

# Books

**The London Region: An Annotated Geographical Bibliography**, by Philippa Dolphin, Eric Grant and Edward Lewis. *Manse.l Publication Ltd.*, 1981. 379 pp., 2 figs., 2 indexes. £30.00.

DESPITE ITS SUB-TITLE and its moderate size, the range of this book is impressively wide. Its terms of reference are primarily the GLC area, but taking account also of the Outer Metropolitan Area up to 65 km from the centre of London. The book is divided into nine main categories (general bibliographies and sources; general works; physical environment; historical patterns of growth; economic structures and patterns; transport; social patterns and processes; planning the metropolis; environmental problems) which are fortunately divided under up to ten, more precise, sub-headings. Within these the relevant works are arranged in chronological order (to the end of 1979), with synopses averaging fifty words apiece. The approach is expressly selective: in all there are 1900 entries, though with some necessary duplication between the categories.

Generally speaking, one could hardly expect more of a book of this scale, and, certainly as far as archaeology and history are concerned, one might have expected considerably less than the bare title would suggest. In fact, 80 of the 300 pages of main text are devoted to this fourth category, which is also usefully arranged by individual GLC boroughs. All the main publications appear to be included, and a wide range of periodicals has been diligently scanned: readers of this periodical may like to know that at least 23 articles from *the London Archaeologist* have been so honoured.

Generous as this coverage is, there are doubts as to whether the right selections have always been made. The authors sagely anticipate this inevitable reaction: certainly some books, admittedly 'outdated', justify inclusion on their own merits. But in several other cases one suspects that it is the qualities of the titles, rather than of the contents, which have determined their inclusion (or omission), and that access to more specialised knowledge would have helped here. Perhaps this is unavoidable in general bibliographies; almost as much as is the cut-off date which leaves some familiar writers rather oddly represented. Indexes of names and subjects help to track down cases which cut across or fall between the categories. Martin Biddle is the saddest victim of this: that momentous tract *The Future of London's Past* now languishes in unsplendid isolation in the ninth section, 'Environmental problems:

conservation, pollution and control' (thus, incidentally, reinforcing the point about titles and contents). The final appendix of library collections is more comprehensive than selective: in view of its scope, Guildhall Library — the repository for records generated *in* the City, rather than *of* the City (Corporation) — deserves to be placed under the heading of Academic and Special Libraries.

All this said, the value and use of this book is considerable and it is readily recommended. For all those who have felt the need of a convenient and reasonably thorough London reading list, and especially one generously disposed towards our own interests, this is the one to go for.

TONY DYSON

**Environmental Archaeology** Myra Shackley. *George Allen and Unwin*, 1981. £9.95 (paperback).

THIS IS A BOOK about methods and techniques; intellectual justifications for environmental approaches in archaeology are, sadly for an introductory text, played down. The author describes various techniques (eg pollen analysis, the study of soils, sediments, animal bones, etc) and illustrates their archaeological application. This latter aspect may be thought sufficient to justify 'environmental' studies in archaeology. Unfortunately, many of the examples cited are poor and, given the existence of an extensive body of literature, one wonders on what basis they were selected. Discussion of the examples tends to be uncritical and unilluminating. I quote one example at length (page 120): "A further example is . . . provided in the work of Fry and Adorasio (1970) (*sic*; the second author is Adovasio) who analysed coprolite data from two Archaic Indian sites and then subjected them to factor analysis stepwise discrimination and mean-linkage cluster analysis, combining the results with an analysis of intestinal parasites. Results showed that, despite geographical proximity contemporaneous occupation and cultural and ecological similarities, the sites were inhabited by socio-political groups that seldom, if ever, inhabited the other." Impressive but even if one understands the statistical jargon, it is less than coprolite-clear how one leaps from the analysis of fossil ordure to the final socio-political conclusions.

Coverage of various topics is uneven. Chapter 1, on sediments and soils, is the best, reflecting Dr. Shackley's expertise in sediment analysis. The remaining eleven chapters cover the biological evidence and range from being adequate (such as

the chapter on animal bones) to poor (eg the chapter on parasites). Each chapter has a standard format: an introduction to the nature of the evidence (often seriously misleading for some types of biological data), a section on sampling (usually good), on laboratory techniques (with excessive detail for a book of this nature) and last a selection of applications of the techniques.

This book contains more mistakes per page than any other British publication that I have read, including the *Guardian*. Some are careless typographical errors, others are serious errors of fact. The use of biological names is particularly disastrous; there is a 17% error rate for the names used in the chapter on parasites, while the appendix of Latin names and their English equivalents scores 14% errors.

I cannot recommend this book. The best general and authoritative texts available are *Introduction to Environmental Archaeology* and *The Environment of Early Man in the British Isles*. Both are written by J. G. Evans, and are available in paperback at a total cost of £6.45.

KEN THOMAS

**The Archaeology of Death**, (eds.) Robert Chapman, Ian Kinnes and Klaus Randsborg. *Cambridge University Press*, 1981. 159 pp., many fig. and plates, index, bibliog. £17.50.

"TO LOSE ONE parent may be regarded as a misfortune: to lose both looks like carelessness." Lady Bracknell's sentiments were echoed by my feelings on receiving copies of this book and of *Mortality and Immortality, the anthropology and archaeology of death* (eds. S. C. Humphreys and Helen King, Academic Press, 1981) within days of each other. Two conferences on the same theme, both in London, giving rise to two fairly expensive Proceedings, seemed a bit much, especially when I realised that one had to read both to get a balanced view of the present state of knowledge. To generalise grossly, the book under review is full of interesting things that an archaeologist might do with burial data, while its rival is full of strange funerary goings-on in obscure parts of the world which would leave either no trace, or a very confusing one, in the archaeological record. Archaeological cautionary tales, one might call them.

Clearly, one cannot review all ten contributions in a paragraph or two. In general, I found the papers relating to skeletal evidence more satisfying than those relating to associated finds or less tangible aspects of burial, and Buikstra must be mentioned for her realistic assessment of the difficulties of interpreting such evidence. Weaknesses often apparent in Conference Proceedings were present and heavier editing could have reduced the

repetitious reviews of earlier works, with their ritual obeisances towards Saxe and Binford, which at times mesmerised me into thinking I was reading the same paper several times over.

This review is more subjective than usual — concentrating on what I felt rather than what was said. But I hope this approach gives the impression that the general reader will find this book rather heavy going, the excavator with a cemetery on his hands could use it as one (but not his only) source of inspiration, and that the theoretically minded archaeologist might enjoy coming to grips with it.

CLIVE ORTON

**Fifth Century Styles in Greek Sculpture**, by Brunhilde Sismondo Ridgway. *Princeton University Press*, 1981. 245 pp. 159 pl. £31.60 (hardback), £10.50 (paperback).

THIS IS AN INTERESTING book, written as a result of the success of Professor Ridgway's earlier two volumes. It is, as she herself describes it, a cross between a handbook and a monograph. The material is logically set out, with a critical bibliography at the end of each chapter. There are voluminous footnotes and a useful glossary of the more abstruse terms. Even with such explanations, it is not a book for the uninitiated. One is expected to be familiar with a number of pieces; to understand such phrases as "Polykleitan influence" (p.7) and "the Doryphoros in his general chiasitic pose" (p.137) before one meets a lengthy discussion of Polykleitos' Doryphoros on pp.202-4, and an illustration of the chiasitic pose in Plate 128.

The index is very helpful, but it is tedious to have recourse to an index before one can make sense of a passage. On the other hand, only a beginner would need such a lengthy discourse on the Doryphoros — without, curiously, a mention of Polykleitos' Canon, particularly with respect to the debateable meaning of "para micron."

One wonders on what principle the plates have been chosen. Some works provoke voluminous discussion (the Great Eleusinian relief, for instance) yet do not merit illustration. Yet the familiar Parthenon sculptures are well represented. I should have preferred (if plates must be limited) a representation of the Diadoumenos Farnese, attributed to Pheidias, with which I am not familiar; I was sorry to note that Professor Ridgway uncritically accepts the date c370 for the Nereid Monument (a date which leads her into difficulties) for this date, even after the latest research, is by no means universally accepted. These faults are however minor ones, and the book remains a deeply interesting and thought-provoking work for the non-specialist; although I cannot help but think it is overpriced.

VERONICA CRISP

**Farming Practice in British Prehistory**, edited by Roger Mercer. *Edinburgh University Press*. 1981. 245pp, many pl. and fig., index, bibliog. £9.50.

A WELL KNOWN story which circulates among urban school teachers is that when an eleven year old was asked, "Where does milk come from?" the reply came back, "Out of a milk bottle." The boy had never seen a cow. One gets the impression from the archaeological literature that many urban archaeologists (but not all — just to save you writing that outraged letter!) have a similar problem. Towns and cities are often thought of as viable units for the study of economic, cultural and social change. They are clearly not. A town is only as successful as its economic and agricultural hinterland. Towns should therefore be studied in a regional context and the region around a town, at least until the 19th century, is going to be an agricultural region. However, before rushing headlong out of London and its suburbs, you must learn something about farming practices. This brings us to *Farming Practice in British Prehistory*. This is the book with which you should start. It is not easy reading, but it is essential reading.

This book is a collection of papers based on a symposium held in late November, 1980, under the auspices of the Munro Bequest at the University of Edinburgh. The fact that the book appeared only nine months after the symposium must be something of a record in archaeological book publication. There is, however, no sign of rushed production. The book is excellently edited, illustrated and printed.

Roger Mercer introduces the book with a concise and extremely useful introduction to the evidence for farming in British prehistory. This is followed by an agriculturalist's view of farming and its problems in Britain today. This sets the scene with good, down-to-earth stuff: rainfall, soil, drainage, vegetation cover and the like. Peter Fowler follows this by stressing evidence for dense prehistoric populations requiring territorial division of the landscape on a scale undreamt of ten years ago.

Fowler's paper is followed by three detailed papers on tillage and crop production by Drs. Rees, Reynolds and Hillman. All three provide detail from the archaeological record but turned to the ethnographic record for interpretive models. Gordon Hillman again stresses the need for water flotation to recover seed remains. Have you been on an excavation recently without any facilities for water flotation? If so, read Gordon Hillman's chapter and challenge the director of the excavation to justify his sampling strategy. You will probably be sacked, but then Galileo had his problems too, and he was proved right in the end.

The second part of the book deals with animal husbandry. The major point stressed particularly by Tony Legge and Michael Ryder is that the impression we get from most bone reports, that bones equal meat, is a gross over-simplification, if not downright wrong. Legge propounds the theory, based on detailed bone studies, that cattle husbandry equals milk, not meat. The significance of this in prehistoric studies is considerable. Likewise Dr. Ryder discusses the importance of skins and fleeces.

The book ends by extolling the virtues of excreta. We have cattle dung, pigeon dung, bird droppings, dung from goats, sheep and asses, and the Chinese farmer's adept use of human excreta. The historical and ethnographic evidence for the importance of excreta in pre-industrial economies is considerable. Are our excavation sampling strategies up to finding this type of information? One fears not.

This book is essential reading for all archaeologists. It leaves one excited at the potential available for new, revolutionary interpretations in prehistory. It leaves one depressed that in many areas our database recovery is so poor that all this potential information is being lost.

PETER DREWETT

**The Find of a Lifetime: Sir Arthur Evans and the Discovery of Knossos** by Sylvia L Horwitz. *Weidenfeld and Nicholson*, 278 pages with 8 pages of black and white illustrations. £9.95 hardcover.

A CURSORY GLANCE at Victorian England introduces the reader to the life of Sir Arthur Evans, 1851 - 1941. Arthur's father, John Evans, emerges as a pioneer in the study of prehistory. His preoccupation with man's remote past, coupled with his considerable wealth, acted as a catalyst to the son whom he always found a little odd. In the early chapters S Horwitz deals with Arthur's formative years, his extensive bouts of travelling, his marriage to Margaret Freeman and his Keepership of the Ashmolean, depicting him as a man with few but intense personal relationships. She tells how throughout his life he remained a passionate advocate of independence for the Slavs of his adopted motherland — the Balkan Peninsula. In 1882 he was imprisoned for his considerable part in their struggle for freedom. Despite a valiant attempt to come close to this lesser known aspect of Arthur Evans, this section of the book failed to move me. It was not until the focus shifted from the Balkans to Crete that the book began to come to life. This I suspect, was due to the biographer's own interest in the labyrinth of Knossos.

Nothing can compare with Evans' own testimony in those legendary tomes of 'Palace of Minos' but it was still exhilarating to watch Sir Arthur uncovering

each successive level, tenderly restoring each pillar and breathe life once more into the decaying palace. Early archaeology was often a mere treasure-hunt and reading this book made me eternally grateful to Arthur's father, who taught him the principles of geological stratification. That knowledge together with his passion for detail and excellent choice of assistants has ensured that his Knossian excavations have remained of central importance to Minoan studies to the present day. The book illustrates that unlike H Schliemann, Sir Arthur Evans was as scientific as his era permitted and the tragic mutilation of Troy was thankfully not repeated.

S Horwitz portrays Sir Arthur as a man born in the right place at the right time — a tireless man, truly endowed with the gift of imagination. Besides the familiar scenes of this great archaeologist presiding over the Ashmolean or surveying a site with his stick 'Prodder', she shows us another more private side, one only a few were privileged to see. Though childless, he was forever enchanted by children, like James Candy whose legal guardian he became. It was a revelation to see this reserved Victorian gentleman crawling about on all fours with the local Boy Scouts, in the camp which he had so generously donated to them.

Finally the book attempts, not entirely successfully, to show how Cretan archaeology is still full of surprises yet ravaged by controversy. It is not always well written and often lacks attention to detail. Unlike Sir Arthur's half-sister Joan, the writer does not seem to have 'a slavish respect for the alphabet' and frequently quotes extracts from his own writings with American-English renderings of words. Nevertheless, at a time when it is fashionable to try to disprove Sir Arthur Evans's theories, it is refreshing to find a book where he remains a hero.

LYNN BRIGHT

**Mortimer Wheeler — Adventurer in Archaeology** by Jacquetta Hawkes. *Weidenfeld and Nicolson*. 387pp, 8 figs, 34 pl, £10.95 hardback.

JACQUETTA HAWKES was the right biographer for Wheeler, since she knew him well, and as an archaeologist herself is familiar with the archaeological world that he dominated for so long. She liked and admired him but has a critical eye for his faults. She sees him as a Hero figure in the epic sense, and this was surely how he saw himself. Even the continual womanising, which brought grief to his first and third wives (the second gave him as good as she got) seems to have been due less to sensuality than the need to live up to the ideal of machismo he set himself. The sub-title is apt, for Wheeler consciously lived a romantic adventure, which he thoroughly enjoyed, and for which he needed an audi-

ence or future reader — hence the numerous letters written to Cyril Fox when there was no admirer to hand; hence also the personal war diaries written in defiance of security regulations. His ambition was to be admired for his deeds, and everything else, including career prospects and personal relationships, was subordinated to this. The Army, distrustful of panache, nicknamed him 'Flash Alf' — somewhat unjustly, for his courage and accomplishments were genuine enough, and few leaders can dispense with histrionics.

Space in this review does not permit even a brief catalogue of Wheeler's immense achievements in peace and war, but Jacquetta Hawkes gives a fully researched account of them, and corrects factual errors in Wheeler's own version (as told in his autobiographical *Still Digging*, London, 1955). Archaeologists must be grateful that their subject offered Wheeler his best opportunity for adventure between the wars, when he applied the principles of his hero, General Pitt-Rivers, to major British pre-Roman and Roman sites, including Maiden Castle and Verulamium. As administrator and negotiator, then and later, he successfully brought to life great new institutions, notably the London Institute of Archaeology, or breathed new life into moribund ones. The culmination of his career was undoubtedly his reorganisation of archaeological work in India, though it was the relatively minor achievement of television stardom that later made his name a household word.

In one detail of particular interest to readers of this journal Wheeler's biographer does him less than justice. In 1926 he was brought to the London Museum as Director, through the machinations of those who hoped he would be able to do something about the unrecorded destruction of the strata of Roman and medieval London. Apart from the appointment of an observer, based in the London Museum but paid by the Society of Antiquaries, nothing could be done, so that Wheeler's involvement with London rescue archaeology appears to be one of his few failures. What is not mentioned, however, is that he laid the foundation for all subsequent study of Roman London by his work on the great Report published by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in 1928 — still indispensable for research in this subject. Wheeler was Honorary Secretary of the Committee set up to work with the Commission staff in preparing the Inventory and Map, and himself wrote the very valuable Introduction, comprising a third of the volume. This is by far the most important general discussion of Roman London written between the wars, and if the technicality that Wheeler was not the sole author of the volume excluded it from his bibliography, it merited at least an honourable mention in the text.

RALPH MERRIFIELD