

Books

Victorian Engineering, by L. T. C. Rolt. *Penguin*. 200pp, 76 plates. Paperback, 75p.

THE DEATH of L. T. Rolt in 1974 took from us a uniquely humane and literate historian of engineering and industry. In this paperback edition of a book first published in 1970, we are furnished with the evidence to support his view that "the achievements of (Victorian) British engineers brought about the greatest social revolution that the world had ever seen". Each receives due credit—the railway builders, the pioneers of steam power, iron founders, engineers of various callings. A final chapter, brief but perceptive, carries the story forward to the 20th century and hints only too clearly at our missed opportunities and lost engineering initiatives.

This book, one of the last by Mr. Rolt, can be read both for enlightenment and for enjoyment. Although the author depends mainly on documentary sources (and provides a reliable, well-pruned bibliography), this is a work deserving of study by every archaeologist, as well as the historian. Why? Because its writer combines factual reliability with an immensely readable style; and above all he shows on every page an awareness that it is people, not things, that create history—and it is people, not things, that must be the primary concern of the archaeologist.

Fieldwork in Industrial Archaeology, by Kenneth Major. *Batsford*. 176pp, 39 plates and 28 figures (all by the author). Hardback £4.50, paperback £2.95.

A FEW YEARS ago, I was prevailed upon to write some introductory notes on surveying for *the London Archaeologist*. Had Kenneth Major's book been available then, I would have declined the invitation with a clear conscience; for he has produced a long-needed guide that will greatly assist those who have acquired an interest in our past, but who are hesitant about going out into the field to document the surviving evidence.

I have written "our past" and not limitingly "our industrial past", because this is a book to be read with profit by anyone who feels (wrongly) that the recording of physical remains—of whatever period—is to be undertaken by the select few, certainly beyond the ability of the interested amateur.

That being said, it must of course be conceded that this book is primarily intended for the industrial archaeologist, and Mr. Major therefore concentrates on the recording of standing structures rather than on excavation techniques. But once the buried structure has been uncovered, its recording is a task essentially similar to the recording of remains above ground; and it is in the description of the basically

simple techniques of a measured survey that this book is so very valuable.

Having a remarkably co-operative publisher, Mr. Major is able not only to describe in words the procedure he adopted to record a typical structure (a Devonshire water-mill), but also to reproduce his original field sketches and the final scale drawings. This must surely be sufficient to persuade the veriest tyro that field recording involves no specialist techniques: it is simply the methodical application of a straightforward approach.

In other chapters, Mr. Major deals with the scope of fieldwork in industrial archaeology; background research (a useful introduction to the available archive sources); photography; and publication. Each subject is covered in a sound, sensible, and practical way.

This is an excellent book even at today's daunting prices, and one worth reading by every archaeologist, whether flourishing, budding, or seedling.

MICHAEL BUSSELL

Field Monuments in the London Borough of Ealing, by C. H. Keene, *Technical Services Group of the London Borough of Ealing* (1975), £1.00.

THE recommendations of the Committee of Enquiry into the Arrangements for the Protection of Field Monuments 1966-8 'showed the need for a consolidated record of all known field monuments'. This record was to be compiled by the local authority and as a result the London Borough of Ealing produced this booklet.

The booklet is divided into three sections, Introduction, Discussion of various categories of Field Monuments, and Conclusions; a Bibliography and source, the list of Field Monuments and four maps showing the location of sites and finds.

Unfortunately this booklet does not begin to list all known field monuments, there are numerous omissions, inaccuracies and misprints. Probably the most serious omission is the Palaeolithic kill site at Fentelow Lane, Norwood Green, one of the few Lower or Middle Palaeolithic kill sites in the British Isles. Derek Roe's *Gazeteer of British Lower and Middle Palaeolithic Sites* lists fifty-nine find spots in Ealing compared to fourteen in the booklet. Roe's gazeteer is not mentioned in the bibliography and source list and neither is Wymer's important book *Lower Palaeolithic Archaeology in Britain*. The recently excavated blade industry from Creffield Road, Acton, is not mentioned. Also a site at Ealing Common is listed as producing Neolithic flints and pottery. This much neglected site is situated be-

tween Woodgrange Avenue and Granville Gardens, Ealing (TQ1895 8036), where in 1906-7 Mesolithic flints were found by F. N. Haward. There is no mention in Haward's notes of any pottery found on the site.

The intention behind the production of this booklet must be applauded but it is unfortunate that the numerous omissions and inaccuracies seriously mar its usefulness. ROBERT LANCASTER

Ancient Mosaics, by Michael Avi-Yonah; **Origins of the Alphabet**, by Joseph Naveh; **Marine Archaeology**, by Elisha Linder and Avner Raban; **Weapons of the Ancient World**, by Rivka Gonen; and **Introducing Prehistory**, by Avraham Ronen. *Cassell's Introducing Archaeology Series*, Nos. 5-9. Approx 90pp. £1.50.

THESE books form part of a series designed for "the general reader in archaeology" and also as "introductory primers for students taking archaeology". Other titles include ancient pottery, scrolls and jewellery, with further books in preparation. While useful as preliminary surveys for the newcomer to archaeology, particularly in schools, they lack the detail to be anything more than general introductions. It is therefore surprising that none of the books have a bibliography or a guide to further reading. All the series were originally published in Israel and written by prominent archaeologists there. This gives most of the books a pronounced eastern

Mediterranean slant although it does introduce sites and finds not widely known in this country. This is particularly true of *Ancient Mosaics* and *Marine Archaeology* which are also the best of the five books.

Ancient Mosaics gives a good account of the development of this art form from the earliest pre-Hellenistic examples to the late Byzantine era. However the author is mainly concerned with the artistic changes in mosaic work and there is little attempt to discuss the information on social and economic life that can be gained from them. British mosaics are only briefly discussed and the important and accessible discoveries at Fishbourne are not mentioned. For anybody specifically interested in Britain, Ann Rainey's recently published book is of much more use. *Marine Archaeology* contains a comprehensive if brief study of this subject. After sections on the history and techniques of underwater archaeology there are discussions on specific wrecks and their economic significance. The book also deals with the excavation of submerged cities and harbour works, including the unfortunate fate of the excavations at Acre.

As a whole the series are well produced and the photographs of good quality. However one feels the publishers would have been wiser to produce a new series more specifically directed at British readers.

GEOFF MARSH

Soil Science and Archaeology, by Susan Limbrey. *Academic Press*. 384pp, £8.40.

"IS IT natural?" must be the Second Plaintive Archaeological Plea, second only to "it's in the baulk!" Archaeologists who read this book hoping to find the answer will be disappointed. As Susan Limbrey points out, the distinction between supposedly archaeological deposits and "the natural" is itself unnatural and arbitrary. The uses to which a land surface is put can affect the soil well down into "natural," and by ignoring this the archaeologist could be rejecting useful information.

What the reader will find is a great deal of soil science, much of it apparently very technical and not obviously relevant to the archaeologist. This impression is perhaps misleading: if we are to really understand the deposits we encounter on sites, a good deal of background knowledge will be required. Otherwise we will be treating them as containers for finds rather than information in their own right.

There are faults in this book, however. It is not easy to read and the illustrations are few and often not particularly illuminating. The answer is to read the last few chapters and dip into the rest as required. It may seem expensive, but information, like anything else, must be paid for. And what, really, is the alternative?

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