

Books

English Medieval Tiles, by Elizabeth Eames. *British Museum Publications*, 1985. 72pp., 36 colour and 50 b&w illus., bibliog., index. £4.95.

BUILDING MATERIALS have long been the poor relation in the study of archaeological finds. That medieval floor tiles have emerged from this obscurity is due largely to the fascination they have exercised on the author of this book. Here she shares with us some of the fascination: those searching for details of particular tiles or designs will need to refer to her monumental *Catalogue*.

The first chapter summarises what we know about the industry that produced these tiles, while the second puts them into context by describing some of the magnificent pavements of which they once

users: for example, he had been able to make a detailed plot of a site using a number of instruments, and thus remove the 'finds' so that others coming would make a low or nil rate of finds.

Brian Hopley talked at length on ways he had raised funds for both his excavation of The Lunt and more recently in London. He brought to our attention the *Directory of Grant Making Trusts* and explained that it would be wise to expect to pick up grants in hundreds of pounds rather than thousands. However, wealthy patrons in general produce more money than do begging letters. Every society should be registered as a Charity since £10 donated was worth £14.29 to a Charity. One should never overlook the monetary savings in borrowing plant and apparatus. In a different vein, he said that as all architects are registered, why should not archaeologists follow suit? Much had been said recently about contract digging: this was undesirable as it could easily lead to a lowering of the high standards needed in modern archaeology.

Peter Addyman gave a blow-by-blow account of Jorvik, one which many of us had heard and admired at a LAMAS conference. Ian Skipper, his entrepreneur, was not able to be present.

Robert Kiln introduced us to Charitable Trusts, adding that submissions must be clear and succinct on the front page. The British Archaeological Awards were now administered by Victor Marchant. He also felt that 5% of *English Heritage* money should be diverted to smaller projects.

The problems which may arise in scheduling were dealt with by Keith Knowles of Brampton, Norwich, and Richard Bellhouse of Cumberland coastal defences of the Roman period. Both had found that it could rebound on them. Tim Tatton-Brown said

formed part. The remaining five chapters describe the main types of tile – plain tile mosaic, decorated tile mosaic, relief and counter-relief decoration, linear decoration and two-colour tiles. A selective bibliography and a list of places where medieval floor tiles can be seen *in situ*, re-set, or in museums, round off the book and lead on to a practical study of the tiles themselves.

The text is in Mrs Eames' usual lucid style and the illustrations are excellent – the quality of the colour plates in particular can rarely have been surpassed in a book of this price. The title might mislead the casual reader, as roof tiles are not dealt with: are they the subject of a further book? The whole forms
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that in the '70s one got all sites scheduled, but with hindsight this was sometimes a waste of time. In his experience Church Commissioners don't care a damn about it! The rescue crisis had produced a new profession and many amateur archaeologists became professional overnight. He posed the question many local societies are asking "how can we bring the under-50s back into archaeology?" Somehow we need to get back to the enthusiasm of the *Animal, Vegetable and Mineral* period!

In the discussion which followed, Daphne Lorimer suggested that we should base our publicity methods on those of the RSPB, which with 39,000 members was now very wealthy and powerful. Further discussion, on the lines suggested by Robert Kiln, produced a resolution calling for *English Heritage* to set aside a small proportion of its money, say £250,000 in the first instance, for use by independent archaeologists. It was carried with a very large majority. To my mind this could bring form-filling and bureaucracy into the part-time field.

The conference had been described beforehand in some circles as "a week-end of professional-bashing". I thought the attitude, whilst being slightly hurt by some past events, was more one of looking forward to better days and more co-operation. Let us face it we need one another.

One of the aims of the congress was to seek ways of getting co-operation between local societies. This hope still exists: maybe the CBA Groups will take it upon themselves to co-ordinate the effort. In the round-up of CBA Groups I think I detected a comment that Units generally were too busy to bother about their brethren in the field, who in general got better support from their local or County Museum. Finally it was agreed to consider another such Congress in two years time.

an excellent introduction to a subject which the author has made her own by many years of painstaking research.

CLIVE ORTON

London under London: a Subterranean Guide, by Richard Trench and Ellis Hillman. *John Murray*, 1985. 224 pp., 160 illus. £14.95.

THIS BOOK MUST be a welcome addition to those interested in the industrial archaeology of London, covering just about everything man has sought to bury in the bowels of the earth, from ancient sewers and rivers, to electrical and hydraulic power supply. It is a simply but well written and informative account of subterranean London, containing a fascinating selection of illustrations, including early wood-cuts, etchings, photographs and even drawings by Henry Moore. It is divided into nine clearly defined sections, each telling the history of a particular buried service, and supplying much background information, such as the geology of London and the problems encountered in digging or tunnelling in sand, gravel or clay.

The first chapter deals, rather oddly to my mind, with the use to which the Underground was put during the Second World War. Seventy-nine stations, as well as a disused tunnel, were used as shelters and new deep-level shelters were built under the Northern Line, which were to be used as a high-speed tube line after the war.

The second section describes London's underground rivers. Some of them are lost, but most are still flowing, including the Walbrook, Fleet, Tyburn and Westbourne. The authors provide a simple map, and informative pieces on each river tracing their history and paths under London. This section is concluded with the mention of London's lost rivers.

Sewers provide the subject of the third chapter, beginning with a journey through a large Victorian sewer. The problem of sanitation in London is considered from the 14th century to the Great Stink in 1858 which led to Bazalgette's system of interceptory sewers, which make use of some underground rivers, and the building of the Thames Embankment. This chapter leads refreshingly on to the subject of supplying water to the inhabitants of London, from medieval times onwards. As early as the 13th century, the Great Conduit took water from the Tyburn and fed it to bored-elm pipes and thence to the houses of the rich in lead quills. The authors then inform us briefly of hydraulic power used to operate lifts, cranes around the docks and so forth, before moving on to the invention and supply to London of coal gas.

Chapter Five is on the more glamorous subject of

tunnels under the Thames, of which there are over twenty. Here the book becomes quite detailed, providing an account of the Rotherhithe Tunnel – the first – and of its building and completion in 1840. Keeping with tunnels, it gives a history of the Underground, from cut-and-cover to the invention of the tunnelling shield and the modern deep-level railways we now know as the Tube.

The seventh chapter brings us back to services: electricity, the Post Office railway, including their pneumatic railway of 1863, right up to the installation of cable television. The concluding sections deal with the now outdated policy of Fortress London: the provision of subterranean government citadels and so forth, and oddities like the Kingsway tram underpass and Adam's Adelphi Arches.

London under London is a fascinating book. Sadly the authors do not provide a bibliography for those wishing to find out more, but they do supply a list of contacts for those brave enough to go below and see for themselves some of what they describe. There is a good index, and thus cross reference is not difficult, but I would have liked more and better detailed maps.

MICHAEL KENTISH

Cheapside before the Great Fire, by Derek Keene. *Economic and Social Science Research Council*, 1985. 26pp., many illus., £2 paperback.

THIS ATTRACTIVE booklet introduces some early results of a long-term project. A team based at the University of London's Institute of Historical Research and the Museum of London is using the records of property holdings in the City of London between 1100 and 1666 to chart changes in the fabric of the City, the density of settlement, the property market and the social and economic structure. The method of analysis being used is one evolved during the study of medieval Winchester and the credentials of the team are impeccable. The funding by the Economic and Social Science Research Council is something for which all interested in London's history can be grateful.

The booklet outlines some of the results of an intensive study of the development of one minute sample area of about eight acres in the heart of the medieval City's commercial district at the east end of Cheapside. It is an exciting sample, containing as it does the church of St. Mary le Bow and the site of the birthplace of one Thomas Becket. As a marginal comment, the number of parish churches in the sample area (six) supports the seemingly extravagant claim by Archbishop Becket's biographer, Fitz-Stephen, that there were 136 parochial churches in the 12th century City. The number of parish churches was similar to that of taverns (eight) in the

same area.

Intriguing to this reader, at least, is the picture of Cheapside at its retailing peak, around 1300, with shops on the street front and bazaars behind. These bazaars were known as *selds* and were large structures within which numerous traders stored, displayed and sold their wares (compare Covent Garden Market – a gigantic *seld*, even today). Reducing demand dealt the Cheapside *selds* a death blow and, when trade picked up around 1500, the small units did not reappear.

The booklet contains many illustrations including a number of well executed maps and diagrams. The layout, however, is somewhat overdesigned with one or two irritating foibles and the odd over-reduced illustration. Three pages are devoted to describing the source material, and it is typical of today that the author is apologetic that the 'mass of raw data' from deeds and rentals is not suitable for computer analysis – it seems that the random access memories of the human team were better able to cope with hypothesis building!

The brief bibliography tells us that two papers and a monograph are already in print dealing with topics mentioned in the booklet and that a Croom Helm book is in preparation. The booklet is thus by way of being an appetizer and, as such, serves admirably well. But the price is high.

DENNIS TURNER

Invitation to Archaeology, by Philip Rahtz. *Basil Blackwell*, 1985. 184 pp., 8 figs., index, bibliog. £14.50 (hardback), £4.95 (paperback).

THIS BOOK FORMS one of a series of Basil Blackwell *Invitation* books, and the invitation in this case is held out to a wide range of readers from those who are only mildly curious about archaeology to the author's "academic colleagues in search of light relief". The book is an absorbing collection of anecdotes, arguments and advice on such topics as who does archaeology and why, what archaeologists do, fringe archaeology, archaeology at home and abroad, and the relationship of archaeology to science fiction, all with a strong autobiographical flavour. Indeed the book's strength lies in the author's personal approach to the subject although, despite the fact that he says he "can afford to be honest, uninhibited and indiscreet", there are still cases when he feels that "discretion precludes a frank and honest exposé of the details", which is in itself a comment on the state of archaeology in Britain. Nevertheless, the author's wide experience gives him an enviable perspective of the subject which is reflected in the numerous insights he gives into many aspects of archaeology. For example, he observes that "workers rarely learn how to record

properly *until* they have had to write up an excavation" – a truism that helps to explain the present back-log of unpublished holes in the ground.

There are many omissions in the book. For instance, it deals only cursorily with the funding structure of British archaeology and does not explain the historical accidents that have moulded British archaeology into its present form. Similarly, the author says that he does not know of any really good archaeologist who does not have some kind of job in archaeology, but he knows of many second-rate archaeologists in jobs who ought not to be employed at all, and yet he gives no hint as to how this situation has arisen. Far from weakening the book, the omissions tantalize the reader into wanting to find out more – and that, after all, is one of the book's main purposes.

Whether you agree or disagree with the author's point of view, you should be stimulated, or at the very least provoked by this book, which succeeds in its intention of being an enthusiastic invitation to the subject. As the author points out, archaeology is "crucial to the survival of man on this planet, and should be accorded high priority and resources by modern society", so read this book while there is still time.

LESLEY ADKINS
ROY A. ADKINS

Croydon Airport and the Battle for Britain 1939-40, by Douglas Cluett, Joanna Bogle and Bob Learmouth. *London Borough of Sutton Libraries and Arts Services*, 1984. 166pp., 97pl., bibliog., index. £3.95.

THE LONDON BOROUGH of Sutton's Libraries and Arts Services have made a considerable effort to publicise the history of Croydon Airport. This offering is a well-researched reference work about the 1939-40 period, which draws on the experiences and memories of people who were there at the time. To quote from Wing Commander Stanford-Tuck's foreword "I consider this book should be read by all amateur and professional air historians ...". Were I unwise enough to consider disagreeing with such an eminent authority, I could certainly find no grounds for doing so here. The book's 166 pages are packed with facts and figures. There are over 90 illustrations, copies of documents and nearly four pages of reference sources. A first class reference book on a specialised subject. As such, it is highly unlikely to become a best seller or be the basis of a box office film success but, if you want to know what happened at RAF Croydon around the Battle of Britain period, this is for you – and at £3.95, it won't break the bank.

JOHN HOBBS