

"What does the C.B.A. do?"

"SURELY THE C.B.A. must do more than produce the *Calendar*" is the not infrequent query our mail produces. Our institutional jaw drops as we contemplate backnumbers of *Annual Reports* fairly bristling with details of C.B.A. activities, the raw material of at least one future postgraduate thesis, as an eminent Professor of Archaeology has remarked. But the opening comment drives home the public relations problems of an organisation which speaks for a serious academic discipline in an age of popularisation and the mass media, more suited to promoting the cult of treasure hunting.

Quite apart from what it does, the C.B.A. deserves to be far better known, especially among young archaeologists. The Council succeeded the Congress of Archaeological Societies as the co-ordinating body for British Archaeology in 1944 and is composed of over three hundred and fifty archaeological organisations; societies, national and regional, the latter ranging from the smallest research group to the largest county society, museums, universities, both intra- and extra-mural departments, colleges of education and even local government departments with archaeological interests. Representatives of these member-bodies meet in London for the Winter and Summer Council Meetings to discuss topics of national importance.

Matters of local interest are dealt with by the Regional Groups which cover Scotland and Wales, with combinations of counties comprising a dozen Groups in England. These Groups, which have an institutional membership comparable to that of the Council, are all directly represented on the Executive Committee of the C.B.A. which can thus claim to speak for the country as a whole. The Executive also includes the Officers (President, three Vice-Presidents, Honorary Secretary, Treasurer and Legal Adviser) and eight co-opted experts. The small Secretariat (at 8 St. Andrew's Place, Regent's Park, N.W.1.) includes three full- and two part-time staff who are responsible for the routine activities of the C.B.A., the editor of *British Archaeological Abstracts*, and a research assistant.

In addition to providing an information service for members of the public interested in joining excavations and societies, or pursuing archaeology as a hobby or a career, the C.B.A. is active as a matter of policy on a surprisingly wide front. For some years it has been urging the need for more effective antiquities legislation but a Bill to protect portable

objects, now in its Ninth Draft, has yet to win the undivided support of the archaeological world. Work on this continues and a vigorous campaign was launched through the press to draw attention to the damage which can result from "treasure-hunting" on archaeological sites.

The absence of adequate legislation to protect field monuments in the face of an alarming rate of destruction, has led the C.B.A., through its Regional Groups and period sub-committees to begin the compilation of a list of "potential guardianship sites." Through this, the very best examples of every category of monument could be selected for permanent preservation through recommendations to the Department of the Environment. The C.B.A. has also made representations to many government Committees, past and present, including the Walsh Committee (Field Monuments), the Brodrick Committee (Treasure Trove) and the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art. In addition, the C.B.A. has often been called upon to supply information to M.P.s apropos of parliamentary debates on archaeological topics, recent examples being the Lords' debate on archaeology and motorways and the Commons' debates on the Field Monuments Bill. Finally, there is the intention to become more closely concerned with legislation affecting wrecks and marine archaeology.

Another side of the C.B.A.'s work connected with legislation, not widely known, is its commitment to historic buildings, named as it is in the Town and Country Planning Act, 1968, as one of the bodies which local authorities must notify on receipt of an application to demolish any listed building. On average the Secretariat has to deal with about twenty notices a week and ensures that the appropriate county archaeological society is given advance warning so that representations can, if necessary, be made at county or national level. The C.B.A. gave evidence at a number of major public inquiries last year, including those at Salisbury, Devizes and Beverley, and it has provided guidance for its members faced with the same ordeal both at a "Conference on Presenting the Conservation Case" and in a booklet.

As part of its concern for both field monuments and listed buildings the C.B.A. has for some years urged the appointment of field officers. Staffordshire County Planning Department was the first local authority to appreciate the need for a comprehensive survey and will publish a report on the subject this following their lead, often with active C.B.A. encouragement. Even so, the help of active fieldworkers will be required in all parts of the country and the

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C.B.A. held a conference at Southampton last autumn in the hope of stimulating interest in field survey and will publish a report on the subject this summer. The Council also aims to establish liaison with other bodies, notably the National Trust, the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves, the Nature Conservancy and numerous others in order to increase their awareness of archaeology as part of the environment and to enlist their co-operation in research and conservation.

Links between the C.B.A. and the educational world have always been close. The C.B.A. gave evidence to the Russell Committee on the future requirements for the teaching of archaeology in Adult Education. Closer liaison with Colleges of Education was the object of a conference held in 1970 which, it is hoped, will provide a precedent for a regular and fruitful exchange of views. Contact with schools is, as might be expected, more limited, but last year the C.B.A. provided a memorandum on the teaching of archaeology in schools with special reference to the C.S.E., which was circulated by the Schools Council. In relation to both the schools and the colleges, a new edition of the *Booklist* is being prepared, along with a revised list of recommended archaeological films.

Publications are perhaps the most straightforward and tangible products of the C.B.A. These fall into several categories. There are the periodicals designed to meet the requirements of students, specialists and the general public. They include the *Calendar of Excavations*, which has a wide circulation both at home and overseas, the *Archaeological Bibliography*; *Current Offprints*, the *Abstracts*, and the *Annual Report*, which provides a resumé of C.B.A. activities both at the centre and in the regions. A series of Research Reports represents the Council's attempts to focus attention on those aspects of the subject which require attention. Occasional papers, too, are prepared to meet special needs, two recent examples being the *Handbook of Scientific Aids*, a useful set of notes compiled by the Scientific Research Committee and the *Carbon 14 Index*. Short printed memoranda have covered such topics as the *Disposal of Finds from Excavations* and *Safety Precautions on Archaeological Excavations*, which will shortly be re-issued in a revised form containing a section on mechanical aids and outlining the newly-introduced National Insurance Policy for Archaeology negotiated by the C.B.A. on behalf of its member-societies.

In addition to financing its own publications, the Council has for many years provided grants to cover the cost of papers of special importance published in the journals of archaeological societies. These grants, totalling £2,000, are awarded annually and help to ensure that the results of research are not

left unpublished for lack of funds.

While providing for the more immediate needs of British Archaeology, the C.B.A. has also looked ahead. Its involvement with industrial archaeology dates from 1959 when the subject was launched at a conference. Pressure on the Government led eventually to a National Survey of Industrial Monuments, which is now being directed for the Council by a full-time survey officer based at Bath University. Closer links with industrial archaeology groups are expected as a result of the reconstitution of the C.B.A. Research Committee on this subject.

Urban Archaeology is another subject on which the C.B.A. has taken the initiative. The need for action, first outlined by the Medieval Society in 1967, was followed by the formation of an Urban Research Committee and the appointment of a full-time assistant, to assess the problems. Publication of a report will coincide with a C.B.A. conference on "The Erosion of History; Archaeology and Planning in Towns," to take place in May.

A third sphere of action, barely three weeks old, arises from the formation of the Churches Committee. The increasing number of redundant churches was perhaps the main catalyst; as with urban research, the need is seen to be that of recording fast disappearing evidence and of influencing organisations unaware of the archaeological implications of their day-to-day activities. Whether funds will be forthcoming for a full-time research assistant remains to be seen but a conference in 1973 will bring together for the first time a large gathering of experts and enthusiasts in this field.

Space prohibits more than a brief outline of the Council's work and no more than mention can be made of such activities as the national survey of Mesolithic sites, the grants available from the Margary Trust Fund for archaeological research and from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust towards training in field techniques. Nor has it been possible to outline in any depth the work of the Regional Groups.

The C.B.A. and its Groups have the strengths and weaknesses of any national organisation with far-reaching interests and responsibilities. It has had to face the criticisms levelled at any democratic organisation, that its very diversity undermines its strength and swift action is often difficult, but in the last resort, its effectiveness is entirely in relation to the amount of time and energy which individuals and institutions are prepared to devote to it.

Most important of all is the realisation that all that has been, and is being achieved by the C.B.A., is in virtue of its status as the body through which archaeological opinion is expressed at the national level, and that this is entirely dependent on the wholehearted, voluntary support of its members.