

Editorial

Threats to major sites in Britain have been a constant theme of the past year. Some of these (notably the Huggin Hill Baths in London, the Queen's Hotel site in York and the Rose theatre in Southwark) received extensive coverage in the national press. Others passed without public mention but presented equally severe problems. Still more worrying than the fudged compromises arrived at in York and London is the evident failure of the appropriate authorities to respond to complex problems with both firmness and despatch. No-one comes well out of the affair at York, where a major Roman building was briefly examined on a site which had lain open for many years, before being moth-balled and buried again. We are none the wiser about its function and significance, despite confident statements from some quarters about its palatial quality. When will we begin to learn anything about Roman York? The Huggin Hill baths eventually fared somewhat better than once seemed likely, being well excavated and then preserved, invisible, beneath a new building. But this solution was reached only after much lobbying, both overt and discreet. Surely this should not now be necessary in so manifestly important a place as Londinium. The inadequacies of present legislation apart, these two cases (to say nothing of the Rose theatre) throw into harsh relief the inability of a body like English Heritage to protect the nation's archaeological heritage. The need is clear (as was recognized in 1882) for the principal agency charged with so many-sided a task to be located within the machinery of government. The main lesson of the events of the past year is that a largely advisory role simply will not do.

Publication of academic works and attendant problems have dominated the counsels of many learned societies over the past year. Inflation in the costs of production, distribution and storage runs well in advance of the official rate, often coming close to doubling it. Subscribers paying the new rate for this number, and for the *Journal of Roman Studies*, will need no reminder of the increase, but should be assured that the reason lies in the steady rise of printing costs and materials. These have been offset for some years by relatively beneficial results issuing from the introduction of new printing methods, as well as by prudent budgetting by Society officers. But after five years of a subscription-rate set in 1983, an increase was inevitable if journals of appropriate standard were to be maintained. In the immediate future, the Roman Society, like several sister bodies, will be examining the feasibility of in-house production to ensure the future of its journals and its expanding monograph series. The appointment of a Publications Assistant, in the person of Dr. Lynn Pitts, is an indication of the rise in publishing activity over the past few years, as well as an earnest of the Society's determination to maintain its contribution in this field at the highest possible level.

The content of *Britannia* is frequently the subject of comment and that is welcomed by the editorial committee. A balance of subjects is aimed at in each volume, within the material offered in a particular year. The result may not please all, but it is hoped that the volumes reflect the best of the work offered over the previous year or so. It is regrettable that discursive or problem-oriented papers are rarely submitted, most contributors preferring to play safe with descriptive pieces. Editors can only edit: they cannot write the entire volumes. A wider range of Roman provincial archaeology could be entertained and would be welcomed.

This is the last issue of *Britannia* to be seen through the press by the present Editor. His place will be taken for the next five years by Dr J.P. Wild of the University of Manchester. Professor M.G. Fulford will be the new Review Editor. The outgoing Editor will retain an interest in the progress of *Britannia*, and the other publications of the Society, as Chairman of the Editorial Committee.