

Commentary

by Gromaticus

Planning under pressure

At the recent meeting of the London Archaeological Forum, a discussion took place about the relative roles of Local Authority Planning Departments (LAPDs), English Heritage's Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) and local archaeological societies, in ensuring that proper provision is made for archaeological recording and preservation when planning decisions are made. Although the picture across Greater London is complicated and very variable, three points stood out:

1. Some LAPDs, which have been hit hard by recent cuts and are likely to be hit further in the future, are often, through no fault of their own, simply not up to the job. Some boroughs may have Archaeological Priority Areas, while others may not. There is a lack of staff continuity and local knowledge, so that (for example) when a rejected Planning Application is re-submitted (sometimes under a different number), the archaeological implications of the original application may not be recognised in the new submission. Cases were described where such problems may have resulted in, or are likely to result in, the loss of valuable archaeological information.
2. GLAAS does an excellent job with very limited resources, but it is very thinly spread across Greater London, and it may be at risk of further cuts as English Heritage continues to shrink. It too can be caught out by last-minute changes to Planning Applications, which leave insufficient time for an adequate response.
3. Local societies, which are the source of much local knowledge about archaeology, nevertheless lack confidence in pinpointing the key issues in Planning Applications, and may lack the resources to mount a sustained campaign over a particular issue. They may lack detailed knowledge about how to engage effectively with the local

planning process, how to make use of the Greater London Historic Environment Record (GLHER), and how to best liaise with GLAAS without wasting the time of its hard-pressed staff.

It was clear that the system is fragmented, with many opportunities for important sites to fall through the gaps. This is likely to get worse, and local societies will need strengthening to meet the demands that are likely to be put on them as they continue to represent local archaeological interests. It was agreed that a good starting point would be a guide/checklist for examining weekly lists of Planning Applications; CBA London undertook to produce such a guide.

What needs to happen next? First, we must find out how widespread the problem is – does it relate to all London boroughs, some of them, or only to the few mentioned at the meeting? Then we need to know the attitude of the local societies – do they feel that they are adequately involved in the planning process, or that they should be more involved in it, or that they do not want to be more involved than they already are? This may lead on to identifying a need for further training in checking Planning Applications, in liaising with both the county societies and with GLAAS, and with making representations to LAPDs. Or is it all too much trouble, and we can go back to bed and pull the duvet over our head?

London Archaeological Prize 2012

This year there were ten entrants for the prize: nine books and one online publication. Judging was difficult because of the high quality of the entrants; the Judging Panel decided to award the first prize to John Schofield for *London 1100-1600*, published by Equinox in 2011. The Panel also awarded a second prize, to Julian Hill and Peter Rowsome for *Roman London and the Walbrook stream crossing*, published by MOLA in 2011. The Awards were presented to the authors at a meeting of the London Archaeological Forum on 16th November. Our thanks

go to the Judging Panel who spent a busy summer reading the entries. We plan to award the prize again in 2014.

Publication grants

Once again, the Publication Committee has decided to make some of its funds available to enable authors to bring projects to successful publication, *via* the City of London Archaeological Trust's grant scheme. This year our award goes to a project to publish the excavation of the City defences at Ludgate. Other awards from CoLAT will go to projects on the geoarchaeology of Queen's Wood, Haringey, repacking the archaeological archive for Kingston upon Thames, the West Essex Geophysics Programme and the Greenwich Palace Foreshore Survey.

Advance notice

The Annual Lecture and Meeting of the London Archaeologist will be held at 7 p.m. on Tuesday 14th May at the Institute of Archaeology, 31–34 Gordon Square, London WC1. A formal announcement will be made in the next issue, but please make a note in your diaries now.

Fieldwork Round-up

Contributions to the *Fieldwork Round-up* for 2012 should be sent to Cath Maloney, Museum of London, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7EE. They should be modelled on the ones in the 2011 *Round-up*, and should be sent on a CD as well as on paper.

Apologies

We apologise that the site of Southwood Activity Centre, Elm Close, Tolworth (ELM11) on p. 67 of the *Excavation Round-up* for 2011 was wrongly attributed to the Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU). It should have been attributed to the Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society; SCAU provided management and the site director for the project. We also apologise that it was not clear in Pat Wilkinson's obituary in the previous issue that the Newham Museums Archaeology Service closed in 1997.