

# Commentary

by Gromaticus

## I've got a little list...

A chance discussion has pointed me in the direction of Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs), posing questions such as 'what are they?', 'where are they?', 'why are they?', and 'how are they chosen?'

The term Scheduled Ancient Monument has always carried for me a Victorian tone, with an image of a clerk entering names into a Schedule in immaculate copper-plate. So it was no surprise to discover that, although scheduling started in 1913, its roots go back to the Ancient Monuments Act (1882). Its current authority derives from the Archaeological Areas and Ancient Monuments Act (1979).

There is no single definition of an Ancient Monument; they do not actually have to be 'ancient' (whatever that means), nor do they have to be visible above ground (the Roman boat below Guy's Hospital is a SAM). Nor is size important: in London, Hampton Court is a SAM, but so is a milestone in Sutton High Street. In fact, anyone can nominate a site to be scheduled – the decision lies with the DCMS on the advice of Historic England (HE).

So the important point is the scheduling process itself, described as 'the selection of nationally important archaeological sites' with 'a presumption that they will be handed on to future generations in much the same state as we have found them'. However, national importance by itself is not quite enough, as the Schedule is reserved for 'carefully selected sites ... a representative sample', and is 'applied

only if it is the best means of protection'. As a statistician, I might quibble about selecting a representative sample from an unknown population, but the DCMS Principles of Selection provide a guide. They are: period, rarity, documentation/finds, group value, survival/condition, fragility/vulnerability, diversity, and potential. They are fleshed out by HE's Scheduling Selection Guides, which cover 18 broad themes, such as Transport, Gardens, Religion and Ritual, Sites of Early Human Activity, etc.<sup>1</sup>

The selection process originally relied on the judgement of members of the Ancient Monuments Board. In the mid-1980s, it was felt that their scheduling was biased and needed to be improved. By then, the AMB had listed about 13,000 sites in Britain. An assessment by HBMC(E) suggested that it was about 2% of all archaeological sites, and was an unrepresentative sample, particularly in terms of periods covered and locations.

There followed the Monument Protection Programme (MPP), set up in 1986 to speed up the rate of protection of nationally important sites, by 'identifying monuments and sites whose national importance and conservation needs justify some form of statutory protective designation'.<sup>2</sup>

How does a monument benefit from being scheduled? Well, Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is required for 'works', whether above or below ground, to a SAM – doing such work without consent is a legal offence.<sup>3</sup>

More recent is the National

Importance Programme, which was 'set up to explore how to help Local Authority archaeologists identify sites of national importance that are not on the National Heritage List for England'.<sup>4</sup> This partnership between DCMS, HE, and the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers appears to focus on procedure and documentation rather than actual site. It seems to create the possibility of a new class of monument whose level of protection is to me uncertain.

Finally, what's the situation in London? A listing of all SAMs in Britain shows that only 166 out of some 20,000 are in Greater London (about the same number as in Surrey).<sup>5</sup> At first sight, London seems to be under-represented, but London predominates in the list of historic buildings – some sites can be both. Nevertheless, there seem to be some anomalies – there are only three SAMs in Westminster (the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey, the Jewel Tower and the recently rediscovered ice well near Regents Park). However, additions are still being made, such as the Roman bath-house at 11–15 Borough High Street (2015).

1. [Historicengland.org.uk/listing/selection-criteria/scheduling-selection/](http://Historicengland.org.uk/listing/selection-criteria/scheduling-selection/) [accessed 28 Mar 2019].

2. [Pcwww.liv.ac.uk/~Sinclair/ALGY399\\_Site/scheduling.html#mpp](http://Pcwww.liv.ac.uk/~Sinclair/ALGY399_Site/scheduling.html#mpp) [accessed 6 Feb 2019].

3. [Historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/consents/smc/](http://Historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/consents/smc/) [accessed 28 Mar 2019].

4. [Historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/scheduled-monuments/national-importance-programme/](http://Historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/scheduled-monuments/national-importance-programme/) [accessed 6 Feb 2019].

5. [Ancientmonuments.uk/england#.XJygEIX7QdU](http://Ancientmonuments.uk/england#.XJygEIX7QdU) [accessed 28 Mar 2019].

## Annual Lecture and General Meeting

*London Archaeologist's* 50th AGM was held on Thursday 16th May at UCL Institute of Archaeology. The following officers were elected: Joint Editors, Jenny Hall and Diana Briscoe; Managing Editor, Peter Rowsome; Secretary, Rosalind Morris; Treasurer, Alastair Ainsworth; Membership Secretary, Jo Udall. Helen Johnston was elected to the new position of Communications Officer. Re-elected to the Publication Committee were Les Capon, Sinead Marshall, Daniel

Nesbitt, Victoria Ridgeway and Jonathan Gardner. Natasha Billson was elected as an ordinary member.

After the AGM, Dan Jackson (Historic Royal Palaces) provided an introduction to the history and development of Hampton Court Palace, Surrey. He examined the challenges of maintaining the palace, while welcoming almost 1 million visitors per year, and introduced the palace archaeological collections, which includes some of the oldest

wallpaper in the country. Then Guy Hunt (L - P : Archaeology) gave an overview of the excavations undertaken so far while replacing hundreds of meters of electrical cabling. The finds have included a large hearth discovered under the, still extant, Tudor Servery, with a glazed tile floor; the foundation of an early hall building under the Great Hall; and the foundations of the Tudor Queen's Apartments, which were demolished in 1689 by Sir Christopher Wren.