

Books

Limehouse Ware Revealed, ed. David Drakard. *English Ceramic Circle*, 1993. 80 pp., 155 black-and-white and 17 colour pl., bibliog.

POST-MEDIEVAL archaeology can be a schizophrenic subject, divided between the 'dirt' archaeologists, historians and art-historians. This has been particularly true of pottery, with a great gulf between the pretty objects one sees in museums, books and antique shops, and the grotty fragments that usually come the archaeologist's way. How refreshing, then, to find a publication in which all the various sub-disciplines have collaborated, and each has an important part to play.

Limehouse ware is the name given to the porcelain produced at Limehouse in London's docklands for a short time in the 1740s. Documentary evidence for it was discovered in 1927, but no examples of the ware could be definitely identified, and it naturally became the subject of much speculation. So it might have stayed, if the Limehouse roadlink had not been planned to pass beneath Limehouse in a tunnel 1.8km long. The evidence suggested it would cross the likely site of the porcelain factory at Dunbar Wharf, and an excavation carried out here in 1989-90 by the DGLA, as part of a larger project, duly revealed traces of a kiln and other structures, as well as wasters and other sherds that were undoubtedly Limehouse ware.

This report is a well-produced and well-illustrated hardback book, with distinct contributions on the documentary evidence, the parish of Limehouse, the archaeological project (not just the post-medieval bits), the kiln site, the pottery itself and an scientific study of the ware. Appendices give transcripts of the advertisements and announcements that first suggested the existence of the factory, the results of the British Museum's scientific analyses of the wares, and a sequence of the use of soapstone in porcelain.

The book is not only an important contribution to the study of early British porcelain, it is also a model of teamwork and a joy to read.

Clive Orton

The Tower of London, by Geoffrey Parnell. *English Heritage/Batsford*, 1993. 128 pp., many illus., index. £14.99.

THIS VOLUME is a companion of those for which the publishers are still announcing 'a major new series in which leading archaeologists bring the past to life by interpreting the great historical

monuments in which Britain is so rich'.

What should we be looking for in volumes so heralded? For whom is the past being brought alive? Readers of the *London Archaeologist* could be the ideal audience, but a series heralded in this way promises to introduce the 'monuments' to a much wider public. The authors must break with the conventions of architectural history and archaeological writing. We might expect technical terms to be avoided and sometimes find methodologies explained. The ideal is effective but restrained and accurate journalism.

But to what extent does the Tower of London need bringing to a wider public — the queues seem long enough already, despite the penal entrance fee. (How many British families can still afford to visit the Tower? Perhaps they will buy the book instead — in the book they will see photographs and drawings of things they cannot see on site. But how many foreign tourists are going to buy volumes of this size?) And are there not, in any case, a dozen or more introductions to the Tower currently or recently in print?

Beyond that, is the Tower of the archaeologist and architectural historian and the Tower of the tourist or family outing the same thing? Perhaps every age gets the Tower of London that it wants. Before Victoria came to the throne, the Tower changed its role many times, and Geoffrey Parnell chronicles these different, mainly utilitarian, functions. The Victorians gradually abandoned utilitarianism and Anthony Salvin was brought in to conjure up the Romantic Tower as part of their deliberate creation of the 'monarchist tradition' that served so effectively until the day before yesterday.

The tendency now is for a Tourist Tower, London's *Jorvik*, an aspect that Geoffrey Parnell avoids. The aims of the heritage industry are not so clear as were those of the monarchist romantics — or perhaps we are too close to them to see them clearly. Fortunately, the heritage industry is less willing to destroy the archive than were the creators of the Romantic Tower, but we can see, even if we cannot quite articulate, the difference between a heritage centre and a museum, or between a monument as 'heritage' and a monument as archive. The former has tourist and commercial potential: it can easily be derided as populist. The latter lies outside market forces, needs some effort by the 'user' and can easily be labelled elitist. Loaded words, every one.

Of Geoffrey Parnell's careful scholarship there is no doubt, and his style moves some way down the difficult path towards restrained journalism: the volume is an easier read than some others in the series. Technical terms have not been expunged but there is a glossary. It is probable that no one knows as much about the architecture of the Tower of London as Mr Parnell: he has, after all, been the Inspector of Ancient Monuments responsible for the Tower for nearly two decades. His volume can be relied upon and should help the customer of 'heritage' to appreciate the archive if that customer is willing to concentrate. However, he may find from time to time that the wood is not always visible through the trees. The specialist user of the archive, on the other hand, will find the volume a useful check on the current position in both his own and other specialist areas: there could not be room for more. Both classes of user may wish that there was a fold-out plan inside one or other cover which could be kept open while reading the text. How many of us can keep the names of all the many parts of the Tower in our heads?

The book is of the same length and observes a similar balance between text and illustrations as others in the series. It includes reconstruction and many excellent cut-away drawings as well as high quality colour plates. If you want your information authoritative and have no objection to quarts in pint pots, you will find this book a welcome addition to the series.

Dennis Turner

Britannia, by Sheppard Frere. *Pimlico*, 1991.

THIS IS A paperback version of the third (1987) edition of Professor Frere's majestic work on Roman Britain. The publisher's description says that the book has been extensively revised from the second, 1978, edition, and it is worthwhile looking at the places in which revision has actually taken place. There are a few details about the basic political geography of Britain for which changes have been made necessary by fresh discoveries or observations, such as the replacement of the *Coritani* by the *Corieltavi* as the British tribe of the East Midlands, and the nature of the rule of Cogidubnus, but in the main the observations relate to fresh information about the military history of the province. There are for example new ideas about the dispositions of the legions in the conquest period, some new thoughts about the Welsh campaigns of Ostorius and the Brigantian wars of Cerealis, Agricola's defensive line between the Forth and the Clyde and the possible location of the battle of Mons Graupius. At the other end of the period we

get a fresh look at the *Notitia Dignitatum* and Zosimus. The alterations in the chapters which deal with economic and social affairs are far fewer – for example some additions to the range of villa excavations and to the list of known imports, and comments on the changing function of towns in the late second century, occasioned in part by the excavations in London.

Taken overall, the changes represent alterations in detail rather than anything fundamental, and the substance and general attitude of the original book remain much as they always were, with, as the subtitle implies, an emphasis on the history of Roman Britain. Even in 1987 it would have been possible to have made greater use of available published archaeological information to have said rather more about the Fenland, for example, or Celtic fields, agricultural buildings, crops and animal husbandry: interesting studies about the interaction between Rome and natives are not referred to. The majestic and authoritative nature of the text does tend to disguise the fact that what is said is quite often still controversial, as for example the tendency to assume that earthwork banks preceded stone walls as a regular feature of late second century defended towns, or that towers were added after a single historical event in the mid fourth century, or that corndriers were used for just that. It is possible to take a less optimistic view of late Roman town life in Britain. But the book remains a classic and for a paperback of four hundred pages £12.50 is very good value.

Tony Brown

Dinosaurs – the Nature of the Beast, *Columbia Tristar Videos*

IF YOU ARE over 10 years old, and not a palaeontologist, then like me your knowledge of dinosaurs probably comes from Spielberg and Fred Flintstone rather than history books. If that is so, then this video and the others in the series are definitely for you. Shown earlier this year on Channel 4 under the title *Dinosaurs Footprints, Nature of the Beast* is in fact the third programme of the series. I saw the video before the series was screened and it made the rest of the series compulsive viewing for me.

The animated opening credits are far superior to anything dear old Fred ever came up against. It was obvious from the start that this is a serious and informative programme, but the conversational style of Paul Sereno, the first of several palaeontologists featured, soon made me realise it was not going to be stuffy. Sereno has found amongst the Triassic rocks of north west Argentina an almost

complete skeleton of one of the earliest dinosaurs — a carnivore some 230 million years old. His enthusiasm for his subject is most infectious.

In Arizona's petrified forest Rob Long introduces us to a desert landscape that was once a lush wetland with trees 120 feet tall. Here at one of the best sites for traces of the Triassic world, appropriately called Lizard Wash, we meet *Desmatisucus*, a very well armoured plant eater rather like a large spiky armadillo, and *Polstersucus* who preyed upon him. At about 16 feet long and standing about as high as a horse, this was probably one of the largest animals of its era, but it wasn't quite a dinosaur. They evolved later.

With changes in the ecosystem as the Triassic period moves into the Jurassic, many species died out. There is some evidence of an extinction event of some sort around 180 million years ago. Neil Shubin of the Smithsonian Institute has been excavating at the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia, where the Triassic-Jurassic boundary actually appears as a white line along the cliffs. The Late Triassic rocks have a high level of species diversity, whereas the Early Jurassic has few so-called "day after fauna" or extinction-event survivors. The dinosaur's almost bipedal stance gave it the agility and speed to gain the edge over the other survivor species, and so small survivors from the Triassic, about the size of a chicken, actually evolved into the colossal beast of our fantasies.

Plant-eaters outnumbered the meat-eaters by twenty to one and the biggest were all vegetarians. The mighty *Brontosaurus* could weigh as much as a herd of elephants and gulp down whole bushes in a single mouthful. Using their powerful tails as a third leg, they could sit back on their hind legs and with that long neck reach up into the tree tops. They had no molars, but instead had gizzards to process the huge volume of leaves needed to fuel such monsters. Using modern high-tech sound shadow techniques, where a seismic gun linked to a computer gives a map of the ground and what's in it, Dr David Norman has found a new dinosaur species — the biggest yet. At 150 feet long, this animal is half as long again as *Diplodocus* and has been named *Seismosaurus* — earth-shaking lizard. This monster was also a vegetarian. With such huge creatures devouring whole bushes, the plant life needed to be able to reproduce quickly in order to survive. As the Jurassic gives way to the Cretaceous period, new species begin to evolve and the flora changes. *Iguanodon*, possibly the most successful of all dinosaurs, and other browsers became prevalent about the same time as flowers, a faster-

growing source of nutrients, evolved. Coincidence or an example of evolutionary cooperation?

One of the most fascinating stories is the tale of the finds made by the fossil-hunting lady owner of a rock shop in America. She called in palaeontologist Jack Horner to help identify her finds. They were delighted to discover they had a baby dinosaur. That was in 1978. Further investigations of the site since then have unearthed a dinosaur-nesting site. Fifteen embryonic dinosaurs were found. Nests were as close to each other as the length of an adult. This was a colony of hadrosaurs or good mother lizards, who nested in large colonies rather like many birds do today. There is evidence to suggest strong social behaviour, with parent hadrosaurs feeding their young and using the same nesting sites again and again.

Dinosaurs apparently were at their peak in the Late Cretaceous period. Certainly the greatest diversity of species has been found from this period. There is evidence of great herds of dinosaurs travelling across vast areas. For millions of years they roamed the planet, arguably the most successful species ever to do so. So what happened to them? Why did they die out?

Tantalisingly, *Nature of the Beast* leaves us with that very question. After all, it is part of a series and I am sure Columbia Tristar who manufacture the video and Robin Bates the producer/director want you to buy all four tapes. Mr Bates deserves much praise. I viewed this programme with some trepidation as I started off knowing absolutely nothing about dinosaurs. My young god-daughter knows much about dinosaurs and she too found it interesting, informative, and entertaining. The enthusiasm of the experts featured is not clouded by any urge to blind the viewer with science, but it does not lose sight of the fact that it is a programme to be taken seriously. It's rather like sitting chatting to a group of very knowledgeable people. The graphics and animation provided by the Encyclopaedia Britannica Education Corporation are terrific. Two wonderful images stay with me — one of *Triceratops* chomping its way through a lush flower garden and the other of a mother dinosaur defending its young. I couldn't wait for the series to be screened so that I could learn more about them.

Catriona Smith

Tudor London, by Rosemary Weinstein. *HMSO for the Museum of London* (1993). 57 pp., illus., £6.95.

SO LITTLE of Tudor London remains intact. What survived the Great Fire of 1666 has since been lost as the City has been redeveloped. However,

there is a lot of archaeological information and written evidence, and it is from this wealth of information that Rosemary Weinstein draws her picture of our capital city during this momentous era.

It is a visually splendid little book — one in a series covering the history of London from prehistory to the 18th century. Only 57 pages in all, but so packed with illustrations, mostly in colour, that I could find only one totally unillustrated page! Illustrations include some of the earliest maps of London, and photographs of a variety of artefacts from the very lovely Parr Pot (an elegant lattino and silver gilt glass bearing the arms of Will Parr, uncle to Queen Catherine) to everyday tools and cooking utensils.

The book is also packed full of information. We are shown a rapidly developing London. Henry VIII once described himself as a “small king in the corner of Europe”, but was determined to impress the two great powers of the 16th century — France and Spain. Henry began his reign with seven royal residences in London, or at least within a day’s ride of the City, and by the end of his reign there were sixteen. Palaces were not the only things he built. There were other public buildings, and the Navy was greatly increased, with much of the work being done at Woolwich and Deptford. The skyline of Tudor London was dominated by over 100 churches, perhaps not unsurprisingly in a period when religion played such a dominant role in life.

Henry’s building plans almost bankrupted the country. The coinage was debased, and in 1551 Edward had to revalue the shilling. Housing shortages were a continual problem, but statutes of 1580 and 1592 failed to control the overcrowding problem.

Elizabeth spent little on royal residences or other great buildings, consequently her direct impact on the physical City is slight. However, her taste for luxury fabrics, fine jewellery and accessories profited London’s goldsmiths and merchants and helped to develop their crafts. With the expansion of trade came further development of the City.

All aspects of city life are covered by this very readable book, and whilst it probably would not be out of place on the bookshelf of a Tudor expert, it is most likely to appeal to the newcomer to the period. It certainly provides an excellent introduction to Tudor London.

Catriona Smith

Rural Life: Guide to Local Records, by Peter Edwards. *B T Batsford Ltd*, 1993. 176pp., many illus., bibliog., index. £19.99

PETER EDWARDS is Senior Lecturer in the Department of History at Roehampton Institute of Higher Education, and the author of several books and many articles on local history. Although the sub-title of this book is *Guide to Local Records*, in fact it is much more than that: it is also a potted social history of rural England with particular reference to the conditions of life and the legislation that led to records being kept.

The scene is set by a chapter on the governance of rural England, which outlines the administrative and judicial bodies to which villagers have been subject. Village society is then dealt with by considering the changing fortunes of different social groups in the community from early medieval times onwards. A man’s standing in society, his liability to pay rates and taxes, or his need to be referred to in the accounts of the overseers of the poor, determine the extent to which he will appear in records. Population trends are discussed, along with the factors that influence them and the sources of information for such studies.

A chapter on earning a living details the wide range of jobs that were available to men and women in country areas and indicates the records that this gives rise to. Given our present day economic problems, it is of interest that ‘many farmers did not see the need to spend money on machinery, especially if greater unemployment meant a rise in their poor rates’. There is then an exposition of the peasant world in terms of beliefs, educational provision, recreation and crime. Family and neighbourhood are explored and advice given on organising the heterogeneous information that can be obtained from registers, court rolls, wills and so on.

The final chapter is on rural housing: there are many documentary sources that help to give the history of buildings in a rural community and the buildings themselves provide additional evidence.

This is a well-organised book that looks at the many aspects of rural life that need to be considered by local historians. A tremendous amount of information is packed into the seven chapters, so much that I felt the need for a summary at the end of each, listing the sources of information that had been referred to. The notes are a bibliography of more than 400 items, and sixty examples of further reading are listed. There are numerous photographic copies of miscellaneous records, together with reproductions of old photographs and drawings. A local historian would need to be extremely well informed not to be able to profit from reading this comprehensive account of the subject.

Charles Abdy