

Commentary

by Gromaticus

The archaeological shoe-horn

One strangely satisfying aspects of the work of an editor is what I call 'shoe-horning': fitting a certain amount of text into the space available for it. There's been quite a lot of it lately: first the Fieldwork Round-up and then the Index. There is something very pleasing about not ending up with several pages of white space, which is more than just the saving of paper and postage costs. This year I came unstuck with the Round-up; I had it all nicely laid out to exactly 44 pages when three late entries threw it all out, and nothing could be done about it. The Index was more tractable; it originally came in at nearly nine pages, but careful juggling of font size and leading (did you notice?) reduced it to eight, a more sensible number. So why does this matter to anyone except for me and possibly our treasurer? I'll look at each in turn.

The work on the Round-up reflects the vast number of entries that we have each year. This year there were about 375 across all 32 London Boroughs, from 33 different organisation, and this number is not unusual. The interventions are spread well (but not uniformly) across Greater London, and it is several years since there were any boroughs without at least one. This means that over the forty years since we started publishing round-ups, there must be thousands of such records, even allowing for the lower level of activity in earlier years, and the fact that some excavations were spread over more than one year. This is a huge resource, which could be used as a starting point into research of any period, or in its own right as a measure of archaeological activity as it changes over time and space. The problem is that this information is not easily accessible; to find a site, you really need to know its year of excavation, and even then you may have to search through a long alphabetical list. And if you want to find out if there are any other sites in the immediate vicinity, well, just imagine trying to find out. The whole thing is crying out for a

searchable database linked to a GIS.

Once you've got that far, there are all sorts of other information that could be added. In this issue, Helen Wickstead and Martyn Barber highlight the enormous amount of information that lies untapped in the aerial photographic record of our area. We should not overlook the potential of geophysical survey, even in London. There are many open spaces, some of them very large, and recent work in Hertfordshire and Surrey, for example, has shown the potential of large-scale magnetometry and other surveys by local societies.

The index for Volume 13 turned out to be longer than that for Volume 12, hence the need for some shoe-horning. The reason for this was not immediately obvious, but I think it was due, at least in part, to an increase in the number of multi-author articles, since they had to be indexed separately under each author. This is itself an interesting development, reflecting greater collaboration between different sub-disciplines, or perhaps a greater willingness to recognise the contributions of secondary authors: I prefer the former explanation. If I am correct, this is a development which deserves to be encouraged.

Where does all this leave us? I think the central point is that although there is a great deal of information that is either available now or potentially available, but that currently the whole is less than the sum of its parts. A good example of what can be achieved when information is brought together (although in this case for a specific period across a limited area) is John Schofield's award-winning *London 1100–1600*. We could do with more such examples.

London Archaeology Prize 2014

The prize this year was awarded to Hazel Forsyth, for her book *London's Lost Jewels*, which accompanied the Museum of London's exhibition *The Cheapside Hoard: London's Lost Jewels*. Exceptionally, two runner-up prizes

were awarded: to Robert Cowie, Lyn Blackmore and others for *Lundenwic: excavations in Middle Saxon London 1987–2000* (MOLA Monograph 63), which is reviewed on p 64, and to Warwick Rodwell for *The Coronation Chair and Stone of Scone* (published by Oxbow Books), reviewed in LA 14, no 2. The authors of the Lundenwic book have generously agreed to donate their prize money to the Young Archaeologist Club (Central London branch).

The Awards were presented to the authors at the London Archaeological Forum on 17th November. Our thanks go to the Judging Panel, chaired by Peter Rowsome, our Managing Editor, who spent a busy summer reading the entries, and to Alison Telfer, who co-ordinated the logistics. We plan to award the prize again in 2016.

Advance notice

The Annual Lecture and Meeting of the *London Archaeologist* will be held at 7 p.m. on Thursday 14th May at UCL Institute of Archaeology, 31–34 Gordon Square, London WC1. Dominic Perring will present the Annual Lecture on *Making sense of Roman London, a new archaeological history 25 years on*. A formal announcement will be made in the next issue, but please make a note in your diaries now.

Fieldwork and Publication Round-up

Contributions to the *Fieldwork Round-up* for 2014 should be sent to archaeologicalarchive@museumoflondon.org.uk, clearly titled London Archaeologist Round-up 2014. They should be modelled on the ones in the 2013 Round-up. Details of archaeological publications by local societies should be sent to the Editor.

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The Index for Volume 13 is being distributed with this issue, and we are grateful to Damaris Dodds for producing it. Please contact the Membership Secretary (see p. 57) if you have not received your copy.