

Books

Anyone for Tennis: Growing up in Wallington between the wars, by Eileen Whiteing.

London Borough of Sutton Libraries and Arts Services, 1979. 64pp. 34 plates. Price £2.95 (plus 30p postage).

"TODAY WE ARE all historians" would be an apt observation of contemporary British society which, nurtured by a long apprenticeship with the historical novel and television series, has embarked on the making of 'history' in a big way. The main catalysts in this important movement include WEA groups, local history societies, Extra Mural groups and, more recently, community groups and History Workshops. Perhaps future generations of historians and sociologists will look back at our present preoccupation with the past — especially the recent past — and see a search not only for a fuller understanding of what actually happened, but for a stronger group or personal identity in a period of rapid social and economic change. The techniques of oral history and personal memoir have vital role in these developments by making possible a sort of "instant history" which can help anchor our present in our past — at all sorts of levels — and add to an ever growing body of folk memories. Whilst everyone will welcome these developments wholeheartedly, it is important that we remain aware that both oral history and personal reminiscences may contain their own inherent pit-falls dependent upon such things as individual viewpoints, memory, written and spoken skills, etc.

Eileen Whiteing's memoir begins with a perceptive comment that "so many autobiographies reflect a very rich or a very poor background, frequently provincial; but mine belongs to the middle-class of the South, for a change, and as I grew up during the legendary Twenties and Thirties I have tried to record an accurate picture of those days, already becoming quite remote". That said, however, Eileen Whiteing takes us on a switchback ride which, although often enjoyable, left me with a feeling of emptiness at the end. A good third of the book deals not with Mrs Whiteing's "growing up" at all, but with the lives of her parents, grandparents and other near relatives which seems to have been included more for reasons of personal dedication than anything else. In Chapter Four, "Home Life", she gives a lively account of middle-class suburban living dependent, as it was, on a comfortably sized house, the rigid organisation of household space and activities, and the services of the last generation of "living-in" maids. The following chapters — "Shops and Shopkeepers", "School days", "Holidays", and

"Religion" etc — are less good, however, giving a bland and often superficial view, lacking any really informative detail. There is an overwhelming impression of life sweeping onwards, but having remarkably little personal impact for the youthful Eileen Lawrence. She admits, for instance, to remembering "vividly" the General Strike of 1926, "which we all thought rather exciting and a little bit frightening", but says nothing either of how it affected Wallington or how her parents responded to the more active goings-on in London. The book also suffers from the writer's inability to resist drawing comparisons with today whether it be attacks on children by "sexual deviates", bullying in "comprehensive schools", "vandalism" or changing prices of the "15 new pence today!" variety.

Whilst not without merit — the family photographs are particularly wide in their coverage, indicating the extent to which important source material for social history still lies relatively untapped in sideboard drawers, wardrobes, and attics — the book would have benefited from definite editing and selective expansion. Some maps would have helped give a stronger sense of place. Perhaps then we would have learned something about the impact of the wave of inter-war house building, with its new residential influx, which changed Wallington from a satellite to a suburb of London.

CHRIS ELLMERS

Archaeology of the City of London, (recent discoveries by the Department of Urban Archaeology, Museum of London). Text by John Schofield and Tony Dyson FSA, many contributors. The City of London Archaeological Trust 1980. 76 pages, semistiff, illustrated cover. The book includes plans, photographs, drawings and reconstructions to a total of about 100. £3.50, plus 60p postage, if not bought at the bookstall at the Museum of London.

THIS WORK WOULD seem to be aimed at an interested public and seeks to cover in only 76 pages the work of the Department of Urban Archaeology (DUA) in the City of London during its first six years of existence. The rate and nature of redevelopment which has taken place within the City in the 70's has caused the archaeological effort to be in the nature of rescue work. Additionally, the DUA has been able to undertake some documentary work, the results of which are included when they help the text.

There are two maps inside the covers, the one in the front locating features of the period of occupation from the Romans onwards. The rear map indicates the destruction of archaeological deposits

within the City of London over the last hundred years. In the first plan it is a pity that the route of the Underground is shown in black since this dominates the pastel shades used for the various periods. On this map its inclusion might be unnecessary, but is relevant for the Circle and District Lines on the second map.

As a general introduction the periods before the Roman invasion have been allowed to cover a much larger area than the City itself. Roman, Saxon, Medieval and Tudor London each have a separate map.

Inevitably for the Roman period, previous work, such as that of Professor Grimes is invoked, especially since the shape of the NW side of the City walls cannot otherwise be explained.

The two phases of the Forum are shown in detail, these plans being the result of collecting together a 100 years of observation on building sites in the area.

The less pretentious buildings of the artisans are dealt with, e.g. the GPO Newgate Street site. Perhaps the most exciting Roman finds which have been made are along the river front from 1965 onwards. These include the Blackfriars boat and waterfront. More recently, the remains of a monumental arch which had been demolished by the 4th century AD and used in construction of the riverside wall. Religion is included and there are single pages devoted to the stream around which life revolved, and also Roman food.

The chapter on Saxon London is of necessity much briefer and deals with four main sites. Both the photographs and the plans emphasise the necessity for careful recording of soil patterns, post holes, and organic remains, when excavating this period. Similarly, the uses to which documentary research can be put are emphasised.

For the Medieval period, the writers have drawn heavily on past documents. It is a pity that the photograph of the Medieval river revetments at Trig Lane, page 51, is so muddy and lacking in the detail which I know was present in the original photograph. Indeed this criticism can justifiably be levelled at all the photographs.

For New Fresh Wharf a commendable attempt has been made to re-create for the reader what the buildings may have looked like in the 14th century. Baynards Castle is somewhat scantily covered. Regrettably also no attempt has been made to suggest what the shape of the pots produced by potters of the Norman period may have been.

Tudor and later periods have again drawn on documents and the plan of Bridewell Palace is clear and locates it firmly in modern context.

The final chapter deals with how the discoveries are made and is rather brief, COLAS getting a rather short credit. Also mentioned are *the London Archaeologist*, *Current Archaeology* and the London & Middlesex Archaeological Society.

A short but highly selective bibliography would have been helpful, and apart from a very short list of contents, there is no index.

I cannot bring myself to like the use of sepia print throughout the text, nor also the size of the book which protrudes beyond the A4 works on the bookshelf. The publication of this book has been made possible by Mobil and all profits will help fund the City of London Archaeological Trust which supports the research activities of the Department of Urban Archaeology. The book inevitably covers more than its full title suggests and should be on the bookshelf of all who have an interest in London's past.

TED SAMMES

Croydon Airport, The Great Days 1928-1939, by Douglas Cluett, Joanna Nash and Bob Learmouth. *London Borough of Sutton Libraries and Arts Services*, 1980. 204pp. £3.50.

PUBLISHED to coincide with the celebrations of the 50th anniversary on May 5th of Amy Johnson's solo flight to Australia, this book is the second in a series of three about the history of Croydon Airport. It takes the story from the opening of the new airport buildings, with an Imperial Airways flight to Paris being the first to use the new concrete apron, until the evacuation of civil aviation from Croydon and the arrival of the RAF Gloucester Gladiators and Hurricanes in 1939.

The book can be divided into two sections. The first and longer deals with the administrative side of developing an international airport in the 1930's, the problems, opposition of local groups and crashes. While the second and more interesting, tells of the personalities who flew from Croydon. It is in this section that Amy Johnson appears briefly. Throughout one gains an impression of the rapid increase in commercial air traffic from its pioneering days until it became a well organised and nearly world wide industry.

The authors tend to refer from one chapter to another and to the first volume rather too frequently, but this is adequately compensated for by the use of well chosen quotations from contemporary sources. The black and white photographs add an atmosphere of the late 20's and 30's showing not only the aircraft and airport but the costume and attitudes of the people towards flying during the period.

This book is more than a history of flying, fliers and aeroplanes but it is also local history in the sense that it is the history of a community, whose closeknit transient population shared the joys of the successes of the early long distance flights as well as the sorrow of failure and the inevitable crashes.

HILARY ORTON

A Source Book of Windmills and Watermills, by Rex Wailes. *Ward Lock*, 1979. 128pp, £2.95.

WIND AND WATERMILLS have always attracted particular interest from industrial archaeologists and from a wider, less-specialised, public. Their appeal is easy to explain: they exude—like churches, country houses, and cottages—a feeling of “*Olde Englande*”; their siting, either on high ground to catch the wind or by water, is invariably dramatic or picturesque—often both; and, once entered, their machinery displays a functional simplicity at once pleasing and easily understood.

For those not yet “hooked” on the study of mills—molinology to the elite—this book will serve as an excellent appetiser. Its writer, Rex Wailes, is a world authority on mills, so it is no surprise that the text is informative and accompanied by many well-chosen photographs. Together these deal thoroughly and concisely with the various types of mill, their equipment, and operation.

This pocket-size hardback is one of a series entitled *Source Books*. (Other titles include *Canals, Locks and Canal Boats, Locomotives, Tractors and Farm Machinery* and *Veteran Cars*.) This book is thus of the right size and stoutness to carry about while travelling, but its usefulness as a field guide is diminished as there is no place index of the many mills described or illustrated. There is a list of mills mentioned which are open to the public, and the author notes that a full list of accessible mills and their opening times is published by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, but the lack of a site index is frustrating: to find whether a particular mill is mentioned, one has to leaf through the entire book. Likewise there is no list of photographs.

These are the only noteworthy defects in a book that should swell the ranks of serious mill students.

MICHAEL BUSSELL

Discovering Timber-Framed Buildings, by Richard Harris. *Shire Publications* 96pp. 45 line drawings and 27 photographs, paperback £1.00.

IN THIS small book Richard Harris provides a brief but very informative insight into the wonders of the timber-framed buildings of Great Britain. Not only does the book help to stimulate the imagination of the beginner, but also it gives the necessary information for him to undertake an active part in

recording these buildings before they disappear.

The abundant illustrations explain the difficult but necessarily technical terms required when recording buildings of this nature. The complete range is simply but effectively described, starting with the lowly cruck barns and houses, cottages and shops right through to the exuberant carpentry of the market halls and guildhalls — all provide a wealth of knowledge yet unseen in a book of this size.

At the end of the book Richard Harris has taken time to list various buildings which may be visited throughout the year; he has also added a simple glossary of terms which is particularly useful for the beginner.

For a mere £1.00 one can gain an insight into the intricacies involved in the construction of that part of our national heritage — the timber-framed building!

BARBARA BROWN

Elementary Surveying for Industrial Archaeologists, by Hugh Bodev & Michael Halls. *Shire Publications*, 1978. 64pp, £1.25.

THIS IS THE SECOND book on its subject to appear in recent years. (The first, Ken Major's *Fieldwork in Industrial Archaeology*, was reviewed in *J. A.* Vol. 3, No. 1). It is only one-third the length of Major's book, and relies on line drawings alone to illustrate its points, as against Major's photographs and drawings. But it is also cheaper, and the authors have used their limited space most effectively. Topics covered are land surveying (worth reading by any archaeological tyro), buildings, machinery, use of film and tape in recording, and completing the report—something that isn't always done! Excellent value at the price.

MICHAEL BUSSELL

Also Received

An East End Directory, ed Peter Marcan.

P. Marcan, 31 Rowloff Road, High Wycombe, Bucks 1979. 143 plus 10pp. pls plus 11pp sketch maps. £3.50 plus 50p p & p.

CHIEFLY an invaluable guide for the modern East Ender — where to go for almost everything (from social services to religious organisations and even centres for foreign sailors). Good bibliographies, of interest to the post-medieval archaeologist in as far as they occasionally step back towards the 18th century. Also recommended for archaeologists who to come ‘up to date’, and to all local historians. An excellent piece of work.

CHRIS GREEN