

# RESCUE — The First Five Years

GRAHAM THOMAS

The RESCUE Trust will soon be celebrating its fifth birthday. Just how successful has it been in achieving its early ambitions and where lies its future role?

RESCUE used the media to make an immediate impact on public opinion. Its professional adviser, Graham Arnold, soon became Public Relations Officer effectively to the whole of British Archaeology. National and provincial newspapers, radio and television all vied with each other for the latest rescue story. Several M.P.s came forward with offers of help. Not since the days of "Animal, Vegetable, Mineral" had so much archaeology entered the collective public mind. Arnold's expertise was subsequently lent to several nascent urban units, and to RESCUE regional representatives, and few would now deny the success of this campaign for archaeological awareness and its fundamental effect on all levels of opinion.

Inevitably this brought about the greatest single change in British Archaeology for years — an increase in the Central Government budget from £210,000 to £1,600,000 together with significant increases from other sources.

The initial targets set by RESCUE itself for membership and fund raising were soon to be modified after advice was obtained from leading consultants. The Committee was advised that it was extremely unlikely that finance on any scale could be raised from the public except on a local project basis, and that the concept of "rescue archaeology" was just not appealing enough to compete for the charity pound. Having embarked on raising £1,000,000 from the Government, it became obvious then that RESCUE would have to employ a new strategy elsewhere designed to achieve the most effective results on a comparatively low budget.

The key to this strategy was the selection of a number of radical projects which, if successful, would lead the way towards the improvements necessary in the crisis situation.

In those early days it was obvious that the "Implications Report" was the key to future action and accordingly RESCUE published Peter Fowler and David Miles' work on Tewkesbury, with immediate results. The previously intransigent attitude of the

Town Council became one of co-operation leading to the early appointment of Alan Hannan as town archaeologist. Tewkesbury became the model for the shoal of reports that have successfully appeared since. Late in 1972 RESCUE took the bold decision to publish *The Future of London's Past* at a cost of over £8,000. When this appeared nine months later it was the major catalyst to the improvement of the City's archaeology expressed in the new Department of Urban Archaeology within the Guildhall Museum.

Seizing the need for an immediate statement of the problems rescue archaeology faced, the Committee, and others, collaborated to produce the Pelican original *Rescue Archaeology* edited by Philip Rahtz. It was unfortunate that internal re-organisation at Penguin books delayed publication by almost two years, yet RESCUE funds benefited to the tune of several hundred pounds from advance royalties at this critical period.

Autumn 1972 saw the launch of *RESCUE NEWS* as a platform for the new ideas promoted by the Trust. The lead story was the publication of "First Aid for Finds" by David Leigh, and RESCUE has concentrated since on helping to expose the dire needs of conservation work. Horror of horrors, the front page of *RESCUE NEWS* bore a picture of a girl in a RESCUE 'T' Shirt, and the population of kittens at Burlington House rose considerably. Ten issues of the magazine have now been produced and plans are in hand to widen its general scope. Since the London Survey, RESCUE's publication policy has been controlled by the need to recoup funds from the sale of "*F.L.P.*", but several new books are in the pipeline, together with a series of pamphlets aimed at those such as developers and foresters, explaining how they can help.

A keynote to RESCUE's policy has been the need to take its message into the regions. Its panel of speakers have given lectures to a wide cross-section of audiences, ranging from international conferences to rotary clubs. A dozen one day "workshops" have been held, particularly aimed at local Government, across the country. This October sees the first Seminar on "Archaeology and the Community" for senior local Government officers and members at Poole, Dorset. RESCUE sponsored excavations at places such as Manchester and the City of London have

brought home its aims to thousands of visitors. Many commercial organisations have been encouraged to provide funds for excavations on threatened sites they own.

Kate Pretty launched Young Rescue in 1972. Originally planned as a local pilot scheme for children in Cambridge, it suddenly became a national affair and now has nine hundred members, and its own magazine and programme of events.

RESCUE takes a courageous interest in supporting specific archaeological causes and constantly its officers are asked for advice from local groups. Dover, Baynards Castle, Westminster, Dartmoor, the Frigg Pipeline and Perth are just a few of the *causes celebres* that have been fought by RESCUE. Painstaking negotiations have been and are being held with developers and statutory bodies such as the Forestry Commission and British Gas, all designed to create a climate of opinion within which individual groups at a local level can chalk up their own successes. It has already been proved that it would be naive to expect instant success although all the signs in this field are encouraging.

Despite a worsening economic situation and the housekeeping problems common to all charities, RESCUE has established archaeology within its rightful place in the community. Some may argue that more services should be provided for the membership, but with an eye to Oxfam, the Committee has always felt that subscription monies should be devoted, in the main, to achieving results by the methods outlined.

RESCUE has so far failed to achieve basic improvements in legislation, organisation and training, but is well on the road. Three RESCUE deputations have been received by successive Ministers, but apart from the ineffective measures dealing with acknowledgement payments, nothing has yet overcome the constipation of the Parliamentary pipeline. Urgent measures are needed to cope with urban destruction and treasure hunting and in conjunction with the new C.B.A. Committee, suitable legislation is constantly being reviewed.

The frustration felt by archaeologists over the lack of progress towards a proper structure for British Archaeology led RESCUE to initiate the discussion paper *Archaeology and Government*, which has been well received except by those misunderstanding the motives behind its production. The current Area Advisory Committees are just no substitute for a proper regionally based state archaeological service, and RESCUE continues to campaign to this end.

On the training front several scholarships have been awarded with funds raised from businesses and

individuals but a lack of Government initiative in this field causes concern. RESCUE is currently organising a Management Conference for archaeologists who have to cope with financial, marketing and staff problems.

Progress has been so meteoric that much of this strategy has been achieved and is now taken for granted. Many local societies would not be flourishing were it not for the success of RESCUE's programme. Yet all this is in the past, and as committees proliferate and Government policy shifts, British Archaeology seems to have entered an Age of Confusion. Is there still a role for RESCUE and if so what is it?

Many think that increased finance has provided all the answers to current problems and that the rescue crisis is over. However, the recent pioneering financial survey revealed that in fact across the country excavation projects are being severely curtailed and in some areas there is little money for even basic survey. Little is being achieved towards "self help" and most organisations are dangerously vulnerable to public spending cuts. RESCUE means to study in detail all aspects of finance in archaeology by means of a working-party in conjunction with the C.B.A., for this is a dangerously neglected area. Many areas particularly in the North of England and Scotland have no effective organisation to cope with a continuing series of threats and RESCUE has demonstrated that even "safe areas" such as Dorset are in considerable danger. On the edges of higher land increasing vigilance is necessary to conserve archaeological landscapes where they merit such treatment. In short, there is no room for complacency and RESCUE will continue to campaign for action in neglected areas.

The public interest has been awakened, but the crying need is to harness this awareness and channel it forward in a productive fashion. The amateur has a crucial role in rescue archaeology and a concerted effort needs to be made to recruit more hands and feet into the front line. The greatest challenge now facing RESCUE is to promote archaeology not merely as an environmental crusade, but as a leisure activity with its own individual satisfying aims. In no way does this mean any lowering of standards, for more human resources controlled under proper professional direction, will immeasurably improve standards and results.

RESCUE must and will retain its completely independent watchdog role. With so many decisions crucial to the future of archaeology taken behind closed doors, it is vital that an organisation exists

*continued on p.320*

# Mosaic

## A.G.M. OF THE LONDON ARCHAEOLOGIST

The sixth A.G.M. was held on the 16th May at City Literary Institute, Stukeley Street. The annual reports and accounts were read and accepted. The six serving officers and the auditors were re-elected. Representatives to serve on the Publication Committee were elected from the following societies: Enfield, Hendon, Nonsuch, S.A.E.C., Surrey and West London. Following the close of business Anthony Legge gave an excellent talk on "Environmental Archaeology."

## CRYSTAL PALACE PNEUMATIC RAILWAY

IT HAS long been known that an experimental pneumatic tube railway was built and operated in the grounds of the Crystal Palace in the 1860s, and a fair amount has been known about the line from contemporary reports and prints — but the three most important items are missing. These are a route plan, a gradient profile and photographs.

So, when this Society was asked by the Chairman of the Arts and Recreation Committee, Greater London Council, if it would organise a search for the remains of the line, something of a detective story was commenced. Written contemporary reports were studied, and when a survey was carried out and a 12ft. swathe of grass of a different colour was found to coincide almost exactly with the known curvature of the line it was concluded that the tunnel was probably somewhere under it.

With the invaluable help of a number of other societies, a working party of over a hundred people assembled on Sunday, 10th August, 1975, and trenching commenced. After only an hour and a half of hand excavation, the crown of a small tunnel was struck, which, when broken into proved to be flooded. Frogmen went down, but could not prove very much. Therefore, with the help of the park authorities the tunnel was pumped out the next day and re-examined. From the evidence then obtained it seems almost cer-

tain that the tunnel, too small in diameter to hold the train, was an air vent tunnel for the line.

Having got so near to the objective, it has now been decided to renew the search for plans, or some evidence of the relationship of the ventilation tunnel to the train one, before the next dig — which should be successful.

Any information about the line would be much appreciated. Enquiries to Robert Vickers (Bus. 01-636 0755 x2) or Kenneth Wills (Home 01-653 1094).

## LONDON KILNS SEMINAR

THE LONDON Kiln Study Group is a newly-formed body, which came into existence in March this year. Its members are drawn from London archaeological societies, and its aim is to encourage the archaeology and documentary research of kilns.

In view of the many kilns discovered and excavated in the London area in recent years, the Group felt the time was ripe for a seminar to exchange ideas and information on the structure and technology of kilns from "Roman to Recent." Amongst the kiln sites to be discussed are:— Highgate Wood in the Roman period; Kingston, Earlswood, Cheam and Pinner in the medieval period; and in the post-medieval period Fulham, Lambeth, and Woolwich.

There will also be a chance to hear lectures and join in discussions on the development of pottery technology. This seminar, entitled "London Kilns," will be held next year on Saturday and Sunday, 24th-25th April 1976, at University College, University of London, Gower Street, London, W.C.1. Further information will be available in the next issue of *the London Archaeologist*.

## TESSERA E

**Dennis Haselgrove**—the Under-Secretary for Archaeology, retired on 1st July. Rescue archaeology now comes under the Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments.

**We're not the only ones!** — from a Linnean Society programme "... in the late Medieval Period — the evidence from Bay Narbs Castle."

*continued from p.299*

to review progress and results. At a time of economic stringency, it is imperative that plans and priorities are effective and that the progress of the last four years does not disappear in a cloud of hot air.

There are many complex issues still to be resolved. Planning integration, priorities, legislation, training, publication and conservation are still problem areas with no simple radical solution. Over the years ahead RESCUE, working in conjunction with other archaeological interests, will continue to act constructively and aggressively to find these solutions.

The RESCUE Trust has always been and probably always will be controversial. Such success that has been achieved was won in the teeth of considerable opposition by individuals giving up what little spare

time they have. More members are required, not just to ensure RESCUE's economic survival but to widen its base and directly participate in the work of the Executive Committee in what remains a worthwhile cause. RESCUE hopes that its £2 or more will top your subscription list for 1976 and trust you will join in not just winning the battles, but the war.

RESCUE, The Trust for British Archaeology,  
25a The Tything,  
Worcester.

Individual membership £2.

Students £1.

Societies £5.