This paper is a personal reflection on archaeological policy and practice from the writer's appointment in 1965 as Field Archaeologist for Leicester City Museums to the present (1990) integrated county wide service.

Tracing the evolution of the present archaeological service in Leicestershire is a formidable task, and to attempt it in detail is beyond the scope of this paper. On the other hand, simply to look back and exclaim wistfully how much simpler and easier it all was in those days, or to regret lost opportunities, or just to marvel at the difference between 1965 and 1990 - to take a purely anecdotal approach - would be to overbalance in the other direction. The following is therefore an attempt to strike a balance between the two and at least mark the important stages in the development of the present service without becoming submerged in detail.

To begin at the beginning: what was it like in 1965? Four years earlier Leicester was the first Museums Service in the country to appoint a Field Archaeologist. The first incumbent was Max Hebditch, now Director of the Museum of London, and I succeeded him in July 1965. I was based at Newarke Houses Museum, an Assistant Keeper in the Department of Antiquities. The job was to carry out excavations within the City, and initially the programme was set by the imminent construction of the underpass, due to start in 1966, which was to tear a hole through the Roman and medieval core (illus. 1). Funding in those days came mainly from the City and the Department of the Environment and took little account of post-extraction work and publication while permission and access were granted, or not, by the site owners. A year's budget in these early days was about £1,500 - £2,500 and this might cover several excavations - labour, machine costs, equipment - and with luck and good management might stretch to cover some extra help with pottery processing, sorting and drawing.

Labour was hard to find on a regular basis outside university vacations. Labourers - usually students with previous experience - were paid £11.00 per week and the rest of the labour force was made up of ‘volunteers’ paid a subsistence allowance of ten shillings (50p) per day. There was a growing band of peripatetic diggers who moved round the country from site to site, but it was difficult in Leicester to take advantage of this source of labour as we could not provide accommodation nor even camping facilities. Despite this, digging was nearly continuous for the first five years - that is, really continuous, seven days a week -
with short intervals of two or three months ‘inside’ in which to try to tackle the writing up and to plan the next excavation.

There was no specific funding for the post-excavation work. Many site directors, as in Leicester, did this in intervals between excavations, often in their own time, analysing the results, often processing the finds and drawing up the illustrations as well as writing the report. Specialist advice and reports were provided free of charge, again often by people with other jobs, in their spare time. Small wonder, looking back, that during the later 1960s and 70s many excavators accumulated a ‘back-log’ of unpublished excavations which in some cases has not yet been laid to rest. During this time excavations were carried out on the site of the forum, across the defences (Buckley and Lucas 1986), under the Peacock pavement, in Redcross Street, West Bridge (Clay forthcoming 1992), Bath Lane (Clay and Mellor 1985), Silver Street, Southgate Street and St. Nicholas Circle (Hebditch and Mellor 1973) and were supplemented by numerous watching briefs, especially in connection with the construction of the underpass.

As was the case elsewhere, many of the excavations were relatively small scale, often consisting of trenches, or ‘boxes’ and attention was concentrated on the Roman levels, often to the exclusion of anything later. ‘Boxes’ were an attempt to come to terms with the need to record stratigraphic relationships in both plan and section. The individual boxes or trenches, where possible laid out in a rigid grid system, explored the site in plan while the baulks preserved the vertical section. In practice this often meant that
key relationships between boxes were not always clear, and the vertical sections were not strategically placed in relationship to the archaeology.

Gradually the advantages of open area excavation, using more sophisticated recording methods were becoming apparent (illus. 3). At the same time the dominance of the Roman period was beginning to decline and the realisation was growing that even in towns where the post-Roman deposits were badly damaged and difficult to excavate and interpret, archaeology still had a major contribution to make to our understanding of the development of the town during the Saxon and medieval periods. Something of the same change in attitude is still in progress with regard to industrial archaeology.

Site records were kept in school exercise books and levels were measured by what was even then an ancient Dumpy level which had to be re-adjusted with worrying frequency. Levelling was consequently an incredibly long job and, in the City centre, was usually done on a Sunday morning so that we could sight on the bench-mark on St. Nicholas church without constantly having the sight line blocked by traffic. Finds were sorted on site, again a common practice, and much was discarded that would now be kept - fragments of tile, bone and even pottery were thrown away on site without much attempt at quantification, perhaps just a note to record that tile fragments for example were present. Still less was the potential of environmental evidence realised and systematic sampling for this purpose was virtually unknown.

In 1972 a joint attempt was made by the Museum and the Archaeology Department at the University to provide some sort of co-ordinated archaeological cover for the rest of the county, outside Leicester itself, under the aegis of the Leicestershire Archaeological Committee on which many of the proliferating local societies were represented as well as the Department of the Environment. Through this body a number of small excavations were undertaken by various directors at sites in Leicestershire and Rutland.

1971 perhaps marks the first point at which the transition from then to now can be pinned down, in the excavation of a large area of the south wing of the forum at the corner of St. Nicholas Circle. This was the first of a series of really large scale operations and while some elements of the old ways still lingered, the beginnings of the new can also be seen in retrospect. Apart from the scale of the excavation, which lasted nine months and covered an area of 405sq m, this was the first site in Leicester on which a determined effort was made to examine and record all the medieval deposits as well as the Roman. Indeed to begin with we had a vision of simply peeling back the centuries and progressing systematically backwards in time. This was the first site too on which Terry Pearce made his appearance, also, briefly, Patrick Clay and Peter Liddle, - indeed it was probably through Terry Pearce’s influence that the medieval archaeology of Leicester began to receive its proper attention. Nevertheless many of the old ways continued. Despite the large area opened up, much of it was still excavated in boxes, finds were still discarded, measurements were still made in feet and inches.

During the winter of 1971-2 determined efforts were made to protect the site from the weather so that excavation could continue. Most of these took the form of fairly ramshackle shelters of scaffold poles and plastic sheeting but new technology was brought into play in the form of a large plastic bubble inflated by an electric motor (illus. 2). Unfortunately this was the winter of the electricity strike, so that when the power was cut off diggers were to be seen fleeing incontinently from the collapsing bubble. In addition the bubble proved unable to resist the rigours of an English winter
combined with the very uneven surface on which it was erected. The constant collapse and re-inflation ripped more and more tears in the plastic which were countered by burying more and more of it in the ground, so the bubble grew smaller and smaller through the winter until getting out of the doorway with a full wheelbarrow became at least a two-man job.

Later in 1972 Terry Pearce directed excavations at South Croxton moated site (Pearce and Mellor 1986) and this was the first time that the Museum had any direct involvement in large scale excavation in the county - the site was funded by DoE but administered through and by the Museum. Meanwhile in Leicester another long slit trench was excavated across the line of the defences on Newarke Houses car-park though this time the size and position of the trench was dictated more by the plans for the new building than by archaeological considerations.

The 1970s were a time of development boom and concern was growing among archaeologists all over the country that the existing, mostly ad hoc, arrangements were simply inadequate to meet the situation. The Council for British Archaeology and the newly formed organisation Rescue, the British Archaeological Trust, were leading campaigners at this time and the Department of the Environment responded by encouraging the establishment of archaeological units to cover the archaeology of many towns and larger areas. These were set up in local authorities, within museums, university departments and as a variety of independent trusts, and many received core
funding from the DoE. This movement coincided in 1974 with local government re-organisation when Leicester City Museums became absorbed within the county structure as Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service.

From the coming together of these two events there flowed a number of consequences which together marked the beginning of the county-wide, integrated archaeological service which operates today in Leicestershire. Of course there have been further developments since then but on looking back it is clear that at some point in the mid 1970s there was a major change in direction. One immediate result of local government re-organisation and the recognition that the Museum's archaeological responsibilities were now county-wide was the creation of the new post of Archaeological Survey Officer still funded by DoE and based within the Department of Antiquities. Peter Liddle's first job was the compilation of the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for the county and the drafting of the two publications on *The Present State of Knowledge of the Archaeology of Leicestershire* (Liddle 1982A, 1982B). In order to build on the 'present state' a programme of field survey was needed and so the fieldworkers were born. This attempt to utilise and integrate the efforts and enthusiasm of amateur archaeologists has been a pattern for similar operations elsewhere in the country, but the story of its development belongs mainly to Peter Liddle and the Survey Team.

Meanwhile core-funding for the Unit from DoE, albeit on an annual basis, meant that from about 1973 onwards it was possible to retain a 'permanent' team to carry out excavations and follow through with the post-excavation work of analysis and writing-up. The word 'permanent' however hardly reflects the position accurately. Apart from the posts of Senior and Assistant Field Archaeologist the rest of the Unit which by now also included John Lucas, Patrick Clay and Deborah Sawday was entirely dependent on funding being forthcoming from DoE so that there was no security of tenure, no pay for sick leave or holidays, even statutory ones, and the level of payment was in any case appallingly low even for those days. In 1975 for example, Patrick Clay, John Lucas, Deborah Sawday and Peter Liddle were classed as 'labourers' and paid £4.00 per day. Nevertheless by careful planning and husbanding of resources and a sympathetic ear from the DoE it was possible to bring about some improvements. By 1978 the strength of the Survey operation had been enhanced by two Survey Assistants, initially Lynn Barrow and Martin Winter and the total salaries for 4 field officers, Survey Officer and two Survey Assistants came to just over £20,000. During this time there was more overlap between the work of the Survey Team and LAU; roles were less clearly defined. For example, Terry Pearce began the process of close liaison with Jim Pickering over the aerial cover of the county and took part in the flights though the plotting and archiving were carried out by Lynn Barrow. When Fred Hartley replaced Lynn in the Survey Team, however, he soon took a firm grip on both aspects of this work which he still retains (Pickering and Hartley 1986).

Despite the fact that the Unit was part of a county-wide service during the mid 1970s, most of the excavation was taking place in Leicester itself in advance of major re-developments. It is to this period that the excavations the Austin Friars (Mellor and Pearce 1981), Great Holme Street (Lucas forthcoming), the Blackfriars pavement (Clay and Mellor 1985) and the Norfolk Street villa (Lucas forthcoming) belong and once again changes in archaeological approaches can be seen. Larger open area excavations were becoming the norm, some preceded by trial trenching, or what we now call evaluation. The value and potential of all kinds of evidence and of its statistical importance was beginning to be appreciated with consequences in the amount and range of material recovered and retained - with further implications in terms of storage space
and post-excavation work. It was during this time and particularly in relation to the major post-excavation work stemming from the Austin Friars, that members of the Unit staff developed specialisations and in particular expertise in different types of material. It was also at the Austin Friars that a systematic programme of environmental sampling was undertaken for the first time in Leicestershire (illus. 4).

During this time the Senior and Assistant Field Archaeologists were still based in an office at Newarke Houses Museum and, when not on site, the rest of the Unit occupied what is now the Education area at Jewry Wall. This situation came to an end in 1976-7 when the Humberstone Drive Annexe was acquired by the Museums and first the Field Officers and then the Senior and Assistant Field Archaeologists moved into these premises. It was about this time as well - in 1975 - that the first negotiations took place concerning the archaeological provision to be made as part of a major re-development in the City centre behind the High Street - the site finally excavated in 1988-9 in advance of
Excavation of a Bronze Age round barrow at Sproxton in 1978

the Shires re-development. Indeed in 1978 this development appeared so imminent that DoE made a grant of £10,000 towards the excavation which, at the time, seemed to be reasonable provision. It is perhaps worth noting that when this site was finally dug ten years later, the total cost for the excavation and post-excavation was approaching half a million pounds - a measure not only of inflation but of changes in archaeological practice. When the prospect of the High Street development receded again the grant was transferred with DoE agreement to excavations on the Norfolk Street villa - another indication of the way things have changed; this would not happen today.

Excavations at Norfolk Street in the late 1970s and, in the county, of the barrows at Sproxton (illus. 5) and Eaton were carried out with a labour force largely provided by STEP, on which Richard Buckley made his first appearance. STEP (Special Temporary Employment Programme) was one of a series of government initiatives to combat the problem of unemployment during the later 1970s and 80s. Employers provided work experience and a certain amount of training for those who qualified under the scheme and received as an incentive a per capita grant for materials and equipment. To be accepted by the unions the work undertaken by STEP had to be work which could not be done by existing staff. Archaeology easily qualified under this ruling and all over the country the various schemes run by the Manpower Services Commission provided a vital source of funding and labour for both excavation and post-excavation work.
Norfolk Street and Sproxton were also notable in being LAU's first serious forays into the realms of public presentation. Both sites were highly 'visual', presenting the layman or woman with features they could at least see even if not immediately comprehend. Open days were held on both sites preceded by publicity in the *Leicester Mercury* and on Radio Leicester and on both the Unit was overwhelmed by the response both in terms of numbers of visitors and in the interest and encouragement which was expressed. For a variety of reasons it was not possible to follow this initiative through in subsequent years and it was not until 1986 that it was possible to pick it up again.

Despite the injections of both national and local government funds into archaeology during the 1970s, the scale of the problem was only just beginning to become apparent. This was partly a result of the survey programmes which had been inaugurated during these years which led to the identification of many more sites. Also more sophisticated techniques were being developed of looking at the sites and indeed the landscape as a whole and archaeologists were beginning to realise that although much had already been lost and damaged, there was still a vast amount of information to be recorded and recovered, while the pace of its destruction was still increasing.

Many of the SMR and County Archaeologist posts established in the 1970s were within local authority planning departments and so were well placed to comment on the archaeological implications of planning applications and thereby to attempt to control the rate of destruction and to ensure that some provision was made for archaeological recording. This integration with and use of the planning system is perhaps the most important single development of the last 25 years. In Leicestershire this role was seized by Anne Graf of the Survey Team and she, together with colleagues in similar positions elsewhere in the country, has continued to explore and extend the possibilities offered by the planning system. There is still very little direct and overt archaeological legislation and it has been a matter of seeing and seizing the opportunities offered by planning legislation in general, with the support and guidance of the DoE and more recently English Heritage.

The increased scale of excavations, coupled with the realisation that all material from a site should be retained, and the activities of the survey team and the fieldworkers was already having the predicted effect. Material from excavations could no longer be accommodated at Jewry Wall and space had to be found at LAU's headquarters in the Humberstone Drive Annexe. In 1979 the problem was solved by acquiring mobile classrooms for staff offices while the original working space was converted to storage. The mobile classrooms were seen as a temporary solution - one which has now lasted for 13 years, and the pressure on space is once again becoming acute.

In 1982 agreement was reached between the County Council and DoE to transfer the Unit staff, then 4 Field Officers and a Roman Pottery Assistant, to the permanent establishment of the County Council; the Survey staff had already been transferred under a previous agreement. The transfer took place over three years and at last put an end to the insecurity and uncertainty of the previous 10 years and was followed a year or two later by re-grading. However before the transfer process was complete the archaeological functions of DoE had been transferred to the new quango the Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission (English Heritage) and yet another new era had begun.

Since the mid-1980s change seems to have become a way of life; no sooner have we adapted to meet one change than another is upon us and the pace is becoming ever faster. The realisation by English Heritage that its budget was quite inadequate to meet the demands of archaeologists led to increasingly rigorous demands for research designs, forward costings and closer monitoring of projects. Project funding
6. Public presentation: painting the hoardings surrounding the Shires excavations.

was with us and soon afterwards came project management with its cascade charts, flow diagrams, endless form-filling and tight budgetary control. Meanwhile archaeologists had learned to work within and use the planning system to control the increasing pace of destruction of an archaeological resource the very extent of which the Sites and Monuments Records and survey programmes were only just beginning to demonstrate. Both national and local government funds were proving to be inadequate to meet the demands made on them; the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) proved a source of salvation for a few years in Leicestershire as in many other parts of the country. From 1986-88 LAU ran a Community Archaeology Programme which enabled excavations at Mountsorrel, Oakham, Humberstone, Blaston and Medbourne to be undertaken as well as a number of smaller projects, and which also contributed to the Shires excavation. At last it was possible to build into the projects a planned programme of display, presentation and public information culminating in the Shires project which was entered for the Virgin Group Award in the British Archaeological Awards in 1990 for the best public presentation of an archaeological project during the preceding two years and which was
highly commended (illus. 6). The de-mise of the MSC Community Pro-gramme scheme in August 1988 meant that once again this aspect of our activities had to be curtailed.

During the later 1980s archaeology saw the withdrawal of MSC funding and the increasing in-ability of both national and local government funds to meet the situation became apparent. Both excavation and post-excavation work are, and continue to be, highly labour intensive and require skilled and experienced people who are at last beginning to be paid something approaching the rate for the job. We are also beginning to realise just how much information can be wrung from a site and its material using the appropriate and developing techniques of excavation, recording and analysis and this in turn leads to higher and higher costs. The days of 'one man and a dog' are long over - though happily there is still room for the enthusiastic and dedicated amateur and, I hope, there always will be.

More and more over the last few years archaeology has come to rely on 'developer funding', at last with clearer and stronger government backing in the DoE Planning & Policy Guidelines issued in November 1990 (PPG16). Over the last couple of years the LAU Field Officers have transformed themselves into 'project officers' running several excavation and post-excavation projects simultaneously at various stages and trying to respond to pressure for publicity, public information, display, presentation while retaining budgetary and organisational control and maintaining the academic integrity of each project. Humberstone Drive Annexe is once again short of space, not only for storage but for working space and equipment for the excavation directors who now have to be brought in to direct the site and to write at least the initial report.

I am happy to be able to say that the job of Senior Field Archaeologist now is nothing like that of the Assistant Keeper in 1965 - if it were it would be an admission of total failure. The last twenty five years have seen the Unit grow in numbers, expand in terms of the geographical area covered and in terms of activities and responsibilities. During 1991 the Unit undertook excavations and evaluations throughout the county - in Melton Mowbray, Market Harborough, Oakham, Normanton-le-Heath, Tixover, Croft Hill, Shipley Hill as well as on several sites in Leicester itself including probably the largest and certainly most complex operation ever carried out in the City at Causeway Lane. All of these were funded by the developers to fulfil their obligations under PPG16. This scale of operation, which is adding immeasurably to our understanding of how Leicestershire came to be the way it is today through the constant interaction of past people with their environment, would hardly be possible without the basic core staff within the Unit and the Survey Team to provide direction and management. The archaeological service has expanded through the role of the survey team and more recently with a Display Assistant, and there is the potential for a totally integrated county service though this has yet to be fully realised. Pay and security have improved for the core staff and at last for the contract workers. Archaeology has at last been integrated into the planning process so that sites should not be destroyed totally without record - though there are still problems with the level of response. On the other hand there looms the threat to the county tier of local government which could have serious implications for the way in which archaeology is organised in Leicestershire, and there is the growth of competitive tendering in archaeology. If archaeology becomes wholly developer-led, there is the danger that we shall lose sight of any strategic or research framework; there is the lack of any coherent and recognised training or career structure and there is still the question of funding. Many Units like LAU are
seriously overstretched in terms of what they know they should be doing. There seems every prospect that the next twenty-five years will be as full of change and challenge as the last.

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