

Commentary

by Gromaticus

Review or Round-up?

IT WAS slightly ironic, but pleasing, to receive a copy of MOLAS' latest annual review¹ while struggling with the final stages of the *Fieldwork Round-up* for 1994. I must confess to a twinge of envy at the glossy publication, the colour illustrations of sites and finds, and the computer-aided reconstructions of buildings. Of course, the roles are different: the *Round-up* seeks to provide a brief account, in a standard format, of all archaeological activity in our area, while the *Annual Review* deals, naturally, only with MOLAS activity, but additionally covers post-excavation and work done by MOLAS staff outside London. So it's not really in competition, and even if it were, I would still strongly recommend it to all our readers as an excellent overview of the year's work.

So what can we learn from this publication? That building development in central London seems to be picking up at last, although much of MOLAS work in this area does seem to be on the back of the Jubilee Line Extension. It's good to see that leaflets are to be produced, giving information about the archaeological discoveries along the line — perhaps they could be placed in dispensers to provide reading for passengers when the inevitable delays in services occur. More seriously, the organisation of the *Annual Review* partly into periods and partly into major projects, enables one to see significant advances in our knowledge. For example, the prehistoric period of our area continues to come into focus, with further evidence for exploitation of the Thames' margins.

For the Roman period, pieces of the jigsaw of London's hinterland continues to fall into place, for example Twickenham (see also this issue, pp. 378–382). Perhaps most significant in 1994 was the site at St. Mary Abbot's Hospital: not only the first Roman settlement in Kensington, but also one of the very earliest Roman sites in our area. This could be very important in the light of recent controversies about the origins of Roman London. In the City, two major projects, at Guildhall Yard and No. 1, Poultry, continue to expand our knowledge of *Londinium*.

1. *Annual Review for 1994* MoLAS 95, compiled by John Schofield and Dick Malt. *Molas* 1995. Available from the Museum of London Shop at £9.95.

A map of Saxon sites shows how the newly-discovered middle Saxon site at Tulse Hill fits into the pattern of settlement south and west of London, but also shows a surprising dearth of settlement north and east of London. What's going on there, and why aren't we finding it? Finds from the medieval period are apparently less spectacular, but are allowing, for example, the topography of Westminster to be reconstructed in considerable detail.

It's also good to see the efforts MOLAS are making to get the results of their efforts over to the public. I've already mentioned the Jubilee Line Extension leaflets (Westminster already published, north Southwark and Stratford on the way); another good example is the Merton Priory area, where a booklet on the Priory, published in cooperation with the London Borough of Merton Libraries Service won the Alan Ball Local History Award of the Library Services Trust, and one on the association of the area with William Morris has recently been published (review to follow in the *LA* shortly). A prime example of 'popular' archaeology was MOLAS' involvement in the *Time Team* project in Lambeth Palace Gardens (see this issue). Although a three-day investigation was never likely to produce conclusive results, it has acted as a focus for work already in progress over a wider area, and has demonstrated that there is still much to do before we can have a clear picture of our area's past. Indeed, that could be the message of the whole publication — there are still very many interesting questions out there that will require fieldwork to elucidate them.

Fieldwork Round-up

YOU SHOULD have received your copy of the *Round-up* for 1994 with this issue. If for any reason you did not, please contact the Subscriptions Secretary. We had hoped to have it ready to go out with the Summer issue, but were delayed by late returns from some contributors. However, we are very grateful to all who contributed, and hope to do better next year. My special thanks go to Viv Hogarth, the unseen heroine of this *Round-up*, who took on the task of phoning or writing to all the Units and Societies active in London, and extracting their contributions. Without her help it would have been much harder to produce this year's *Round-up*.