

Commentary

by Gromaticus

Downturn

The following report posted in January by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA; note the change of name from Institute of Field Archaeologists = IFA) will come as no surprise.

Late in 2008, anecdotal information was coming to the attention of the IfA that the economic decline, and in particular the slump in housing construction, was having a negative impact on commercial archaeological practice. Together with FAME (the Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers), IfA has approached a selection of archaeological employers to gather statistical data on any job losses in the sector in order to substantiate the impact of the current economic situation and to support the archaeological profession as a whole through this period of uncertainty. We have found that the economic downturn has had a direct effect upon archaeology. While over the previous five years, the number of people working in archaeology had been expanding by approximately 4% per annum, many archaeological organisations lost staff over the three months to the end of 2008.

In total, 345 archaeological jobs may have been lost in the quarter from 1st October 2008 to 1st January 2009, representing 8.6% of the jobs in commercial archaeology and 5.0% of the entire UK archaeological workforce. Larger organisations (those that were employing over 50 staff in 2007) have been particularly heavily affected.

Significant numbers of organisations anticipate further job losses in the quarter to the end of March 2009. Most of the organisations that anticipate further losses have already lost staff in the period to 1st January 2009. Business confidence is very poor, with most employers expecting the situation to further deteriorate in 2009 and for some archaeological practices to cease trading.

IfA will repeat this survey in April 2009, reporting the results on its website and tracking changes in the situation until further notice. The report is available on the IfA website www.archaeologists.net/modules/news/article.php?storyid=354

Upturn?

Meanwhile, London Mayor Boris Johnson has unveiled the Greater London Authority's plans for the *Story of London*, a celebration throughout June of the city's past, present and future for tourists and Londoners alike. There will be major events, focused on royal sites, as well as a programme of events and activities focused around smaller museums and sites in the outer boroughs. The London Museums Hub scheme will enable smaller museums to stage events in different boroughs.

Highlights in June include:
A Story of London Walking Weekend (6–7 June). Londoners and visitors to the capital will be invited to walk the Story of London with over 120 different walks on offer, provided by London Walks and other organisations.

A **living history weekend** (20–21 June), in association with Historic Royal Palaces and English Heritage. A Tudor river pageant, organised by Historic Royal Palaces as a highlight event of the 500th anniversary year of King Henry VIII's accession to the throne, will sail from the Tower of London to Hampton Court Palace with the King and Queen Katherine of Aragon on board.

A **weekend of lectures** on 20–21 June, which will see a range of historians talking about their work in the context of London ranging from the building of St Paul's to the horrors of the Victorian slums, from the Whitehall of the Cold War, to the story of the West End.

The Museum of London will host a marathon non-stop performance of London's history on the opening weekend. Other events include the first ever guided tour behind the scenes at the Museum, unlocking the mysteries of how the Museum ticks, to the most unusual back door in London, opening onto the Roman London wall.

More information can be found at www.london.gov.uk/storyoflondon.

For London archaeologists, there is irony in the coincidence of these two news items in 2009. To celebrate London's past while many of those who are responsible for bringing it to light are facing the loss of their jobs seems perverse, although there is certainly merit in making Londoners more aware of their history. Archaeology seems to be poorly represented so far, but one hopes the balance will be restored in the many walks and lectures.

Annual Lecture and General Meeting

At our 40th AGM, who better to give London Archaeologist's annual lecture than Peter Marsden, author of the first article in the first issue in 1968. Peter dug with Prof. Grimes and became the first paid archaeologist at the Guildhall Museum. With volunteer help over two decades, he dug some of the most iconic sites in the City, including Billingsgate and Huggin Hill Roman baths, the 'Roman palace', Baynard's Castle, medieval churches, the

Blackfriars medieval barge and other key riverside sites. His lecture, entitled *Hopes and Fears*, will provide insight into how a foundation was laid for the archaeology of today during the 1960s, when there was such a bonanza of sites, discoveries and research. As usual, the wine reception at 6.30 pm will be followed at 7 pm by a short AGM and the annual lecture – we've reserved the lecture theatre this year to ensure everyone can fit in comfortably.

RSVP for the reception please to the Secretary or via the website (details contents page). 19 May 2009, Institute of Archaeology, 31–34 Gordon Square, London WC1.

The proceedings will include the election of Officers, and the election to the Publication Committee of six Ordinary Members. There will be two vacancies to fill. Nominations should be made to the Secretary, 44 Tantallon Road, London SW12 8DG.