

Books

The Thames: Record of a Working Waterway, by David Gordon Wilson. *B. T. Batsford Ltd.*, 1987. 125 pp., 100 pl., bibliog., index. £10.95.

'MESSING ABOUT on the river' appeals to us all, whether we are in the class of Ratty or of the Three Men, but in the exuberance of floating on the water we tend to overlook the fact that for 4000 years and more the Thames has been a crucial transport artery penetrating deep into England, as well as serving as a source of food. In the later periods, the river has also been a provider of power.

It is easy to forget when passing through a frothing lock with its adjacent charming and well-kept keeper's garden, that the original *raison d'être* of the weir was to pound a stretch of river in order to produce a head of water to power a corn mill. Another use for a weir was, of course, as a placement for fish traps.

Today, although many locks remain to indicate the former presence of mills, virtually nothing is to be seen on the river of the once rich variety of boats which plied for trade up and down the Thames. Luckily this book does to some extent atone for that state of affairs.

The Thames is a fascinating record of boats, their loads and their installations which once lined this river. Although of necessity the book's strength lies in the descriptions and illustrations of the post-medieval traffic above the Port of London, much else is covered.

The development of the design of the 'Western barge' is traced from the Roman large punt-like boats such as those found at Zwammerdam, the early swimhead barges and later horse ferries to their modern steel descendants. Also not forgotten are the steel-ended pole-implements, the connecting canals into the hinterland, the maintenance of the river, 'Thames barges' and medieval references to boats and locks. The illustrations of Tudor, 18th and

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conglomerates. It hopefully will not get confused with 'ferrocrete', the name given to early examples of reinforced concrete.

Examples of these conglomerate stones used in construction work are by no means uncommon. They occur in Beeleigh Abbey, Colchester Castle and at St. Osyth's in Essex as well as in a number of locations along the valleys of the rivers Stour, Avon and Frome¹ in Dorset and Hampshire and a little west of the example cited in the article at St. Mary's, South Stoneham (on the fringe of Swaythling but not its parish church). Within the London area but south of the Thames the soffit of the southernmost arch of the Clattern Bridge at Kingston-upon-Thames is lined with ironstone.

There is an indication that in the Roman and later periods a knowledge of the hardwearing and concrete nature of iron-

20th century 'halers' (gangs of men who from the river-bank towed barges upstream) recall their Roman forebears illustrated on bas-reliefs from the Rhineland.

For anyone with a weakness for the Thames and its history, this book is a must. The wealth of photographs, prints and paintings of the river at work will feast the eyes, while the text both provides a useful commentary and fills in some of the gaps which the illustrations are unable to cover.

NICHOLAS FUENTES

Dolmens for the Dead – megalith building throughout the world, by Roger Joussaume (translated from the French by Anne and Christopher Chippindale). *B. T. Batsford Ltd.*, 1987. 320 pp., 26 pl., 65 figs., bibliog., index. £19.95.

THE SUB-TITLE "Megalith building throughout the world" is something of a misnomer, since the author concentrates on megalithic chambered tombs, originally covered by a mound (whether they are still covered or not), which were used for the disposal of the dead: stone circles, alignments and standing stones are only discussed when found in close association with structures which fit his definition. This is probably the most controversial aspect of the book, since not all the structures included by Joussaume are universally accepted as having been originally covered by a mound or even used primarily for the disposal of the dead.

The first seven chapters provide an excellent general survey of European chambered tombs, while the remaining six chapters deal with North and Central Africa, Madagascar, the Near East, the Caucasus, India, the Far East and South America. These latter chapters are more superficial in their treatments of the monuments than the first seven, but this almost certainly reflects the smaller amount of information available and the current state of research in those areas.

cement bound gravels when exposed to air was used to good advantage. Iron pyrites, shot² and ferrous waste was sometimes mixed with compacted gravel to form a suitable road surface. Could this be the derivation for the term 'metalling the road'?

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1. Wool, Sturminster Marshall, Shapwick, Wimborne Minster, Corfe Mullen, Fordingbridge.
2. Paul Arthur and Keith Whitehouse 'Report on excavations at Fulham Palace Moat, 1972-1973' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 29 (1978) 45-72; Wright, Hassall and Tomlin 'Roman Britain in 1974' *Britannia* 6 (1975).

The major theme throughout the book is that while diffusion of the idea of chambered tombs probably occurred from local centres in some areas, the concept that the idea of such tombs originated in only one or two places and spread to all other areas is completely wrong. The author does not so much argue this point as demonstrate it with an overwhelming weight of evidence, commenting at various points to highlight specific aspects.

There is a good bibliography which is more comprehensive for Europe than for other areas, although there are some notable omissions. Nonetheless, this is a pioneer work, attempting to study megalithic chambered tombs on a world-wide basis, and it highlights the current state of research in Europe and the potential for further research in other parts of the world. It also shows what can be achieved by studying a single class or archaeological site in great depth and breadth – a method of research that has gone out of fashion in recent years.

For students of the Neolithic and Bronze Age in Europe and anyone else interested in megalithic chambered tombs, this book will be essential reading and a major source of reference. Those readers with minimal interest in the subject are likely to find the book heavy going, but yet may still find it rewarding because of the author's realistic and practical approach to his subject: observations like "A dolmen is as simple as it is badly excavated" (or in other contexts "A Roman villa/Saxon cemetery/Medieval monastery is as simple as it is badly excavated") are truisms that all archaeologists (field, desk and armchair) need reminding of from time to time.

LESLEY & ROY ADKINS

Putney & Roehampton, positive pastimes from picture postcards, by Patrick Loobey, 1987. 50pp (A4), 144 pl., 1 map. Price not stated.

IT IS VERY fortunate that many districts had their dedicated photographers, particularly when it needed a wheeled cart to carry the equipment. Putney had William Field to record many views that have since disappeared, and these have been collected and published in this well set out volume.

It would probably have increased interest to have printed the present view to compare with the picture shown, as it can be a surprise to many to realise that the modern scene is not always so very different from that of 100 years ago, or alternatively it may have changed out of all recognition and the erstwhile scene would evoke memories.

It is good to see that publications such as this continue, for they are part of the area record as well as being nostalgic, and assist local historians in very many ways.

Bee Boles and Bee Houses, by A. M. Foster. *Shire Album* no. 204, 1987. 32pp., illus. £1.50.

INVESTIGATING ancient buildings, one sometimes sees niches and small cavities to which one may attribute an incorrect use. With the publication of this book a different and probably more correct view could be taken, for it gives a fascinating review of some of the 900-odd types of structure built to house bees.

The author tells us that "bees had probably been domesticated for many centuries before Roman times" and gives an account of bee-keeping past and present, illustrating many of the bee boles, alcoves and shelters. The earliest remains of a straw skep was uncovered in York and dated to the 12th century. The book contains a useful list of books and articles for further information, and lists places to visit. An interesting addition to an excellent range.

Dummy Boards and Chimney Boards, by Clare Graham. *Shire Album* no. 214, 1987. 32 pp., illus. £1.50.

WHEN ONE SEES occasionally a wooden cut-out figure advertising goods and services outside a shop, it is unlikely to remind most people that these dummies were much more common in times past. The author tells us that a painted cut-out could be placed in a corner or doorway in the hope of deceiving the unwary, and I liked the comment that "a gentleman placed a wooden maid-servant at the door of his 'salon' and the assembled company were much entertained by a guest who tried to tip her". Many are similarly deceived at waxworks now.

The uses of dummies were many, and varied from decorative jokes, soldiers 'guarding' stairways, concealing doorways and many uses in theatrical shows. Some were very elaborate and almost works of art, comprising animal as well as human figures.

This is an interesting booklet on a little-known subject, which undoubtedly will extend the knowledge of many.

Mitcham, a brief history, by E. N. Montague. *Merton Historical Society*, 1987. 26 pp., 3 illus., centre-fold map. £1.50.

READING THIS book, one would quickly appreciate the history of Mitcham, and in consequence take more of an interest in what one can see in the district. The book starts with a thumbnail sketch of the Geology, and then deals with Archaeology period by period from earliest times, before starting on the historical aspect, again chronologically.

It is a very readable account, and as it is a 'brief history' one obtains the salient facts quickly and easily. For further information there is a list of titles for further reading. MARSDEN ANDERSON