

# Commentary

By GROMATICUS

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## The Amateur

IN MANY quarters of the archaeological world there is a feeling that the amateur element is slowly being taken over by the professional element. With more and more full-time units being set up all over the country, more and more excavation activity is taking place. Thus the part-time archaeologist sees not only that his contribution is becoming smaller, but also that it very often the full-timer who excavates "the best sites."

There are various facets of the situation — the most obvious one is that a full-time unit can dig seven days a week, while an amateur group can dig only on two days. On the same tack, a full-time archaeologist can visit construction sites regularly and, if necessary, every day that work is continuing, while this course of action is barred to the ordinary amateur.

On the other hand no full-time unit, in London at least, could undertake all the work it does, without the assistance of the part-time volunteer — Southwark provides an excellent example of this form of co-operation between the two elements.

With the advent of the archaeological unit there are bound to be occasional conflicts of ideas between the full-time team and the local amateurs, but with good will on both sides a *modus vivendi* can easily evolve. It would probably be salutary for both parties to remember that if the dreaded depression should come, it is the professional who will suffer and the amateur who will have to fight the battle of rescue archaeology, a burden which he is unable to handle alone—see the list of eight 'cold' boroughs listed in my next note.

The full-time and part-time archaeologists are complementary to each other and working together they should be able to carry out their task more efficiently, the task of recording the vanishing archaeology of London.

## Round-up

This is the third year that an excavation round-up has been carried by *the London Archaeologist* and some interesting facts are beginning to emerge. The most obvious one is the sudden surge of excavations in 1974. Looking at only Greater London area, over the last three years there have been 43, 41 and 56 digs respectively; this rise is due mainly to the City and Southwark units.

Taking the rather dubious method of 'digs done' as a measure of activity, Croydon heads the local society league, closely followed by Wandsworth, Waltham Abbey and Enfield; in passing, it is interesting to note that two of these societies are basically local history ones. The lesson that can be drawn from the records of these four groups is that the level of activity seems comensurate with the number of local people capable of directing excavations.

On the debit side there were no excavations over the three years in eight of the 32 Greater London Boroughs; Barking, Bexley, Camden, Hillingdon, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Richmond and Waltham Forest; in addition, a number of other boroughs can list only one-off excavations, e.g. Hackney dug by an American foundation.

Of the eight boroughs listed, three (and Hackney) now fall under the aegis of the new Inner London Unit, and Richmond is shortly to be taken in hand by Surrey Archaeological Society. That leaves in the cold two boroughs east of the River Lea and two individually isolated ones elsewhere.

Who's for action?

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## Index to Vol. 2 Nos. 1 - 8

This temporary Index which was compiled by Daphne Brinklow, was issued with No. 9 to all subscribers. Further copies may be obtained for 10p. (includes postage) from the editorial offices.

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Consequent upon restocking with binders, the Editor regrets that the increased costs of production and postage make it necessary to fix the new price at £1.50 (includes postage).