

## British Museum goes abroad

NOT LITERALLY, of course: the British Museum has joined the growing number of organisations providing tour programmes to sites of archaeological and historical interest. This is seen as a natural extension of the Museum's educational and promotional policies – visiting the sites from which many of the Museum's exhibits originally came.

The first two tours, in 1989, are to Egypt – *Pharaohs and the Nile* and *Pharaohs and Christians*. Future plans include Wonders of the Greek World, an Icon-oriented tour of the Soviet Union, and visits to Turkey, India and South America, incorporating a visit to Easter Island. The tours are operated by Classic Tours, Kent House, 87 Regent Street, London W1R 8LS, tel. (01) 734 7971/2, to whom all enquiries should be addressed.

## Are your visitors welcome?

UNTIL RECENTLY, the presentation of archaeological sites to the public has often been the poor relation to what archaeologists see as their 'real business' of excavation. There have been notable exceptions (high-lighted by the Hepworth Archaeological Awards, for example), but it is hard for the trained archaeologist to realise how the public can fail to appreciate the details of an excavation unless they are carefully spelled out to them.

*English Heritage* has decided to give greater priority to presentation and interpretation of excavations aimed at the general public, and in future grants will be provided to selected projects to allow work to be presented to visitors in an attractive and informative way.

As a first step, *English Heritage* has produced a book *Visitors Welcome*, a down-to-earth guide for excavation directors, aimed at putting archaeology on the tourist map. Published by HMSO, it costs £25, and we hope to review it in a future issue.

## National Heritage Memorial Fund

ALTHOUGH it was established in 1980, and has since saved a varied selection of Britain's heritage for the future, the Fund has made little impact on public consciousness. The range of its activity is surprisingly wide, from Britain's first submarine and the car *Bluebird* to buildings, paintings, furniture, manuscripts and wild-life sanctuaries. A selection is on view at an exhibition at the British Museum (see *Diary*), sponsored by British Gas to the tune of £150,000.

## Earliest agricultural activity in London

A THREE-MONTH excavation at Phoenix Wharf (no. 4 Jamaica Road, London SE1, TQ 3379 7996), carried out in the summer of 1988 by the DGLA and supervised by J. M. C. Bowsher, has revealed the earliest evidence for agricultural activity in the Lower Thames Valley.

The site covered some 1580 sq. m (17,000 sq. ft) into which two trenches (A & B) were dug. Area A revealed an area of high sand at +1.24m OD. A sondage revealed a gravel layer underneath the sands at -0.46m OD. Cutting through the sand was the north bank of a river, known from 17th-century cartographic evidence, running WSW-ENE. There was evidence of that the river had been revetted in the 17th century, but had rapidly silted up and then been sealed under modern dump deposits.

Area B was opened to the south-east of A in the hope of picking up the south bank of the river. Neither bank was found but a buried prehistoric land surface was discovered. There was a rich ploughsoil which covered the natural sand at -0.40m OD, into which were scored ard marks, the earliest agricultural activity found in the Lower Thames Valley, along with spade marks and post holes. Also

sealed by the ploughsoil and thus earlier than the agricultural phase was a rectangular cooking pit fed by a small east-west stream to the south. This is the only known example of this type of pit in south-east England. Also revealed in this trench was a deep north-south channel, which cut the prehistoric features; this was part of the original inlet which was formalised into St Saviour's Dock in the medieval period.

## Butser open to local societies

MEMBERS OF local societies responsible for organising summer outings may like to consider the possibilities offered by the Butser Ancient Farm. They include:

1. A standard lecture tour of the Demonstration Area of the Farm. Time 1½ – 2 hours; fee £3 per person.
2. **Half Day School.** Talk at Nexus House, tea/coffee and biscuits, walk to farm, lecture tour of the Demonstration Area. Time 3½ hours; fee £5.45 per person.
3. **Full Day School.** As 2 in the morning, followed by lunch, illustrated lectures on specific programmes, tea and biscuits. Fee £9.50 per person.

Other specialised Half and Full Day Schools can be arranged on request. Details from Butser Ancient Farm Project Trust, Nexus House, Gravel Hill, London Road, Horndean, Hants., tel. 0705 598838.

## Two new museums

TWO NEW museums were opened in London by the Queen within a month of each other. The new Richmond Museum was opened on 28 October; it tells the story of Richmond, Ham, Petersham and Kew from the prehistoric to the present day. Special displays show medieval Shene and the Carthusian Monastery, and Henry VII's Palace. The address is Old Town Hall, Whittaker Avenue, Richmond TW9 1TP, tel. (01) 332 1141. Open every afternoon except Mondays; also Wednesday evenings until 8 p.m.

The Bank of England Museum was opened on 16 November. It covers both the Bank's history and its role today. Exhibits include gold bars, a collection of bank notes, architectural history of the Bank and an interactive video on the work of the Bank today. The entrance is in Bartholomew Lane and the phone no. (01) 601 5793. Open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday.

## British Archaeological Awards

TWO OF THE eleven winners in the current round of British Archaeological Awards are from the London area. The Young Archaeologists Club Award goes to Sarah Chew from Kensington for an essay about the discovery of a medieval harp. The BP Award for the best non-archaeologist who, in the course of his normal employment, makes and reports an archaeological find, went to Douglas Blake who dredged up an Iron Age shield in a gravel pit near Egham.

The Hepworth Heritage Communication Award was won by the Flag Fen excavations near Peterborough, and the overall prize – the Legal and General *Silver Trowel* – by the Monmouth Archaeological Society for their excavations in the town.

## Congratulations

VAL BOTT, formerly curator of the newly-opened Wandsworth Museum, has been appointed Curator of the Passmore Edwards Museum, in succession to Ian Robertson.

## Curator retires

MISS LESLEY Ketteringham, Curator of the East Surrey Museum at Caterham, retired in June from the post that she had held since the Museum's inception in May 1980. We wish her a happy and fruitful retirement. The new Curator is Mr John Bushby.