

The Archaeology of Shakespeare: the material legacy of Shakespeare's theatre, by Jean Wilson. *Alan Sutton Publishing Limited*, 1995. 211pp., 89 illustrations, index, bibliography. £19.99.

WHEN THE ROSE Theatre was controversially re-buried in 1989 many people outside the archaeological world experienced a deep sense of frustration and bafflement. How could these remains, unique in their survival, be abandoned to an uncertain future with apparently little official awareness of their significance? It was as if people did not understand the importance of the information they could provide, and were unaware of how little we already knew about the theatre buildings of the age of Marlowe and Shakespeare. Jean Wilson felt that journalists, campaigners and archaeologists were hazy about the facts, that misleading information was being disseminated and that the site was being unfairly talked down through lack of knowledge. She insists for example that the Shakespeare-orientated publicity did the site little service since this was one of the few theatres of the period with which his name can be only speculatively linked. The Rose was Christopher Marlowe's theatre and should have been promoted as such. This book seems to be her attempt to put all the necessary information between two covers, and place the Rose and the Globe (found later in the same year) in their proper perspective. It is also an attempt to confront archaeologists with the amount of knowledge which has been accumulated by research into theatre history, while emphasising the lack of material evidence. Contradictory thumbnail drawings on panoramic maps, the financial accounts kept by the Rose's manager Philip Henslowe, and the contract for the building of the Fortune Theatre are examples of documents which give large amounts of specific kinds of information but which also serve also to reinforce awareness of the gaps, especially with regard to matters like dimensions, methods of construction and internal decoration. The solid 'olde worlde' structure of the Globe in Olivier's wartime film of *Henry V* has, she believes, fooled many into believing that we are in no doubt about what Elizabethan playhouses were like.

Her first chapter contains an account of the life of Shakespeare, an extremely judicious synthesis (as the Bibliography testifies) of the evidence and the

academic controversies surrounding it. The second, third and fourth chapters cover the background of Elizabethan drama (mystery cycles, household entertainments and religious and civic pageantry), the early London playhouses, other performance sites, and the major outdoor theatres. These, the Rose among them, she rightly observes, were an extraordinary phenomenon, but also a 'cul-de-sac'. The outdoor theatres flowered briefly and vividly, and then died out with the civil war. It was the indoor theatres with their rectangular shape and use of scenery which influenced theatre design in succeeding centuries.

Contrary to the effect of her opening chapter which reinforces the prominence of Shakespeare, she attempts to lay to rest the enduring belief that Elizabethan drama was mainly written by Shakespeare, and that it was all in the form of plays. Executions and sermons, education and eulogy, speaking tableaux and emblematic tomb sculptures were all manifestations of the dramatic urge in a society fascinated with the presentation of the self. She discusses the wide use of symbolism in contemporary portraits as well as in the portrayal of character and the design of theatrical spaces, and there are a number of interesting, but small and not always very clear, black-and-white photographs. Her particular enthusiasm seems to be for the elaborately carved tombs of the period peopled with family members arranged hierarchically in pillared and draped alcoves reminiscent of classical stages. She also examines surviving domestic buildings for further ideas about how theatre interiors, renowned for their splendour, might have been decorated. It has to be remembered that one enigmatic sketch of the Swan Playhouse is the only extant view of the interior of a named theatre, and that it provokes more questions than it answers.

Her account of the theatres and the theatricality of Elizabethan life is authoritative and stimulating, but those wishing to know more about archaeological discoveries at the sites of the Rose and Globe may well be disappointed since the author can go no further than the already-published interim reports. She tries to give a balanced view of the debacle surrounding the excavation of the Rose, but is almost certain to irritate one or more of the parties concerned, if only through her conciseness. She probably underestimates the ar-

chaeologists' academic knowledge of the site, and perhaps fails to appreciate that there is a very fine line between educating the public and actively campaigning, a position which the archaeologists could not be seen to adopt. The press contributed to the trivialisation of the Rose, sometimes using it as a weapon to attack actors who, not unnaturally, flocked to the Rose for a rare glimpse of the material history of their profession. The situation was a delicate one, the archaeological team being in effect just another contractor in a chain of on-site works leading from demolition to the construction of a new building. It was a difficult case and has been much discussed in legal journals as well as those devoted to archaeology and English literature.

The brief, archaeological/'political' chapters at the end of the book sit rather uneasily with the rest. Her attitude here could be considered a little naive. It is arguable whether any closer links with theatre academics who were, after all, among the active campaigners would have made any difference to the outcome for the Rose. She writes as if universal knowledge and understanding could have prevented disaster. The more cynical reader may well be less amazed at the characteristic sound of money talking.

Jo Udall

The Monastic Gatehouse and other types of portal of medieval religious houses, by Roland W. Morant. *The Book Guild*. 219 pp., 32 pl., 22 figs. £15.

THERE WERE over a thousand monastic establishments in Great Britain before the Dissolution. Over two hundred of their gateways remain in a variety of degrees of disrepair. They are widely scattered, visible signs of our medieval heritage, and yet this is the first time a study of them in their own right has been published, although many have been featured in general works on abbeys and priories or in specialised papers on specific sites.

In this book Roland Morant describes not only the variety that existed in these monastic entrances, but also shows how much there is left to see today. He investigates the position, structure and function, as well as decoration and embellishments of all the surviving monastic gatehouses in Britain.

Obviously the result of many years of painstaking research by a man with a special love of the medieval period, Roland Morant has managed to make his book thoroughly readable for both the serious historian and the general reader. He devotes the first chapters to the functions and types of gatehouse and other portals; their location in relation to the other buildings within the monastery; the historical development of portals and their structure; their design and ornamentation. These chapters are followed by an inventory which lists and describes all the remaining monastic portals in England, Scotland and Wales, classified according to their present material condition. The text is well illustrated with numerous photographs and some very detailed drawings.

Catrina Smith

Excavations and post-excavation work

City of London. Museum of London Archaeology Service, Number One, London Wall, London EC2Y 5EA (0171-972 9111).

Croydon & District. processing and cataloguing of excavated and museum collections every Tuesday throughout the year. Archaeological reference collection of fabric types, domestic animal bones, clay tobacco pipes and glass ware also available for comparative work. Enquiries to Mrs Muriel Shaw, 28 Lismore Road, South Croydon, CR2 7QA (0181-688 2720).

Greater London (except north-east and south-east London), by Museum of London Archaeology Service. Excavations and processing in all areas. General enquiries to MOLAS, Number One, London Wall, London EC2Y 5EA (0171-972 9111).

Borough of Greenwich. Cataloguing of excavated and other archaeological material, the majority from sites in the borough. For further information contact Greenwich Borough Museum, 232 Plumstead High Street, London SE18 1JT (0181-855 3240).

Hammersmith & Fulham, by Fulham Archaeological Rescue Group. Processing of material from Fulham Palace. Tuesdays, 7.45 p.m.-10 p.m. at Fulham Palace, Bishop's Avenue, Fulham

Palace Road, SW6. Contact Keith Whitehouse, 86 Clancarty Road, SW6 (0171-731 4498).

Kingston, by Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society. Rescue sites in the town centre. Enquiries to Kingston Heritage Centre, Fairfield Road, Kingston (0181-546 5386).

North-east London, by Passmore Edwards Museum. Enquiries to Pat Wilkinson, Newham Museum Service, Archaeology and Local History Centre, 31 Stock Street, E13 0BX (0181-472 4785).

Surrey, by Surrey County Archaeological Unit. Enquiries to Rob Poulton, Archaeological Unit Manager, Old Library Headquarters, 25 West Street, Dorking, RH4 1DE (01306-886 466).

Individual membership of the Council for British Archaeology includes 10 issues a year of British Archaeological News, as well as the supplement CBA Briefing, which gives details of conferences, extra-mural courses, summer schools, training excavations and sites where volunteers are needed. The subscription of £18 p.a. includes postage, and should be sent to C.B.A., Bowes Morrell House, 111 Walmgate, York, YO1 2UA (01904 671417).