

# Commentary

by Gromaticus

## A new look at London's archaeology

Welcome to the first issue of the new-look *London Archaeologist*. Since our Reader Survey last year, a small Task Force has been working on how best we could implement the suggestions that you made. Here is the outcome: an enlarged page size (to A4), full colour throughout, and a range of additional feature articles, some of which will appear in each issue and some of which will be rotated throughout the year. We are also discussing with our authors about a new style of writing – still informative, but perhaps less formal or formulaic. We have been able to achieve this at no increase in cost; in fact, a slight reduction in our printing bill seems likely. All this has involved a lot of extra work over the past few months, and I would especially like to thank those who have borne the brunt of it: Becky Wallower, our Secretary, who has run the Reader Survey, coordinated the changes, and produced the new feature articles, and Tracy Wellman, who has kindly created our new design for us. The Publication Committee has been extremely supportive, making valuable comments and suggestions, and of course we value greatly the direction that you our readers gave us through the Survey.

By the time that you read this, the magazine will have been re-launched at an event at the Museum of London on 26 April. We believe that we have significantly improved the magazine, and have given it a much wider appeal. We hope that you will share our enthusiasm for the new look, and that you will pass the word on to friends, colleagues, members of your societies, and anyone else who you think would be interested in taking out a subscription.

## Here we go again

The Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) seems to be going through one of its periodic crises. A press release from the Museum of London branch of the trade union Prospect warns that major redundancies and restructuring have been proposed by museum managers. The cuts seem to

fall most heavily on the finds specialists, where 8 to 11 posts out of 13 are threatened. The case is made on the grounds of a fall in demand for their services, yet Prospect point to a backlog of four to five years' work, some impending major sites in London, and the income earned by the specialists from external clients. A reorganisation of the management team is also proposed; although the number of posts remains about the same, 5–6 redundancies are suggested.

The work of specialists and project managers has helped to ensure that MoLAS is one of the leading archaeological units in the country, and one of the foremost archaeological publishers in Europe. The loss of their skills will damage not only MoLAS and the Museum, but British archaeology as a whole.

For more information, visit the website [www.bajr.org/BAJRforum/topic.asp?TOPIC\\_ID=1171](http://www.bajr.org/BAJRforum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=1171). If you want to take action, write to Michael Cassidy, Chairman of the Museum of London Board of Governors, Members' Room, PO Box 270, Guildhall, London EC2P 2EJ, [michael.cassidy@dlapiper.com](mailto:michael.cassidy@dlapiper.com).

## Protecting our Heritage

The long-awaited Government White Paper *Heritage Protection for the 21st Century* was published in March 2007, to widespread approval from archaeological bodies, such as the Archaeological Forum. It's not hard to see why – it makes all the right noises and gives archaeologists something that has long been on their wish-list: a statutory duty for local authorities to maintain or have access to Historic Environment Records.

This is a coherent and well-thought-out document with three main strands:

- Developing a unified approach to the historic environment
- Maximising opportunities for inclusion and involvement
- Supporting sustainable communities by putting the historic environment at the heart of an effective planning system (p. 6).

It recommends a single system of national designation (the Register of Historic Buildings and Sites of England) to replace Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, etc., expanded to include sites of early human activity without structures. Decisions about designation will be made on the basis of special architectural, historic or archaeological interest, and detailed new selection criteria will be published. Initially, all existing Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments will be transferred to the list, and in the future there will be interim protection for buildings and sites between their recommendation and addition to the list. One loss will be the revocation of the Areas of Archaeological Importance (which have not been added to since 1984), as this system has been overtaken by the provisions of PPG16.

The paper envisages a wider role for Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), and indeed the general public, in the recognition and protection of our heritage. LPAs will be encouraged to maintain local lists in addition to the national Register, and public access to the records will be improved through new internet portals.

Wide-ranging though it is, the White Paper is only part of the impending legislation and guidance in the area of Planning. The Guidance Notes PPG15 (standing buildings) and 16 (archaeology) are due for revision, and a parallel White Paper is due on the planning process itself. Much will depend on what is contained in these. LPAs will play a key role in these proposals, and this will require training of staff, and in some areas a shift in attitude towards heritage issues. It may be that not all will be as enthusiastic in this respect. So, while this White Paper is to be warmly applauded, it may be a little premature to hang out the flags.

If you want to read the White Paper for yourself, you can purchase a copy for £18 from TSO (The Stationery Office), or download a copy (68 pages) from the DCMS ([www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)). Responses are requested by 1 June 2007.