

Books

Underneath English Towns. Interpreting Urban Archaeology, by Martin Carver. *B. T. Batsford Ltd.*, 1987. 160pp., 94 illus., bibliog. £12.95.

THE CONCEPT OF urban archaeology is relatively new to British archaeology, and of the work that has been done, much remains unpublished. Indeed, Professor Carver states in his preface that his book is based on "urban excavations carried out in the last 25 years, over 75% of which were unpublished at the time of writing" (1986). Consequently, it is not so surprising that a book of this kind has not been written before. It may also be this research among unpublished material that led him to head his preface with the modified quotation "And is an archive, then, an instrument not for distributing the truth but for delaying its appearance?"

The book is divided into ten chapters, the first of which is a brief introduction to urban archaeology. Three other chapters deal with the archaeology of Roman, early English and Medieval towns, and there is a very good chapter on "dark earth" and what happens to towns between the Roman and Medieval periods. There is a chapter on how people lived and died in towns, another deals with how towns function in society, and the final two chapters give a brief history of urban archaeology and an overview of methodology in current use. There is a good bibliography, and also a very useful bibliographical gazetteer which enables the reader to find references for specific towns and cities. The book is

also well illustrated with plates, maps, plans, diagrams and reconstructions.

Despite the fact that the book is heavily reliant on unpublished material, Professor Carver must also have done considerable reading of published sources because he wryly remarks that "while other disciplines seek to refine their facts with the pure white heat of simple prose, archaeologists seem to rebury theirs in mounds of secondhand verbal slag" – a criticism he has taken to heart himself, because this book is very well written and a pleasure to read. Generally the reader is left wanting to read more at the end of the book; this is neither a virtue, nor a fault (it is difficult to see what other topics could have been included in a general survey of this kind), but it is a reflection of our current state of knowledge about urban archaeology.

The chapters are well-balanced, and ably demonstrate that the author is talking from experience. For example, he points out the problems of trying to record diverse archaeological remains using a recording system that requires the archaeologist to be an objective observer because, as he points out, "no scientist is truly objective in the sense of being a passive observer". He also points to the folly of a recording system not capable of organising records into hierarchical groups because "archaeological strata are not homogeneous but hierarchical".

In short, this is an excellent addition to what is fast

(continued from p. 415)

Collegial and Augustinian Churches TL 3816 0065 WAHS (P. J. Huggins)

Following on from last year (see *LA* 5 no. 10, 278) a trench was dug to locate one further buttress of the ambulatory of the collegiate church. As a result it is clear there were 7 apse bays. Complicated geometry was used to ensure the first and last apse bays were wider than the others for reasons of access. In 1177 the apse and ambulatory was taken down and the whole extended as the Augustinian central nave. This nave was wider than the Collegiate chancel, of which the pillars were retained, and the overall width was greater too. New Augustinian pillars, close to the Collegiate chancel pillars, must have meant there was a sudden awkward change of width.

Eldeworth TL 3817 0057 WAHS (P. J. Huggins)

The outline of *eldeworth*, the old enclosure, appears on a map of c 1600 AD, where it is relatively clear on the N, E and S sides. On the W side a ditch is currently (Dec 1987) being investigated at Church Street/Leverton Way which seems to relate well with the other sides. The result is a sub-rectangular enclosure of about 1.6 ha (4 acres) around the present Market Place. Romano-British and Iron Age pottery backfilled into the ditch leave the date of the enclosure in doubt but the boundary obviously existed in some form into the 17th c in parts. Today it is mirrored in places by modern property boundaries.

Piggotts Farm, Abridge TQ 462 973 West Essex Archaeological Group (F. Clark)

A crop mark site was investigated in September 1987. It is an

80m (260ft) square bisected on its sides to divide it into four roughly equal areas. The NW area contains a circular feature some 15-17m (50-55ft) in diameter while c 5m (16ft) from the SE corner a square feature also appears. There are other marks and traces of a trackway that parallels the existing farm track.

The excavation was undertaken to locate and date these marks. The marks were found to be ditches and the pottery in the lower levels was Middle Iron Age in date with a scatter of Roman pottery in the top soil. The site appears to be an Iron Age farmstead. Previous excavations on the area revealed a sequence of occupation from the Bronze Age to the present.

The finds from the excavation are housed at the Passmore Edwards Museum; publication is expected in 1988.

SURREY

Nonsuch Palace Privy Garden TQ 2281 6307 Carew Manor Group (J. Phillips)

The storm on the night of 15-16 October 1987 blew down a tree near the centre of the former palace privy garden. The corner of a brick wall was lifted in the roots. One arm, of which about 0.85m (2.8ft) was lifted, would have run approx. N from the corner, while the other, of which about 1.5m (5ft) was lifted, ran roughly E. Both walls were of honeycomb brickwork in which a layer of stretchers alternated with a course of headers with a gap left in the place of alternate headers. The corner was of solid brick and was rather roughly constructed. The feature appears to relate to the palace privy garden and may be a drain beneath the central fountain which is known from documents. A full report will be deposited in Sutton Library and Bourne Hall Museum.

becoming a very important series of books from Batsford. Most archaeologists will find something to interest them in this book; for urban archaeologists, it should be compulsory reading.

LESLEY ADKINS
ROY ADKINS

The Stonehenge People – an exploration of life in Neolithic Britain 4700-2000BC, by Rodney Castle- den. *Routledge & Kegan Paul*, 1987. 282 pp., 42 pl., 76 figs. £14.95.

THIS IMAGINATIVE book (not to be confused with A. Burl's **The Stonehenge People**, which is a different book entirely) takes as its starting point Stonehenge:- "a kind of *omphalos* or earth-*navel*". From here the author moves on to cover varied aspects of the Neolithic period, with a richness of expression not usually encountered in archaeological books. There are chapters on the first farmers ("as if by adoption, the Stonehenge people made themselves the children of the ever-fruitful earth"); houses; settlement; technology ("I think we can indulge a certain casualness, a certain haste, in the Stonehenge people's pottery when we realise that they were massively preoccupied with greater projects by far"); causewayed camps and henges; stone circles ("the ring of stones fastens the two worlds together and makes a moongate through which we can step from world to world"); burials; what the Neolithic people were like; what their culture was like; their rituals, their visual and literary art; and finally the demise of the "egalitarian" Neolithic society where "there were no kings, nor was there any literature in which individual self-glorification would have been possible" and "no man was a serf, no woman a servant".

The book is an ambitious attempt to bring the Neolithic period to life, and the author has some interesting and sometimes provocative statements to make, but the conscious decision not to quote supporting evidence because "the book would have become clogged up with references, footnotes and discussions of archaeological techniques and interpretation" is a self-inflicted wound. It is always difficult and sometimes impossible in this book to see the boundaries between observed fact and hypothesis based on fact, and between hypothesis and unsupported imaginative reconstruction.

The author is at pains to point out that he is "not an archaeologist", is "not in a position to disagree with the raw archaeology of any site" and yet his interpretation of the implications of sites "is often very different from that of its excavator". Under these circumstances, the reader has no means of knowing what the excavator thought, who the excavator was, and sometimes even which sites have provided the evidence for the reinterpretation. The

reader has been denied the opportunity to check the basis of the interpretation:- without any supporting references as a guide, the reader is left wondering whether an unfamiliar concept is the latest result from some brilliant piece of research or just an uncontrolled flight of fancy. Faced with no alternative but to either accept or reject the book's interpretation of the Neolithic, many readers may well decide it is safest not to trust the book further than they can throw it.

LESLEY ADKINS
ROY ADKINS

The Seamless Web, by Bernice Cohen. *Codek Publications*, 1987. 384 pp., 10 pl., 60 figs., 44 tables, 4 maps, bibliog., index. £19.95.

THIS BOOK IS certainly ambitious, attempting to set the entire history of man into a coherent theoretical framework, namely Systems Theory. To do so scientifically, which seems to be the author's aim, one would have to set up a hypothesis (e.g. that the variability observed in man's past could be accounted for by the Theory), look for relevant evidence, for *and* against, and use it to assess the hypothesis. Here, however, the book is so imbued with the theory that the idea of contrary evidence scarcely arises. This one might call the Jellymould Principle: one starts with a hypothesis that all jellies are, say, rabbit-shaped, one finds a rabbit-shaped jellymould, makes jellies and behold! they are all rabbit-shaped. After reading this book for a while, one begins to wonder whether there is *anything* that could not be described as a System, and therefore whether the hypothesis is actually falsifiable – a prime requirement for any scientific hypothesis. If everything is a system, do we gain by casting man's past into this mould?

It could be that Systems Theory, although not qualifying as a hypothesis, is still useful as a descriptive framework in which to view the past. To be so it would need to bring new insights to such perennial problems as the origins of agriculture. Here the issue is not so clear-cut; there are interesting parallels between the agricultural and industrial revolutions, for example, but I don't think they really help us to understand either any better.

Nevertheless, I do not wish to decry the vast amount of work that has gone into this book, as witnessed by the 800 or more footnotes and nearly 400 references. Simply gathering and putting together this much material is a great achievement, and to organise it in a coherent and logical structure an even greater one. One admires too the dedication of sinking so much of what must be family capital into such a speculative venture as publishing. The chances of sales are not enhanced by the peculiar typography; the text is set in a strange typewriter-

like face, which suffers badly when compared with the serif face used for sub-headings and 'bold' text. If the whole text had been properly typeset, the book would have been shorter (saving on printing costs) and far more legible and attractive to the reader.

CLIVE ORTON

The Idea of Prehistory, by Glyn Daniel and Colin Renfrew. *Edinburgh University Press*, 1988. 221pp., 37 illus. £19.50 (paperback £5.75).

A WELCOME SECOND edition, this book is a revised and expanded version of the original classic by Glyn Daniel published in 1962. That book remained, for many years, the best introduction to the topic of prehistory and was to be found on most students' reading lists: this new edition deserves to do the same.

The first eight chapters are little changed from the original version, and show how well the book has stood the test of time. The basic theme of the book is to discuss the concept of prehistory, as it has been viewed, studied and defined from when the idea of prehistory evolved in the early 19th century, right up to the present day. Chapter 1 deals with the meaning of "prehistory", and traces the development of the idea amongst early antiquarians, while the theme of Chapter 2 is the influence of geology and the clashes between Catastrophists, Diluvialists, and Fluvialists which led to the proper recognition of the antiquity of prehistoric artefacts and the development of the three age (stone, bronze, iron) classification system.

The continued development of prehistory is discussed in chapters 3 and 4, while chapter 5 deals with the diffusionist and hyperdiffusionist approaches. These tended to view Egypt as the single source of civilisation which spread outwards to the rest of the world; a simplistic idea that was finally disproved with the advent of radiocarbon dating.

In chapter 6 some of the limitations of prehistory are detailed, and it is demonstrated how some concepts of prehistory, particularly those dealing with racial origins, were and are distorted and misused for political ends. Chapter 7 discusses the meaning of prehistory, with Glyn Daniel firmly rejecting the idea that prehistory is a science: he points out that it is "part of human history", and deplors the fact that this part of history is invariably ignored by historians in general works. In his final chapter (8), Glyn Daniel examines the popular image of prehistory.

The last two chapters (9 and 10) were written by Colin Renfrew to cover the developments in the study of prehistory since the first edition of the book in 1962. In these chapters he makes a valiant attempt to explain the "New Archaeology" and its impact on prehistory. He recognises that the "New Archae-

ology", only 25 years old, is already becoming old hat, and he prefers the term "processual archaeology"; he does not point out that some archaeologists are already beginning to refer to "post-processual archaeology".

Inevitably, with the two authors writing separate chapters, there is a noticeable difference in styles. After Glyn Daniel's anecdotal style, with its enlightening asides, such as the description of the origin of the Society of Antiquaries in the taverns of 18th century London, Colin Renfrew's chapters are a little dry. However, he laudably refrains from quoting some of the worst excesses of jargon so favoured by the "New Archaeologists", so that his two chapters provide a very good, concise overview of the development of prehistoric archaeology over the last 25 years.

One major theme throughout the book is the continuous change in ideas about archaeology and by changes in society generally; it is therefore perhaps surprising that although Colin Renfrew points out that "New Archaeology" was a revolutionary product of the 1960s, he makes no attempt to link it to the explosion of social experimentation and expression of that time – the so-called permissive society. While the contribution of the natural sciences to archaeology was indeed a revolution, it remains to be seen how much else of the "new archaeology" that was born in the heyday of the permissive society will last for another 25 years.

This is a book for anyone interested in prehistory: it is also an ideal book for non-prehistorians to catch a glimpse of what they are missing. At £19.50 the hardback version is overpriced, but the price of the paperback should ensure that the book continues to be a popular introduction to the subject.

LESLEY ADKINS
ROY ADKINS

Three C.B.A. Practical Handbooks:-

No. 1 **Recording Worked Stones**, by Tom Blagg *et al.* 47 pp., 15 figs., bibliog., £3.95.

No. 2 **Survey by Prismatic Compass**, by Raymond Farrar. 24 pp., 4 figs., £2.50.

No. 3 **British Archaeology, an introductory book list**, (ed) James Dyer. 36 pp., £2.50.

THESE THREE booklets (in A5 format) are packed with extremely useful and very practical information.

No. 1 After a brief introduction which states 'Architectural fragments have always posed problems for the field archaeologist', with which comment few would argue, includes a practical 'flow chart', lists categories of stone, handling and personal safety, cleaning, marking and recording. There is useful information on publications and

long-term storage with appendices giving a detailed scheme for recording and advice on how to draw a moulding profile and photographing stones. Finally there are notes on records and the computer, and a comprehensive bibliography.

No. 2 A revised and enlarged work on the comparatively inexpensive and readily portable method of carrying out a survey of features and earthworks covering large areas.

The physical labour of transporting bulky heavy equipment over inhospitable terrain has probably deterred many from the survey of some sites, but the use of a prismatic compass, a few bamboo canes and a tape, together with a metric scale, protractor and, of course, a drawing board and sharp pencil is all that is required to record a feature; with the speed that some potential sites are being destroyed, this method of recording is very effective. The survey can be carried out by one individual, if necessary, and does not require a great deal of training. Having read this booklet, and with a short period of practice, most people could produce a credible record of a feature which may otherwise go unrecorded.

A 3-page appendix explains the method of drawing the profile of a feature. This requires a further instrument (pocket-sized) and personally, I was pleased that reference to use of a Suunto clinometer has been included in the revised work, as I am of the opinion that I introduced Mr Farrar to this instrument many years ago.

This booklet, or the first edition of 1980, will hopefully encourage many to record the sites which have so far not been drawn.

No. 3 This is a bibliography of the works on general importance, principles and methods and of all periods from prehistory to post-medieval. There are eight sections covering the whole of the British Isles, except Ireland, and a section listing 37 works for young people.

The title includes the fact that this is an introductory booklet ... what a magnificent introduction ...

Rescue Archaeology – what next? Proceedings of a conference held at the University of York, December 1986. Edited by Harold Mytum and Karen Waugh. 128 pp. in A4 paperback.

THIS BOOK contains a collection of 19 papers given at the first major weekend conference held by Rescue and provides, as stated in the introduction “a permanent assessment of the state of British rescue archaeology in the mid 1980s given through the eyes of some of those most actively involved”. There must be many people who, having heard a good talk, have wished that it has or will be published in some form, so that the subject matter can be referred to instead of relying on memory or the scrappy notes made at the time. The task of assembling, editing and publishing is not easy and therefore all concerned are to be congratulated on producing this work. The subjects are wide-ranging and contain much to interest a large number of people.

If conference organisers encouraged speakers to provide a typescript of their talk, it may be that many more excellent publications of this type would be available.

MARSDEN ANDERSON

Letter

BEDDINGTON VILLA SITE – 1951

DUE TO THE forthcoming *Festival of Britain* celebrations, the wish to reveal Croydon's Roman past by an official of the Council, Mr C. Pratt was approached and asked to help in this venture. Mr Pratt got in touch with me, and one cold day in February 1951 found us field-walking the sewage farm together. Unlike today, one particular field was quite level and freshly ploughed, and of all the fields showed clear signs of buildings, for the surface was covered with mortar in two places. One such area was in the corner of the field, the other towards the further corner out in the field. We took note of what we had found, and when the weather improved we dug a cutting and discovered a wall made of tufa, 2ft down. We exposed 6ft of the wall, photographed it and left the trench open so that the officials could view it. The Site Foreman was astounded to see walls under the ground on his sewage farm, more so since they were Roman. This wall was about 80ft south of the recently-discovered bath-house.

We did not investigate the second site, which was towards the opposite corner of the field, but were astonished to find a large

quantity of tesserae on the surface, hence most definitely there exists at Beddington the remains of another villa which has (or had) mosaic pavements. The tesserae were 1in long and 1/4in square.

The field is now covered by large heaps of soil, hence when they are cleared for gravel-working someone should observe this work. I am certain they are in for a surprise.

I visited Beddington Villa site and pointed out the above to Roy Adkins, hence no doubt these particulars are recorded. A pity that potsherd which I deposited in 1951 (see *LA* 5 no. 10, 255-7) was not found earlier, then I could have been of assistance re this second villa.

Incidentally, several articles were published in the local press about Mr Pratt's 'excavations at Beddington' in 1951. A scrutiny of these papers may be quite revealing.

FREDERICK J. NYE

14 Sheffield Drive,
Harold Hill,
Romford.