

# Commentary

by Gromaticus

## Adding to the Dictionary

The Oxford English Dictionary annually publishes a list of new words which have entered the English language during the previous year. As I review 2017, I shall do the same for the language of archaeology and heritage. Three terms in particular came to my attention: the Bedern Declaration, the Mendoza Review and the Heritage Statement. I'd like to pick out common threads which might tell us something about the state of our sector in 2018.

The *Bedern Declaration*<sup>1</sup> came from 'an alliance of the key agencies concerned with the preservation of the intellectual record of the historic environment of the UK, convened under the auspices of the Digital Preservation Coalition.' They believe that 'digital preservation is an essential function for the protection of the historic environment, ensuring effective management, meaningful access and reliable, verifiable research.' They see significant advantages over the old world of paper publications and archives.

They welcome the trend towards greater reliance on digital records, but also see dangers in the 'pressures of technological obsolescence, as well as the need to adapt to new scales, new complexities and new expectations.' A whole new system of management is needed and the Group is committed to try and resolve issues of policy or practice in the preservation of digital resources such as training; collecting policies; standards for deposition of archives; and advocacy in the sector.'

We can expect to hear more from them.

In 2016, the DCMS commissioned Neil Mendoza to review national, local and regional museums, working with Arts Council England and the HLF. The Government speedily accepted the *Mendoza Review*'s recommendations,<sup>2</sup> perhaps none were controversial, but with usable points and lessons to learn.

I can only highlight a few of the most significant points for London here. On the positive side, figures about the input that museums make to the national and local economies are hardly surprising – something we have always suspected, but it's good to see hard evidence. I also welcome the recognition of museums' contribution to a sense of identity (especially applicable to local museums).

Where museums do less well is on diversity, both of visitors ('audiences') and of the workforce and, with not all sectors of the community visiting in equal numbers, the Review suggests this should be addressed. Those involved with small local museums should study the Review to see how their museum can benefit.

Finally, *The Heritage Statement 2017*<sup>3</sup> describes itself as 'the Government's vision and strategy for Heritage and the historic environment.' I can only comment on a few points.

Like the Mendoza Review, the Statement stresses the economic and social benefits of 'heritage', citing that, in a recent survey, 94% of adults (strongly) agreed with the statement: 'It is important to me that heritage buildings or places are well looked

after'. Problem areas are also pointed out, such as the need to 'bridge the gap between primary school and engagement in later life' (which suggests to me the need for more YACs and a route from them into adult life). There are also new initiatives such as *Kick the Dust* and the *#iwill* campaign.

I hope that some of you will read one or more of these documents. Yes, there are obvious elements and many bland but comforting words, but there is also a rich seam of data and case studies which can be exploited in the case of a local issue or situation. Get mining!

## Fieldwork and Publication Round-up

Entries to the Fieldwork or Publication Round-up for 2017 are due by 31 May. Entries should be modelled on 2016 examples. If you have not already received the Guidance notes, contact the Archive at the address below. Please send entries, clearly marked LONDON ARCHAEOLOGIST ROUND-UP 2017, to [archivemol@museumoflondon.org.uk](mailto:archivemol@museumoflondon.org.uk).

Send details of publications by local archaeological societies for sites within the M25 boundary to the same address.

1. The founding members comprised the Archaeology Data Service, English Heritage, the RCAHMS and RCAHMW, who first met in the Bedern Hall, York, in October 2011. See <https://tinyurl.com/y92xlmxy>.

2. Published in November 2017, download it from: <https://tinyurl.com/y7gbyw2z>. For the Government recommendations, see: <https://tinyurl.com/yarmj94s>.

3. Published in December 2017 by the DCMS, see <https://tinyurl.com/yblg3cuq>.

## Annual Lecture and General Meeting

We meet on 17th May this year at the Institute of Archaeology as usual. Our wine reception at 6.30 pm will be followed at 7.00 pm by a short AGM and the prestigious annual lecture.

Presenting *Slippery when wet*, Senior Archaeologist Jessica Bryan will discuss continuing work by MOLA on the huge seven year Thames Tideway Tunnel project,

highlighting foreshore and landside archaeological work in Putney, Bermondsey and Deptford.

AGM proceedings will include the election of Officers, and the election to the Publication Committee of six Ordinary Members. There is one vacancy to fill, and we expect to elect a new Marketing Manager.

To discuss the positions or submit

nominations (*and to send RSVPs for the reception please*), email the secretary via the contact page on the website ([londonarchaeologist.org.uk](http://londonarchaeologist.org.uk)) or write to her at 44 Tantallon Road, London SW12 8DG.

**All welcome:**

**Thursday 17th May 2018 – 6.30 pm  
Institute of Archaeology, 31–34  
Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY.**