

Books

Hounslow As It Was

Hounslow and District

Historical Society. 70 pl. £1.50.

A SELECTION of photographs from the Hounslow Public Library's Local History Collection, with descriptive captions, published by the Hounslow and District History Society. The area covered by this book is that of the "Urban Sanitary District of Heston and Isleworth", which was formed in 1875, and comprises the town of Hounslow and the villages of Cranford, Heston and Isleworth and spans 60 years or so from the mid 1860's, the photographs of each area being arranged chronologically to show the development from independent rural communities to the beginnings of the anonymous autonomous automated amorphous amalgam that we know today. (Seriously though, we do have an enlightened council).

As with other publications by the Society, this book is well produced and in some cases the reproductions look in better condition than the original photographs! In many of them the stiffly formal groups of people dictated by the photographer and the photographic processes of the time give the flavour of Victorian life as they stand looking at the camera outside their shops or the many (alas now defrocked and demolished) pubs. That flavour is of a leisurely life with little evidence of the coming holocaust of traffic — the horse drawn traffic and early trams mix happily with the fashionably dressed children in the streets, with the proud proprietors outside their establishments with the intriguing advertisements and signs long since vanished, the firemen with their first steam engine, the postman on parade alongside the horse powered Royal Mail Coach (all first class!) the Jubilee (1897 vintage) celebrations when there seemed to be more bunting across the High Street than for the 1977 celebrations!

All the seventy photographs of the Borough of yesteryear add up, with the commentary, to a vivid record of memories and nostalgia for inhabitant and visitor alike. They can also provoke some questions, such as "How many pubs once were there?" and what was "Sich's Entire Fine Chiswick Ales" that were available at the *Bell* c. 1899 (Photograph No. 1). In this photo the ratio of police to customers standing outside is 2 to 5, a sobering pre-breathaliser reflection. How wide was the High Street before the demolitions in 1899 to accommodate the trams (No. 8)? And does perhaps someone know the identity of the man standing *outside* the Cranford High Street village lock-up c. 1890 (No. 31), or have copies of the destroyed file editions of the Middlesex Chronicle between 1863 and 1865? (Contact me).

There are unfortunately no reproductions of appropriate maps, but this was not possible for several reasons, including the extra expense involved. However, there are quite a number of the buildings still standing today so that the amateur historian/detectives can see for themselves the changes that have taken place since the photographs were taken.

It is for me an enjoyable change from roman pot to see this 'living archaeology' and I look forward with pleasure to similar volumes for Brentford and Chiswick and Feltham which the society intend to produce, they will solve some problem presents.

MIKE COTTON

Blackheath Village and its Environs — 1790 - 1970, by Neil Rhind.

Bookshop Blackheath Ltd. 251 pp. 70 pl. £5.

THE LOCAL HISTORY of a settlement usually tends towards one of two diametrically opposite approaches : a brief account of a wide variety of very loosely linked facts and figures concerned with major buildings, major people, and a wide area around the settlement, or an unemotional gathering of facts and figures which are wholly objective and based around a framework of economic conditions. Both approaches are correct, and both serve different groups of people. The former attracts the general reader, the latter the geographer, historian and economist.

This book may be said (thankfully!) to fall between the two extremes. Mr. Rhind has concentrated here upon the core of Blackheath village by defining the village as that roughly triangular area around the small valley of the Kid Brook which in the late 18th century was bounded upon the south and east by the Page estate, to the west of the estate of the Manor of Lewisham, and to the north by the Common. It was in this area that small parcels of land were granted freehold or leased by the landowners to their tenants, so forming the edge of this triangle. By 1780, the village was a handful of settlements along the link-roads from Greenwich to Lee, Lewisham and Eltham. This is Mr. Rhind's introduction to a book crammed full with shopkeepers, businessmen, hoteliers, housewives and even the occasional rogue. Every site within the Village has been researched from numerous sources (a full bibliography is included) to present an almost complete history of the site and its owners whilst occupied. Gaps are inevitable, but Mr. Rhind has clearly researched so exhaustively that continuity is almost complete in every case. Each chapter concerns itself with one particular road, block or estate, the last chapter deal-

ing with Arts and Community Life. The 70 photographs and numerous local adverts cover a long time period and are in every case relevant. This is a reference book of the highest order and a delight to read for the earnest historian and layman alike. I hope the second volume on the Heath and the Estate bordering it is of an equally high standard.

ROD FITZGERALD

The First Civilisations,

by Jacquetta Hawkes, Pelican. 522 pages with 14 pp of plates, and 4 maps. £2.25.

THIS SCHOLARLY VOLUME deals in great detail with the evidence but also the problems and theories regarding Sumer, Egypt and the Indus Valley where arose cultures in settlements thriving on primitive agriculture: riverine regions where the peoples harnessed seemingly intractable rivers for the irrigation of crops in their "Neolithic Revolution". These communities later developed what were called "cities" often because each was an independent political unit with its own king and deity. By our standards they would hardly be "towns" and far from grand. The houses were of mud-brick, so were the community walls, the temples, and that pride of each of them the ziggurat. As Jacquetta Hawkes puts it, "The mud of the Valley of the Twin Rivers was forced into brick-moulds and hardened in the sun". Good soil, agriculture, some elementary technology and social stratification may have made the necessary groundwork, but what except imaginative power lifted inert mud into the fantastic ziggurat with its crowning temple, or the resistant mass of rock into a gleaming pyramid?

The prosperity of Sumer depended on its irrigated fields: the beginning of this system (about 4,000 B.C.) and its collapse (about 2,000 B.C.) also delineate the beginning and end of Sumerian history. The area is the southernmost region of the "Mesopotamia" of Classical times and now "Iraq". Its earliest people called it Sumer and so drew to themselves the name of "Sumerians". Our first difficulty is to define "civilisation" itself. Originally it referred to the quality of citizens and therefore the Greeks, exemplified by Strabo, classified peoples without cities as uncivilised. The notion has remained with Western man until very recent times. Yet now that our disintegrating cities become increasingly barbarous while new modes of travel and communication make it possible to enjoy most of what is meant by civilised life far away from them, sociologists say that civilisation cannot be identified with urban living, indeed that it never should have been. They now claim that in Egypt, for example, civilization came into being without true cities. Man's first creation of civilization in the great valley of the Tigris and Euphrates makes clear

why it was identified with walled cities not only by Greeks and Romans but by those moderns who first put a social interpretation upon the revelations of archaeology. Gordon Childe making a close study of the rise of Sumerian civilization seems to have identified the establishment of such cities as Uruk, Lagash, and Ur with the dawn of civilization. Later, however, he saw the city as the "resultant and symbol" of the urban revolution. This implies acceptance of the historical fact that this criteria for civilization had evolved *before* the appearance of the fully-fledged city. This is "what happened in history" yet it can be accepted that in Mesopotamia the urban revolution followed so closely on the heels of civilization that they were a single process. Maybe the whole argument is just one of the follies of trying to impose intellectual analyses on the organic flow of life. The first need of people to become civilised was greater steadier food supply: a productivity far beyond subsistence level. The flood plains of the Tigris-Euphrates, the Nile, and the Indus had the necessary potential: their level valley-floors offered unlimited water supply and the feasibility of irrigation: their alluvial soil once drained was immensely fertile and so maintained by annual floods which spread fresh silt on the fields. They also offered long distance water transport both for goods and people.

Once food production exceeded family needs for survival people could practise both crafts and professions. Social structure came to depend on the place and the work which the people did. The next step was the transfer of surplus wealth to a ruling élite variously interpreted as the people's wish or by extortion: probably spontaneous tribute to gods and their earthly representatives ultimately hardened into reluctant payment of taxes. Temples, palaces, citadels, city walls, and the equipment of armies prompted human imagination and the rulers' love of power. Yet craftsmen, sculptors, architects, fighting men and the élite all needed a merchant class to import metals, wood, and stone as well as such rarities as lapis lazuli, turquoise, and sweet gums. Silver and copper next began their long career as common tender.

The materialist Gordon Childe sums up the story as "accumulating wealth, increasing specialization, and expanding trade" but for Man's mental growth adds writing and number, exact observation and calculation which could be called scientific. Yet men have lived on well watered fertile lands without achieving civilization and also created civilizations in seemingly poor environments. Their efforts were often devoted to wild fantasies: raising artificial mountains for men-gods or building millions of tons of rock into geometric form to receive the corpses of god-men.

The Indus is the most spectacular of the three

historic rivers with which we are concerned. From its glacial source 17,000 feet above sea level it flows 650 miles north west through the most awe-inspiring scenery in the world, then breaches the Himalayas in great gorges, is joined by the Kabul from Afghanistan and reaches the plain of Attock well within Pakistan remaining therein for the rest of its journey. Its last major tributaries are the "five rivers" of the Punjab. Yet there is a wide sterile gap between the northern Punjab territories centred on Harappa and the southern Sind-territories centred on Mohenjo-daro just 350 miles from Harappa. It is now accepted that the Bronze Age agriculture of the Indus Valley depended upon irrigation and annual silt-bearing floods caused like their counterparts in Egypt and Mesopotamia by melting snows and glaciers : erratic and more like those of the Tigris-Euphrates than the steady pulse of the Nile.

One cannot touch, however lightly, on even a tithe of the topics so completely dealt with by Jacquetta Hawkes and it is unthinkable not to add an equal appreciation of Prof. J. H Plumb's brief but masterly Introduction in which he stresses that it is with the experience of men in society that the Series ("The History of Human Society") is primarily concerned. Moreover, the story of man's fluctuating progress over the centuries though studded with pitfalls and streaked with disaster ought to strengthen both hope and will. Yet, throughout the ages most men have derived pitifully little from their brief existence. Loss and defeat are evidenced as well as hope.

The uncovering of the archaeological record in all three of these vast regions has taken only a century and a half and no doubt more tombs and papyri will be revealed in Egypt, and more royal graves and clay tablets in Mesopotamia, while the language of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa may yet yield its secrets. Meantime a careful study of this vast comprehensive work of Jacquetta Hawkes is to be strenuously advocated.

E. LIONEL FEREDAY

Spatial Archaeology, ed. D. L. Clarke (1977)
Academic Press. 386 pp. many figs., £9.50.

THE EARLY DEATH of David Clarke was a sad blow to British archaeology. Although relatively little known outside academic circles, his work has led to the development of approaches and techniques whose fruits may not be seen by the general reader for, perhaps, five or ten years. This book can be seen as a small memorial by some of those who had come under his influence.

David Clarke's introductory chapter sets the scene by describing the development of "spatial archaeology" (i.e. studies which concentrate on the two horizontal dimensions rather than the vertical or time dimension), and outlining the various "levels of reso-

lution", from domestic to regional.

We then start at the lowest level with *An Analysis of Historical House-plans* by Peter Dickens. He manages to make the study of simple house-plans appear more difficult than one would have thought possible, partly by the questionable and badly explained use of the chi-squared statistic.

Moving up the scale, Roland Fletcher's *Settlement Studies* examines a modern Ghanaian settlement and a 17th century pueblo, from the point of view of the spacings that make up the settlements. All spacing are grist to his mill: wall lengths, post spacings, doorwidths etc., and the statistical analysis seems to ignore the lack of independence that this sort of approach is likely to bring. The average reader is likely to finish feeling stupid and confused, even if he has been able to translate "residence unit" into "house", "reduction in local timber resources" into "cutting down trees" and so on.

Robert Foley's chapter *Space and Energy* seeks to provide an alternative to the technique of site catchment analysis for assessing the "value" of a habitat around an archaeological site. There is much food for thought in his contribution, but its relevance to archaeology seems a little remote — to get started at all one would have to make so many assumptions (e.g. about "palaeo-precipitation" as he calls it) to invalidate the whole exercise. He acknowledges that there is a major problem here, but presses on nevertheless, apparently on the grounds that there is so much inaccuracy in archaeology that a little more won't really matter (p 175).

From subsistence to urban life : R. A. Raper's *Analysis of Urban Structure of Pompeii* is a long overdue look at the famous ruins from a sociological point of view. He rightly rejects a materialistic ecology in favour of one that takes account of man's social as well as his economic activities. The amount of information needed to study urban structure in this way could set a target for excavators for years to come.

The longest contribution is Ian Hodder's *Some New Directions in the Spatial Analysis of Archaeological Data at the Regional Scale*. Full of interesting ideas and examples, only some of which have already appeared in *Spatial Analysis in Archaeology*, it will be of great use to the would-be synthesizer, but less to the local worker. The latter may, however, be interested to see what is happening to the concept of a "culture."

We finish with the easiest paper for the general reader : Peter Danks's *Some Observations on Medieval and Post-medieval Artefact Distributions*. His area is East Anglia and his topic is distribution and marketing. Readers will be interested to see the density of markets in the middle ages, but many be less

impressed by the study of the distribution of Lowestoft porcelain.

To sum up, this book contains many interesting ideas and some bad statistics and opaque language. Readers may share my feeling that theory seems to be running ahead of archaeological reality in much of this area. I cannot recommend it as a purchase, but selective use of a copy may give the researcher a new inspiration or insight.

CLIVE ORTON

The Excavation of an 11th Century Viking Hall and 14th Century Rooms at Waltham Abbey, Essex, 1969-1971, by P. J. Huggins. Reprinted from *Medieval Archaeology* Vol 20 (1976). Price 80p + 16p postage from R. C. Gray, 64 Honey Lane, Waltham Abbey, Essex.

YET ANOTHER in a long line of excellent excavation reports to come from Waltham Abbey. The principal discovery reported here is a rectangular late-Viking turf-walled hall of aisled construction of a type well known from the northern Viking world but previously unreported from England. This is possibly the hunting lodge built by Tovi le Prude who held estates at Waltham Abbey under Cnut. There was some pre-hall occupation which took the form of shallow pits, gullies and a stormwater ditch. Pottery from the ditch included sherds of Badorf relief-band amphora and Ipswich ware.

The medieval remains uncovered consisted of domestic rooms of the abbey. One room had a group of eleven glazed floor tiles of the 'Westminster Tiler' type *in situ*. The buildings were demolished soon after the dissolution of 1540. There was some robbing in the 17th century.

There is a short section on the documentary evidence by K. N. Bascombe. The pottery report by Rhona Huggins is useful and cautious, it covers material from the 9th to the 17th century. Other reports cover the small finds, floor tiles, building materials, jettons, a bulla and a Roman coin, food debris, pollen analysis (inconclusive due to corrosion of the pollen grains), and finally a most interesting piece of lead with an incised alphabet on one face. This was found in the loam used to construct the walls of the Viking hall and should date from the 9th to the early 11th century.

This is an important and useful report for students of the London area in the post-Roman period, a period which for too long has been the Cinderella of London's archaeology.

ROBERT LANCASTER

The Plundered Past : the Traffic in Art Treasures by Karl E. Meyer. Penguin 303pp. 10pl. £1.50.

'AMERICANS love Art', said Nancy Mitford, 'they even call their children it'. This interesting book tells us how they kill the things they love : by each let it be read. During the past twenty-five years, prices in

the art market have multiplied at least ten, and in some cases as much as forty, times, with disastrous results. 'More than any other single element', writes the author, 'the increase in art prices has been responsible for the wholesale theft, mutilation and destruction of art everywhere in the world'.

Mr. Meyer lists in an appendix all the major art thefts from 1911 to 1976. Most of them are pictures : at least it is in the interests of those who steal them that paintings should be preserved. The fate of antiquities looted from archaeological sites is more sinister, and it is with this bitter story that Mr. Meyer is chiefly concerned.

During the 1960's, the great museums of America held acquisition to be their foremost duty. Competition raged ; prices soared ; new fashions for hitherto neglected cultures arose among collectors ; and clandestine diggers and tomb-robbers, often themselves desperately poor, strove to supply the demand. Monuments of the past were hacked to pieces, sites were mangled, tombs bulldozed : priceless information was totally destroyed. Countries such as Mexico, Turkey and India found that their cultural heritage was disappearing from under their noses and turning up again in foreign collections. The consequent rows are here described, and fascinating reading they make.

The market, rebuked, has become more cautious and more complex, though no less active. Traders in stolen antiquities, dodging the laws of their various countries, cannot provide true information about their wares, but oblige with convenient stories to simulate authenticity. When the reputed previous owner of a famous Greek vase was asked where it came from, he replied 'a hat-box': a refreshing change from the 'impoverished old family' that usually veils the draughty gaps in such pedigrees.

Mr. Meyer scarcely mentions submarine sites as more than a hopeless problem, but he writes of one find from the sea that is now in the public eye. It is a classic illustration: a great bronze statue, enormous sum paid by museum, secretive dealer, another country claiming ownership. Of course, the Adriatic is a better context than a hat-box, but where is the wreck, where the rest of the cargo ? Long ago, another bronze athlete by Lysippus caused a row that could illustrate one of the premises of this book: that great works of art are in a fundamental sense the property of all mankind. When Tiberius swiped the Epoxyomenos from the Baths of Agrippa to adorn his bedroom, public outcry forced him to return it. But knowledge of the past is also the property of mankind : once lost it is gone for ever, and it is indeed tragic that greed, nationalism, lack of public funds, corruption and inertia combine to prevent the international legislation that alone can check its destruction.

SARA PATON