

# Commentary

by Gromaticus

## Searching for publications

A starting point of research is to gather information that has already been published about the subject of interest. This is one of the reasons why we have Publication Round-ups in our annual supplements; other reasons being to draw readers' attention to the wide range of work done on London's archaeology, and to perhaps spark interest in some aspect that had not previously grabbed a reader's attention. There was a time when this was an easy task: one simply visited the website of the BIAB (British and Irish Archaeological Bibliography) and searched for titles published in the previous year that related to London. In recent years, gaps began to appear, and I took to searching the 'obvious' sources (such as the county society journals) first, then 'topping up' by searching the BIAB. This year, a search of the BIAB did not even reveal any of the publications that I had already gleaned by searching the obvious sources. This was such a surprise that I decided to investigate further, and found that the most recent entries from these sources were two or three years out of date, i.e. there were no entries for 2013, 2012, and in some cases 2011. What had happened?

To pursue the issue, I contacted the CBA office in York, which now runs BIAB. The root of the problem, I learnt, was shortage of staff; the CBA's funding is being severely reduced, and the services that they can offer are being affected as a result. BIAB's own dedicated funding has also been reduced and one major funder (the Irish Heritage Council) has had to withdraw entirely from the consortium which supports the service. My contact, Sarah Howard, was very helpful and sympathetic, and kindly provided me with a list of relevant publications which had not yet reached the public part of the database. I am naturally very grateful, and thanks to her help we have one of the most complete London bibliographies for several years. This shows the potential of BIAB, if it can be

fully sustained.

But somehow, my gratitude misses the point. It should not have been necessary for me to complain, and for Sarah to go out of her way to help me. If more users took the same approach, would the time taken to answer their queries slow down the process even further? Clearly, the BIAB is under-resourced. The CBA appreciates this point and is seeking ways to bring in more data from new publications via automated data exchange, and also link the bibliography with other online resources. Given the ever-expanding flow of relevant publications covering British & Irish archaeology, we need to support the CBA staff in their efforts to keep up to date with new publications. Further funding must be sought to enable the bibliography to be comprehensive for all the key publications. Already 2000 new records are added to the database each year, but current staff resources are not sufficient to cover all the relevant data sources.

While I was thinking about this, I happened to read an article in the magazine *Significance*, in which the author argued that medical researchers did not make enough use of the existing literature in their research. If it's true of medics, I wondered, how about archaeologists? With the BIAB and the ADS (Archaeology Data Service) to help us, we have no excuse. Expanded funding for BIAB depends on being able to demonstrate to potential funders its value and its widespread use. We should all use it, or there is a danger that we will lose it.

## So long, and thanks for all the sites

For many years the fieldwork part of our annual supplement has been compiled by Cath Maloney, except for two years when Joanna Wylie compiled it. Every year it seems to get more complex, with more and more organisations (33 this year) undertaking fieldwork in our area. All I've had to do is to edit the text, format it and lay it out neatly (I hope) on pages. It's been a pleasure to work

with Cath – she has always understood our needs and our house style, and has edited the various contributions into a good clear style. Each year my editorial input has been less than in the year before, as our styles converged. Now Cath is about to retire, and this is her last Round-up. What can I say, except thanks Cath for all your hard work, for all the deadlines met and the queries answered. You will be a hard act to follow, and we wish you joy in your well-earned retirement.

## London Archaeology Prize

This year nine nominations were received for the London Archaeology Prize 2014: seven books, one journal article and one online publication. The winner (and the runner-up, if the standard of the entries merits it) will be announced at the next meeting of the London Archaeological Forum, which will be hosted by CBA London at the Clore Education Centre of the Museum of London on 17th November, starting at 6 p.m.

## Apology

We apologise that an out-of-date advertisement for the Thames Discovery Programme was placed on the back cover of the Summer issue. A previous version of the file was used in error. Details of the conference being organised by TDP and the Nautical Archaeological Society that should have been publicised can be found on the back page.

## Fieldwork and Publication Round-up

The Fieldwork and Publication Round-up for 2013 is being distributed with this issue. If you have not received your copy, please contact the Membership Secretary (address on p. 29). Please let us know of any omissions from either section. We intend to distribute the Index to Volume 13 with the Winter issue.