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## OFFICERS OF THE BRITISH BRICK SOCIETY

Chairman	Mr T P Smith BA, MA, M.Litt., MIFA	School Flat, Dartford Grammar School for Boys, West Hill Dartford, Kent DA1 2HW
Hon. Sec and Membership Sec	Mr M Hammett ARIBA (who also receives all direct subscriptions £3 p.a.)	9 Bailey Close, Lucas Road High Wycombe, HP13 6QA 0494 20299
Enquiries Sec and Editor of 'Information'	Mr D Kennett (for enquiries on academic or historical matters and articles and items for 'Information')	27 Lords Lane, Bradwell Great Yarmouth Norfolk NR31 8NY
Hon. Treasurer	Mrs Evelyn Hammersley (only matters concerning the annual a/cs, expenses etc.)	68 Bromley Heath Road Downend, Bristol BS16 6JT
Publications Officer and Bibliographer	Mrs A Los	"Peran", Plaxton Bridge, Woodmansey, Beverley E Yorks HU17 0RT

## OFFICERS OF THE BRICK SECTION OF THE BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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Membership Sec BAA	Miss I B McClure	61 Old Park Ridings Winchmore Hill London N21 2ET

Members of the BAA may elect to join its Brick Section and, as such, will be eligible for affiliation to the British Brick Society. They should inform the Hon. Secretary of the BBS of their address so that they can be included in the membership list.

## EDITORIAL

Information began in 1973 with a couple of duplicated sheets. Since that time, and under different editors, it has grown in size to its present twenty or so pages. When it was started, by Geoffrey Hines, there was no certainty that it would continue or even, indeed, that the British Brick Society itself would prove viable. Was such a society, with its obviously restricted interests, really needed at all? Obviously, however, there is a need for the Society and for its newsletter, which has helped over the years to keep members in touch with each others' interests and researches, very varied as they are. Though not a learned journal in the normal sense, it has also contained articles which have made a material contribution to the study of the subject, and it is gratifying to see so many of those articles listed in the Bibliography to Ronald Brunskill's new book on Brick Building in Britain (reviewed elsewhere in these pages).

A change of editor can be a good thing from time to time, enabling new ideas and approaches to be put into practice. I therefore hand over the task, at least for the time being, to David Kennett gladly, confident that he will produce a worthy newsletter - but also with a tinge of regret, since I have enjoyed (most of the time!) my seven years as editor. David Kennett has had considerable experience of editorial work, and indeed has to some extent acted as a kind of sub-editor for this and the previous issue of Information, at a time when there have been various difficulties in producing it on time. I hope that he will receive full support and that many members will feel able to offer material to him - I hope to do so myself. This should be sent to: David H. Kennett, Esq., 27 Lord's Lane, Bradwell, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR31 8NY.

It only remains for me to thank all those who have helped me in my editorial task over the past seven years, whether by contributing material or by helping in its production: Warmest thanks!

Terence Paul Smith  
Editor

### Kiln Painting

Linda Babb, of the Buckinghamshire County Museum, has asked me to draw attention to a coloured picture postcard now on sale at the Museum. It is of a detail of an oil painting recently purchased by the Museum, entitled 'At Brill, Bucks, Wotton and Ludgershall in the distance' and is by Edward John Niemann (1813-76) and dated 1858. Brill Common was a regional centre for the ceramic industry, including brickmaking, and the painting shows, right foreground, a ruined kiln together with what may be an open-sided drying shed. Other buildings, including a possible second kiln, appear slightly further back. The painting represents the final years of the industry in Brill. Fieldwork has shown that the village in the background is Ludgershall. Comparison with the Ordnance Survey map of 1878-80 indicates that a degree of artistic licence has been allowed in the placing of the main kiln.

The postcard is available from the Buckinghamshire City Museum, Technical Centre, Tring Road, Halton, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 5PJ. The cost is 10p (though one should include the cost of postage). I have been given a copy, and it is well worth having.

TPS



# LASCELLES' PATENT

*Maurice Exwood*

The recording of Moat Cottages, Loseley, Surrey,<sup>1</sup> by the Domestic Buildings Research Group, revealed some timber-framed out-buildings clad on the south side with large slabs, so formed as to imitate hanging tiles, some stamped 'Lascelles Patent'. The attractive red colouring gave the impression of a burnt clay product, but it was soon realised that the slabs were in fact concrete.

Each panel, about 900 by 750 mm high, imitates five rows of six tiles. The illusion of hanging tiles is achieved by variations of thickness of alternate tiles, a middle one standing proud of its neighbours by a few millimetres and the bottom edge of a higher row projecting by the thickness of a common tile over the adjacent row below. Two of the row imitate sculpted tiles. The bottom of each slab is recessed at the rear to receive the top of the next lower panel. Each panel is screwed to the timbers with hefty wood screws.

## The Patent

W.H.Lascelles of Bunhill, Middlesex, applied on 11 June 1875 for a patent, No 2151, entitled 'Improvements in the Construction of Buildings'. This describes a method of building small houses or cottages cheaply by screwing prefabricated slabs onto wood framing. The slabs are preferably moulded from crushed coke or cinders mixed with Portland Cement, 1 to 1.5 inches thick, reinforced with two lengths of bar wire or wire netting. By facing the mould with a thin layer of fine concrete, any colour may be achieved. The main objective is stated to be to reduce the cost of cottages and artisans' dwellings which can be erected mainly by unskilled labour in a short time. The idea of imitating tiling is a secondary consideration mentioned in the patent but without accompanying drawings showing how this is achieved by the method described above.

The comfort of the inhabitants seems to have been unimportant in the majority of cases: 'For houses of the better sort, and where the cost is not so great an object as in building cottages and artisans' dwellings, the house ... may be lined internally with the concrete slabs ... [which] may be plastered ... to receive paper-hangings, and so the houses will be much warmer in winter and cooler in summer.'

## Norman Shaw's Involvement

In what at first sight seems surprising, Lascelles got the co-operation of no less a personality than Norman Shaw, the highly successful nineteenth-century architect of churches, country houses (such as Armstrong's Gragside in Northumberland), the earliest garden suburb of Bedford Park, and the Piccadilly Hotel. In May 1878 Lascelles published a book, Sketches for cottages and other buildings, designed to be constructed in the patent cement slab system of W.H.Lascelles ... from sketches by R. Norman Shaw R.A., drawn by Maurice B. Adams A.R.I.B.A.

This book has twenty-eight exquisitely drawn sketches with plans of buildings rising from two-roomed cottages and a village shop to a detached residence (the only one with bath and WC), churches, a village hall, and a cottage hospital. The whole seems to be designed

more as a pattern book for rich country estate owners than as a promotion of Lascelles' patent slabs; indeed, apart from the frontispiece (quoted above) there is no mention of concrete slabs nor any indication in the drawings of how they would be used. The buildings in the book could just as well, or better, be constructed by conventional methods and materials. So how did Shaw come to agree to have his designs for a picturesque estate village associated with Lascelles' ideas for cheap construction? The answer is found in Andrew Saint's book on Shaw,<sup>2</sup> which makes it clear that Lascelles was one of two building contractors often recommended by Shaw, who tried to avoid builders with whose work he was not familiar. Shaw's way of recommending a single contractor can be expected to benefit both builder and architect, while the customer got a better job if not the best price.

Shaw's co-operation is confirmed in The Builder in 1878<sup>3</sup> which gave a glowing description of Lascelles' ingenious system and went on to say 'The patentee has secured the valuable co-operation of Mr Norman Shaw to assist in putting this material into picturesque shape, and publishes a very pretty volume of cottage buildings drawn by Mr Maurice B. Adams from that gentleman's design.' The article then continues by slating Shaw for '... imitating old rustic buildings in a modern material.... [H]ere was a real chance for doing something new on the basis of a new material and method, which chance has been deliberately and almost perversely thrown away...'. Do we detect a degree of sour grapes from the contracting world faced with the strong team of Shaw and Lascelles?

During the 1870s Lascelles did, in fact, do a great deal of building for Shaw, including 'Hopdene' at Holmbury St Mary, Surrey, a number of large London houses, and Shaw's own house in Ellendale Road, Hampstead. Shaw and Lascelles also co-operated by having a number of concrete slab buildings erected at the Paris International Exhibition of 1878, where Shaw's Jury House, built by Lascelles, this time in his concrete blocks, won a gold medal. Both Shaw and Lascelles were awarded the Legion of Honour for their contribution to this exhibition.

#### W.H.Lascelles

Andrew Saint got most of his information on Lascelles from Miss Helen Brooks, who is the recognised expert on the subject and has written a number of contributions on this which were noted in Saint's book. She knows what a good builder Lascelles was, since she has lived for a long time in a house in Croydon, built of concrete slabs by Lascelles in 1882, which without alteration has stood the test of time better than many traditional houses of similar age. Lascelles, whose works were in Bunhill Road (London EC), lived in Croydon and built twenty-one concrete houses there, of which twelve - eight cottages and four of 'the better sort' - survive (March 1990).<sup>4</sup> He had a number of other patents to his name. He had a bent for publicity which did not stop at using Shaw's fame: in two months at the end of 1879 he managed to get himself or his concrete blocks mentioned in The Builder no fewer than seven times. One correspondent, under the pseudonym 'Fair Play', accused him of using someone else's published system, but he had no difficulty in proving that he applied for his patent two years before the publication referred to.

All the publicity of 1879 may have gone to his head; he contributes a letter to the editor of The Builder of 20 December 1879 in which he recalls riding in Brunel's atmospheric railway as a boy (he was born in 1832 in Exeter where Brunel's atmospheric traction on the South Devon Railway from Exeter to Totnes started in September 1847 and finished a year later) and proposes a system of harnessing tidal energy to compress air on Brighton beach to drive an atmospheric

railway to London!<sup>5</sup>

### Notes and References

1. NGR: SU 974471. DBRG Report 3971.
2. A.Saint, Richard Norman Shaw, Yale, 1976.
3. The Builder, 31 August 1878, 908-9.
4. Some Lascelles houses are listed in N.Pevsner and B.Cherry, The Buildings of England: London, 2, South, Harmondsworth, 1983, pp.224-5, 650. Some of these have now been demolished.
5. For a biography and bibliography of Lascelles see Dictionary of Business Biography, vol.4, London School of Economics, 1985, article by Helen Brooks.

## MORE DRAGONS!

### Derbyshire Dragons

Ashbourne: Magnificent high-winged late Victorian dragon finial to the roof of an older rendered building, The George and Dragon Inn, in the Market Place.

Buxton: Dragon finial (re-set or old stock?) of bright red terracotta, set to blast visitors on the porch of a 1901 sandstone terrace house in 'Brooklands', west of the town centre.

### Dead Dragon

Reading: Reading Museum has the head of a particularly large, individually sculpted dragon, which unfortunately cracked off in a very frosty winter some years ago. The finial belongs to a house in Christchurch Road, one of a group east of the junction with Kendrick Avenue that were erected in the 1880s by William Poulton, of Poulton and Sons brickworks. He lived in the first house himself, but dragonless. This firm was taken over in 1908 by S. and E. Collier of Grovelands, whose pre-1914 War catalogue has various dragon finial designs, but most of their finials, air-bricks, and all kinds of fancy or special bricks were of old Poulton designs, to be ordered from the Waterloo Kiln, which had been Poulton's. Reading has quite a lot of these dragons, including one at The Griffin Inn, Caversham.

### Musical Dragons?

Craig-y-nos Castle, Brecon Beacons National Park, Powys: Jane Wight was consulted in 1977/8 about a pair of dragons which turned out to have lost their wings (? dragons since restored). They were finials to a late Victorian garden pavilion, belonging to the period when this older house was the home of Dame Adelina Patti, the singer. The dragons clambered sideways over their decorative end-ridge-tiles, and retained fleur-de-lys tail-ends and wonderfully knobbly spines, but, even worse than wing-loss, they had both lost their heads. When complete, they must have looked like the Reading dragons (or wyverns or griffins) that have trefoil tail-ends, knobbly spines, smallish wings jutting virtually



upright from a very small base, and two legs only, not four.

### Another Creature

Maidenhead: A good place for dragons, but does anyone know anything about the superb swan sailing the roof of a riverside villa (you can see it from the railway), looking maybe old rather than antique?

Jane A. Wight

Following the editor's comments on the dragon at Rye House (Information 48, July 1989, 2-3), I went to see it and became more interested. Since then I have been noting dragons in my own area of North London:

- (i) In Baker Street, Enfield, the pub now known as The Enfield Stores but known to most locals as The Hop Poles has two very good dragons. One has a long curved neck.
- (ii) Also in Baker Street, Enfield The Jolly Butchers has two smaller dragons on the roof.
- (iii) The Three Compasses pub in Queen Street, Tottenham - on the Tottenham-Edmonton boundary - has two good dragons.
- (iv) No 57 Wellington Road, Bush Hill Park, Enfield is a house with two dragons.
- (v) Nearby, in Dryden Road, Bush Hill Park a small outbuilding behind the former Barclays Bank had two fine dragons. One fell off during the January storms of 1990: I can see its fragments lying in the back garden. I hope to contact the occupier of this small house, so as to repair it.
- (vi) Another house in Southgate N14 - no 10 Cannon Hill - has three dragons. One has lost his head! The owner wants a replacement head.

Sidney M. Beadle

I seem to have started something with my mention of the Rye House dragon! I am most grateful to those who have sent me details of their own dragon spottings. I hope they will keep coming in. I am, of course, no longer in the position to make firm promises, but I am sure that the new editor, David Kennett, will be pleased to include details in future issues of Information. It is too early to produce a distribution map, but clearly the dragons spread their wings widely. What else, indeed, would one expect of self-respecting dragons?!

T.P. Smith

## A NATIONAL REGISTER OF BRICKMARKS

At the AGM in June 1990 it was decided to set up a working party to consider the preparation of a National Register of Brickmarks. The working party will need to decide how to produce a publication which will be of value in identifying all British bricks bearing makers' marks.

Comments and contributions are invited from BBS members wishing to join this group.

Please contact: Sidney M. Beale, 105 Green Dragon Lane, Winchmore Hill, London N21 2NL. (Please enclose SAE for reply.)

Sidney M. Beale

# EARLY MEDIEVAL BRICKWORK IN ESSEX & SUFFOLK

*David H. Kennett*

The Spring Meeting of the Royal Archaeological Institute on Saturday 12 May 1990 was devoted to the topic of 'Early Medieval Brickwork in Essex and Suffolk'. The speaker was the chairman of the British Brick Society, T.P. Smith Esq.

Three exceptionally interesting buildings were examined. The morning was divided between two ecclesiastical buildings: Little Coggeshall Abbey, Essex, and St Mary's church, Polstead, Suffolk. A secular building, Little Wenham Hall, was the venue for the afternoon session.

The abbey at Little Coggeshall<sup>1</sup> was founded in 1140 by King Stephen for monks of the Order of Savignac; in 1148, it became a Cistercian house. Building was from then until the mid 1220s. Of the church, the earliest structure, nothing survives above ground although Mrs Brew, the present owner of the site, reported being able to trace the outline in years with parched grass. Brick is reported from its structure, including segmental bricks used for the columns. Jane Wight reports the discovery of a kiln with wasters in 1845. A mould fault in extant brickwork was traced by Nathaniel Lloyd.

The surviving buildings are the dormitory undercroft, a two-storeyed range with a vaulted corridor on the ground floor, the abbot's lodging, and a free-standing building not aligned with the others which has been interpreted as the guest hall.

The dormitory undercroft includes a single brick pillar of the twelfth century in a room of the present house on the site. The house itself is of a different brick to the monastic structures on which it is situated. There is a date of 1581 on the porch.

The two-storeyed range with the vaulted corridor has been remodelled and it is suggested by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner that the vaulting is inserted. The corridor is open on its eastern side; the west wall includes doorways which are apparently thirteenth century in date but the indications of patching suggests a more complex history might be revealed by a brick-by-brick analysis of the whole. It is 40 ft (10 metres) long.

It was not possible to go inside the abbot's lodging. This has brick fenestration and on the upper floor a brick piscina in the chapel. The brick windows are lancets but round-headed inside.

Adjacent to, but not aligned with, the abbot's lodging is a free-standing brick building. The fenestration had bricks made especially to provide for wider space on the inside of the walls than where the glass would have been. Below these long thin windows are a series of recesses built in brick into the walls to provide seats. The north wall of this building includes a doorway of moulded brick. It is suggested that this building dates to c.1185-1190 and is the guest hall of the abbey.

Standing away from all of these is the final element in the buildings at Little Coggeshall, the capella extra portas dedicated to St Nicholas. This is a complete building, of four bays. The brick windows are regularly spaced on the north side, but not on the south where the stone doorway is. Two of the south windows are shorter than the others. They are above the interior brick sedilia and piscina at the east end. The western end has a renewed three-light brick window under a single pointed arch; the east window with hollow-chamfered bricks in the lancets is more weathered. A date of around 1220 has been postulated for the chapel of St Nicholas.



The visit to St Mary's church, Polstead, was the spur to some further research. This more extended account of the church where the brick arches pre-date 1163 follows this report on the visit.<sup>2</sup>

In the afternoon the focus was on Little Wenham Hall,<sup>3</sup> which was examined by kind permission of A.T.C. Binney Esq., the grandson of the early twentieth-century owner who did much to keep the building in such excellent condition. Little Wenham Hall has a vaulted room on the ground floor of the west range of the L-shaped structure with above this a first-floor hall. In the short, north range are a vaulted room on the ground floor, a chapel on the first floor, and a possible solar on the second floor. The stair turret is in the inner angle of the two wings and rises to give access to the roof of the hall. This is now flat and lead-covered. It may have been pitched originally.

The lowest portion of Little Wenham Hall is built of the local stone, a light-coloured shale sometimes called septaria. Inserted in this are lumps of flint and as single courses rows of light-coloured brick. There are four of these courses before the building fabric changes to brick only for the main walling material. The septaria at Little Wenham is much lighter in colour than and has the feel of translucent opacity absent from the material used at the parish church of St Osyth in the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. From 5 ft (1.55 metres) high, the walls of Little Wenham Hall are of the yellow, light cream, light pink bricks.

It is thought that the building took some time to erect. It is usually attributed to Sir John de Vallibus, in occupation in the 1270s, and his successor, Petronilla de Narford, who did not inherit until 1287. The boss in the apex of the vault of the chapel is of St Petronilla, suggesting that this work (which is non structural) was not completed until then.

Vaulting at Little Wenham is of brick on the ground floor but of stone in the first-floor chapel.

Of the thirteenth-century building the only portion which has been demolished is a garderobe on the south side of the first floor hall. In the sixteenth century a range was added adjoining the southern third of the west wall. A plaque above the ground floor doorway records its building by Sir John Brewse in 1569. This range lead to the assessment of Little Wenham Hall by the hearth tax enumerators in 1674 as 21 hearths occupied by William Brewse. The range was destroyed about 1760.

John Brewse is one of the members of the family buried in All Saints' church. He died in 1585 and has a monument on the south side of the chancel. An earlier, unknown, member of the family is commemorated opposite in a monument about a hundred years earlier; Thomas Brewse, died 1514, and his wife have a fine brass immediately opposite the altar in the centre of the chancel. On the south wall of the nave is a monument to Giles Debenham, a fourteenth-century owner of Little Wenham Hall.

To students of brick, the church is interesting for the restored top of the tower. Here the brick is deep red, a contrast to the hall.

North of the church is a large barn. The lower stage of this is brick, mostly red but incorporating burnt headers in diaper pattern. The upper part is timber-framed with brick in-filling. It is unknown whether the in-filling is original.

Those participating in the day were especially grateful to Nicholas Cooper, the Meetings Secretary of the Royal Archaeological Institute, for the excellent arrangements, particularly making it possible to visit Little Wenham Hall and Little Coggeshall Abbey, to Mr Binney and Mr and Mrs Brew respectively for permission for fifty eager architectural enthusiasts to invade their properties, and to Terence Smith for his introductions to the buildings and to early brickwork in general.

## References

1. Popular accounts of Little Coggeshall Abbey appear in N. Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Essex, (Harmondsworth, 1954, second edition revised by E. Radcliffe, 1965), 276-277; N. Scarfe, Essex: A Shell Guide, (London, 1968), 75-76; J. Wight, Brick Building in England from the Middle Ages to 1550, (London, 1972), 260-262 with pl. 4 and 5. More extended accounts are given R.C.H.M., An Inventory ... Essex III North-East Essex, (1922), 160 sqq., with plan and photographs, and J.S. Gardner, 'Coggeshall Abbey and its Early Brickwork', J.B.A.A., 3rd series, 18 (1955), 19-32. As was observed by several at the meeting this is a building which deserves a new and extended study.
2. For references to Polstead church see 'Polstead Church' infra this issue of Information.
3. Popular accounts of Little Wenham Hall are given N. Scarfe, Suffolk A Shell Guide, (London, 1960, third edition 1982), 173; N. Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Suffolk, (Harmondsworth, 1961, second edition revised by E. Radcliffe, 1974), 340-342 with pl. 43 and 44a; J. Wight, Brick Building in England from the Middle Ages to 1550, (London, 1972), 371-372, with pl. 6. More extended accounts appears M.E. Wood, 'Thirteenth-Century Domestic Architecture in England', Arch. J. 105 supplementary volume (1950), 76-81 with fig 15a, summarised M.E. Wood, The English Medieval House, (London 1965, reprinted 1981), 22 with fig. 7, and H. Avray Tipping, English Homes Period I, (London, Country Life, 1921), 92-100.

## POLSTEAD CHURCH, SUFFOLK

David H. Kennett

### Introduction

The report on the Spring Meeting of the Royal Archaeological Institute (supra) indicates that the visit to St Mary's church, Polstead was the spur to further research by the present writer on returning to his permanent base. The work arose because it seemed clear that the church was not just an ordinary parish church paid for by an average community of twelfth-century peasants with a no more than moderately prosperous lord of the manor.

The church at Polstead <sup>1</sup> is well-known for the brick arches <sup>2</sup> to the twelfth-century nave arcades with a series of blocked brick windows above, once forming a contemporary clerestory, and the series of now-blocked round-headed windows in the chancel. Most authorities, among them Munro Cautley, Laurence Harley, Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, Norman Scarfe, and Jane Wight, ascribe an early medieval date to the nave and chancel, and suggest around 1160 as the probable date.

### Tenurial History

The history of St Mary's church is clearly linked to the history of the manor at Polstead. The living is a rectory and has been since the thirteenth century. The incumbent is therefore entitled to the great tithes but has the responsibility for the upkeep of the chancel.

The church was therefore always connected with the village, and no monastic connection is known. Like many parish churches, Polstead church was built as the chapel of the local lord. In the middle ages, the advowson went with the manor. Investigation of the manorial history is therefore of value in ascertaining who built St Mary's church and when this was done. <sup>3</sup>

As with many Suffolk villages, the first record is that of 1086. In the Domesday Survey, the large parish of Polstead was among the Suffolk lands of Swein of Essex. He also held the adjacent parishes of Stoke-by-Nayland, and Nayland, as well as the non-parochial Withermarsh and Aveley, also in Babergh Hundred, as well as other lands in Thingoe Hundred, tenements and customary dues in the Borough of Ipswich, and manors and lands in Samford Hundred. In Essex, Swein had no fewer than fifty-five lordships. As at Polstead, many of these other properties had been held by his father, Robert of Essex, before the Conquest. Swein's position can be seen by his place in the list of landholders in the Suffolk Domesday: he is placed second among the lay lords, after Richard of Clare and William de Warenne, but before Eudo Dapifer, Hugh de Montfort and Geoffrey de Mandeville Aubrey de Vere, among others.

In the 1150s, the tenant-in-chief at Polstead was Swein's descendent, Henry de Essex. In the early years of Henry II's reign, this man held a number of royal appointments including royal standard bearer and constable. As such he was present at a number of Henry II's military campaigns, particularly the failures. In 1157, Henry of Essex was with Henry II when the king was ambushed in a wood near Chester. Here he is reputed to have panicked and both fled the field and abandoned the standard. As a result of this, Henry of Essex was challenged to a duel by Robert de Montfort in 1163. At Reading, in the king's presence Henry of Essex was defeated and subsequently he was deprived of his lands and offices.

Among the lands Henry of Essex lost was the manor, and parish, of Polstead. About the tenurial history between 1163 and 1199 nothing is known. The new tenant-in-chief in the reign of King John was Sir Hugh de Polstead, a man of much less wealth than his mid-twelfth-century predecessor.

### Description

St Mary's church, Polstead, Suffolk, is now a building comprising a large chancel, a nave of four bays with a north and a south aisle, a north porch, a south porch, and a west tower. Each of these will be described, but notice of non-structural elements will be sparse in the account which concentrates on the use of brickwork.

The chancel is best appreciated from the exterior. On the north side are one complete round-headed window at the western end of the wall and a fragment of another cut by the renewed fourteenth-century window at the eastern end. These two are linked by a table of red brick set in the stonework at the base of the twelfth-century windows. On the north side of the chancel there are now two windows in the eastern third and the central third of the structure: these appear to be good copies in much renewed stonework of the windows inserted into this part of the structure in the fourteenth century. On the south side of the exterior of the chancel,



an almost complete round-headed window can be seen in the centre portion of the wall. This has been cut by the top of the priest's door to the chancel. A fragment of one side of the western round-headed window can be seen cut by the renewed stone window. There is a second renewed window in the eastern third of the wall. On the east face of the chancel there are the beginnings of a multiple group of round-headed windows and blank arcades which can be seen on either side of the great east window of the chancel. The latter was inserted in the known renovation of the church in 1510-1520, but may replace a fourteenth-century east window.

Brickwork in the chancel fabric is thus the evidence for a series of three round-headed brick windows on both the north and south sides and a grand east end. These were linked by the table of brick at the base of the windows.

The chancel is large: an indication of its width can be gained from the three-sided communion rail which encloses a Stuart communion table of the standard size. The interior of the chancel is plastered over and now whitewashed. None of the early features is visible internally.

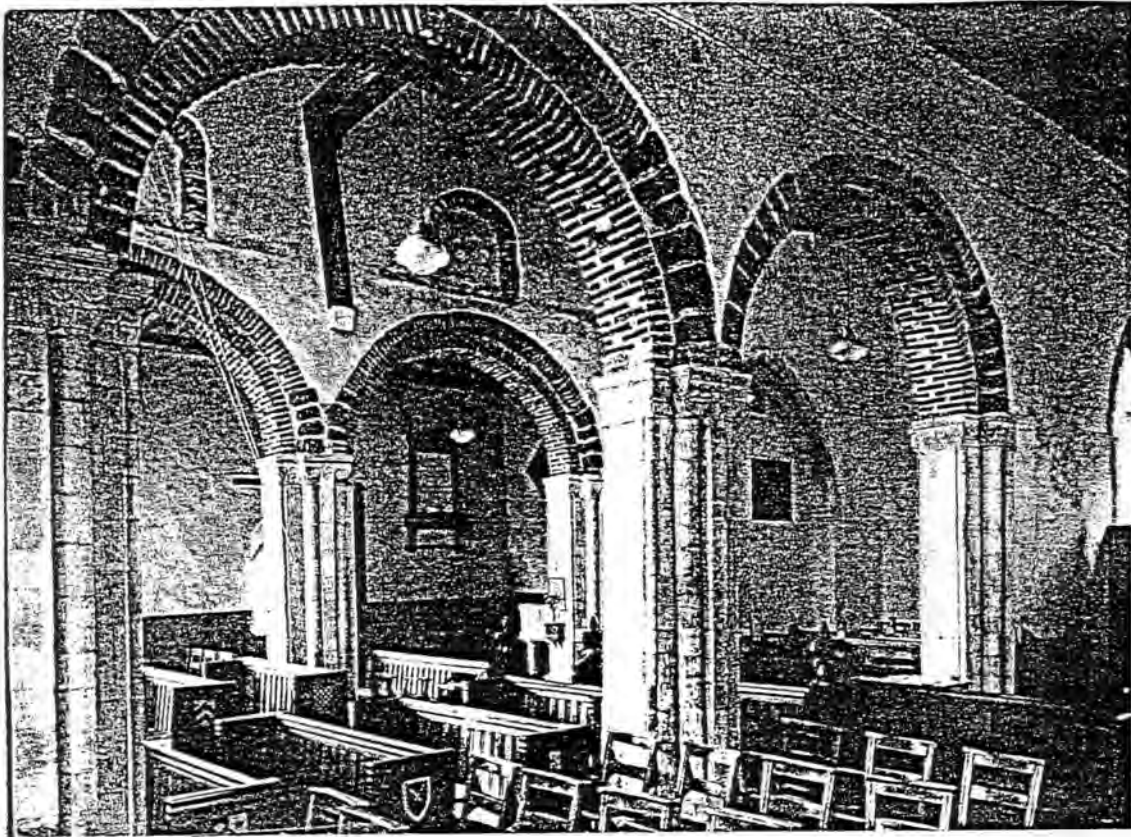
The chancel arch is carried on square-sectioned limestone pillars, narrower in width than the wall separating the chancel from the nave. The chancel arch itself is brick with a narrower inner section corresponding in width to the outer part of the columns. Above the chancel arch is a three-light stone window inserted probably in the fourteenth or fifteenth century.

The nave is separated from the aisles by the well-known arcades whose arches are of brick. These arcades share characteristics, but differ in detail. Both arcades are of four bays. The three most easterly bays are carried on square-sectioned columns with capitals and nook shafts in the corners. These supports are of limestone although Jane Wight reports some brick in their structure. These three arches on both sides are of brick with the use of a dark stone in large blocks in the lower portions of the outer edges, both to the nave and to the aisles, of the arches. The inner portions of the arches are purely of brick, laid so that a stretcher face and a header face are visible when looking up at the underside of each arch. Above each of these three bays on both the north and the south side of the nave are the brick surrounds of round-headed windows from a clerestory. Because of alterations to the roof structure these are not visible from either the outside of the building or the inner face of each aisle: in the case of the south aisle the former outer face of the clerestory is now covered by plaster and whitewash. The fourth bay of each arcade is separated from its fellows by a section of walling. The western bays of the arcades differ.

The arcades differ in detail. The south arcade has the first, most easterly, bay partly remodelled to make it pointed. This was abandoned after the cutting back of the outer face. The refashioning does not cut the base of the blocked clerestory window above. On the column separating the first and second bays and again on the column separating the second and third bays, repacking of the material on the outer face on the south side has been effected. This repacking is done with a different brick and with the mortar joints more prominently done than is the case elsewhere in the arcades. The fourth bay of the south arcade is not of brick. Now blocked this is a stone arch, on a plain upright to the west, which is pointed in its form.

The north arcade also has the first, eastern, bay remodelled to the nave face as a pointed arch. This does piece the base of the blocked clerestory window above. In the north arcade there is much more use of the tufa than in the other arcade. The fourth bay of the north arcade is round-headed and built up on brick columns.

The western end of the present nave has a brick arch on the inner face of the doorcase and above this a blocked window of the same round-headed form as the clerestory.



North side of the north arcade and north side of the south arcade at Polstead church. The brick font can be seen in the south aisle. (after Wight)

The roof of the nave is of tie-beam and crown-post type. Windows were cut into the south side of the roof to admit light to the nave.

Both aisles have been rebuilt. The south aisle has a good quality fourteenth-century window at its east end. Tracery is akin to but not identical with that found in more northerly parts of the Diocese of Norwich. The doorway is of a similar period but the other windows are renewed and of a later style. There is a polygonal brick font in the south aisle. It is on five supports of thirteenth-century type. The piece has been renovated in the twentieth century.

The north aisle was also widened in the fourteenth century; the east window is of this date but the others are later. The roof of this aisle has a panelled section above the eastern bay; Munro Cautley suggests that it served as a canopy of honour. This may imply that the north aisle was expanded for liturgical rather than other reasons. The aisles give the impression that they are of unequal widths.

The principal entry to the church is from the north porch which is some steps above the level of the aisles and the nave. There is also a south porch.

Inside the east face of the ground floor room of the present west tower is a fine Norman doorway of three engaged columns and an arch of four orders above. This piece can be paralleled elsewhere in the medieval diocese of Norwich. South Norfolk examples which spring to mind are the north door of Hales church, the south door at Heckingham, and the south door at Hellington. All of these have this level of elaboration. At Polstead there is a brick arch on the inner face of the door.

The tower makes the west door invisible from the outside. The tower has been placed in the fourteenth century; it is capped by the only stone spire in Suffolk.

### Building Materials

Members of the British Brick Society would clearly visit Polstead church to view the brick arcades and the brickwork in the chancel. Even in the pages of BBS Information it is worth commenting on the other materials. This is particularly so in the case of the limestone used in the pillars of the arcades as this can be seen as reinforcing the idea of Polstead church being treated by the man who financed its building as a prestige-enhancing building.

The chancel arch and the nave arcades have limestone columns, of an equal-armed cross in cross-section which are of dressed stone. This is material which has been brought a considerable distance. No identification of the limestone has been made. The nearest English sources are at least 100 miles distant: sc. Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire; and involve a sea journey round East Anglia. A north French source would also involve a long sea journey to bring the stone to Polstead.

The dark stone in the arches is regarded by some as 'tufa', described by Jane Wight as a 'dark, pitted stone (? of volcanic origin)'. Laurence Harley suggests that it originates in the Lake District, North Wales or the Cheviots, and that its presence at Polstead is due to the robbing of a Roman villa. Carefully counting the pieces in the published photographs suggests that the total number of pieces of tufa in the church is about 140 or 150. This number could well be local in origin. The stone is darker than but resembles the various crag formations of south Suffolk. It is a different local stone to that used in the lower portions of Little Wenham Hall.

The interior bricks are agreed as twelfth century in date. However, the other bricks and the 'tufa' in the make-up of the building have been suggested as Roman in origin and the spoils of a Roman villa. The present writer is unaware of any discoveries of a Roman villa in Polstead or adjacent parishes.

The present writer sees no need to treat the brickwork of the chancel as using other than early medieval bricks. Laurence Harley implies a comparison with the brickwork, including window surrounds, in St Albans Abbey, which does re-use Roman brick from the city of Verulamium. However, the two cases are not comparable. The great centre tower, some of the nave arcades, and much of the north wall of the Norman abbey are built of Roman brick. This is unlike the brickwork at Polstead. The use of brick in the chancel at Polstead is deliberate and planned: at St Albans Abbey it is randomly used as a walling material, and serves no decorative function. Also there seems to be no difference in either texture of the bricks or their size between those in the nave arcades and those in the chancel walls.

The Polstead bricks were measured by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, who reported that they are 10-11 in. by 5-7 in. by  $1\frac{3}{4}$  in. This contrasts with the Roman brick size of 18 in. by 12 in. by 1 in. It agrees with the size of the bricks at Little Coggeshall Abbey.



## Discussion

The church at Polstead presents a number of interesting problems to the investigator. First we have the exceptionally early use of brick. There is little doubt that the medieval brickwork is primary and dates to the time of building, which as all have agreed is around 1160. A terminus ante quem is provided by the disgrace of Henry of Essex in 1163.

Brickwork this early in England is known only sparsely. The most obvious example is the abbey at Little Coggeshall, Essex, where the earliest of the surviving buildings has brickwork conventionally ascribed to the 1180s. The church which had brick in its structure would have been earlier, a building probably of the 1140s and 1150s.

Quite apart from the use of brick, Polstead church was built in the mid twelfth century as a prestige-enhancing building: it is not the small local church of a community of about three hundred. In 1066 there were 26 villeins, 36 bordars and a serf, and slightly fewer households twenty years later: 21 villeins, 31 bordars and a serf. In the 1327 subsidy, there were 32 tax payers. None of this suggests a medieval population much above three hundred people. Such a community of itself cannot afford to construct a large church, with aisles from the beginning, and having a great straight-ended chancel.

Churches built by unprivileged villagers in the twelfth century are not uncommon in their survival in the Diocese of Norwich, which then included Suffolk, and are frequent in Essex. Such comprise a narrow nave with either a west or a central tower and a small, apsidal chancel. Where a contemporary aisle is present it is either cut through the wall and roughly finished or the division is supported on circular columns. A contemporary clerestory is absent. Examples originally with a central tower but now with a sixteenth-century west tower of brick include Hemley and Waldringfield on the south bank of the River Deben, and inland churches like Carlton near Kelsale and the deconsecrated one at Ubbeston. In all of these the chancel is straight-ended. With a round tower and an apsidal chancel is Hales, Norfolk; as this but with a crudely done north aisle, the church at Heckingham. The aisle breaking through the wall recurs at Eaddiscoe, Norfolk, where the chancel may always have been square. Members of the British Brick Society who visited north-east Suffolk early in 1990 saw three such typical early medieval churches. At St Margaret's, Herringfleet, there is a round tower, a nave, and a square-ended chancel. Here almost the only alterations are new thirteenth-century windows in the nave and sixteenth-century brick windows in the chancel. St Edmund's church at Fritton was widened in the fourteenth century but retains the small apsidal chancel. Brickwork here is mostly seventeenth-century and later repairs and buttresses. At the church dedicated to St Peter and St Paul, Burgh Castle, the chancel was rebuilt in later middle ages but the nave was not extended until the building of the north aisle in 1847. In concept the church at Polstead is much more grand than any of these.

Rather Polstead church can be seen as a twelfth-century precursor of the grand fifteenth-century churches of Suffolk which were built by a combination of aristocratic patronage and mercantile wealth. Here, one thinks of Long Melford, Cavendish, Aldeburgh, and Blythburgh, to be followed in the sixteenth century by the great church at Lavenham. The appropriate early medieval comparison for Polstead church is a generation later. The church dedicated to St Nicholas at Castle Hedingham, Essex, is one of the very few stone-built parish churches to be constructed with a clerestory: it dates to not earlier than c.1180. Building at Castle Hedingham is due to a skilled set of masons who finished the castle some time after the death of Aubrey de Vere, in 1141; the first de Vere's son set his men to build a great church.

It seems not improbable that after unknown, presumably secular, work, Henry of Essex set his masons to build Polstead church in the late 1150s and early 1160s. St Mary's, Polstead, represents the kind of parish church which a high-standing royal officer built in a village which he considered to be an important centre of his estate in the mid twelfth century.

The shape of the church built for Henry of Essex may be discerned. The chancel was the present one. The nave and aisles were there, but the aisles had a different profile so as to reveal the clerestory. The present west tower was not there: the fine doorway was clearly meant to be seen.

The doorway is noted as having three engaged columns and an arch of four orders above. The complexity of the doorway marks it out. There are other examples of this level of sophistication in the medieval Diocese of Norwich. Norfolk examples are the north door at St Margaret's, Hales, the south door of St Gregory's, Heckingham, and the south door of the church dedicated to St John the Baptist at Hellington. The last is partly covered by the thirteenth-century porch. More usual, however, are fewer columns and fewer arches. Members who came to north-east Suffolk saw the door of St Margaret's church, Herringfleet, with a pair of columns and two arches. The church at Fritton was locked on the occasion of our visit: the reassembled doorway inside the south porch has a single set of columns to each side. These are more usual than the lavish provision in the west door at Polstead.

The door at Polstead was meant to be seen, thus giving a show front to the west end. But it is unclear how wide this front was. No firm evidence of the original width of the aisles was observed: a more thorough examination perhaps involving a stone by stone drawing might reveal that the aisles were narrower when first built. The south door has never attracted critical comment: this may include re-used twelfth-century work. The east wall of the south aisle lacks any obvious indication of a straight joint indicating widening at some point prior to the insertion of the large, good quality window. It may be that the whole of the outer walls were rebuilt when the church was refenestrated in the fourteenth century. The opinion has been given that the north aisle appears to be wider than the south one: this would need measuring to be confirmed.

The aisle walls are thus no help in determining the appearance of the congregational part of Henry of Essex's church. Nor is it clear whether the church when completed had a tower.

In the liturgy of the mass in the twelfth century there is no strict need for a tower. On the other hand the majority of twelfth-century churches have a tower either at the west end or in the centre: the centre tower is abandoned progressively in the middle ages or simply not renewed. By the late thirteenth century the west tower is the norm in new and rebuilt churches. However, in the twelfth century either placing is used with the centre tower most common in town churches. If a centre tower is present, it is part of the liturgical space we now designate as the chancel. At Polstead, the regular spacing of the Norman windows in the chancel argues against the possibility of a centre tower, as does the lack of any internal indication of a dividing up of the present chancel. The proportion of 2:3 between width and length of the chancel at Polstead is a common one for twelfth-century square-ended chancels in East Anglia.

If a centre is to be ruled out, the presence of a west tower, if any, has to be assumed. Above the present western bay of the nave is a possibility. Between this and the neighbouring bay is a stretch of walling. It is possible that this was meant originally to have the columns of a tower arch abutting. This tower arch would have been of the same positioning as the chancel arch and the nave arcades. Either it was never built or has been taken down and the walling covered with smooth plaster. There is no clerestory window on the south side above the now pointed arch. This may indicate a rebuilding completely

of this portion or suggest that there never was a window at the clerestory stage here, precisely because the walling was intended to be the south wall of the tower. The window in the west wall, above the door, may have been intended to light both the lower part of the tower and provide additional light to the nave. The use of a clerestory is to provide additional light to the nave.

The level of a prestige building surely demanded a tower, but we know that Henry of Essex was deprived of his lands in 1163. The problem of the tower might be solved by suggesting that one was intended but had not been begun in 1163 and so was not built as the finance for the project was removed before it could be begun.

### References

1. Summary accounts of Polstead church are given H.M. Cautley, Suffolk Churches and their Treasures, (Ipswich, Norman Allard, 1937, third edition, 1954), 304; L.S. Harley, Polstead Church and Parish, (guide book, 6th edition, 1988), esp. 16-28; N. Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Suffolk, (Harmondsworth, 1961, second edition, revised by E. Radcliffe, 1974), 395; N. Scarfe, Suffolk: a Shell guide, (London, 1960, third edition 1976), 143-144; J. Wight, Brick Building in England from the Middle Ages to 1550, (London, 1972), 374. To the best of the present writer's knowledge there is no extended account with a plan.
2. Photographic coverage of the arches is various: Cautley, 1937/1954, pl. on 284 left (looking east showing south side of north arcade, chancel arch, north side of south arcade); Harley, 1988, pl. on 17 (looking east showing two bays of south side of north arcade, chancel arch, one and a half bays of north side of south arcade) and pl. on 18 lower (top of capitals and lowest courses of arches to south side of chancel arch and east respond of south arcade); Pevsner, 1961/1974, pl. 15a (looking north showing south side of south arcade, part of chancel arch, two eastern bays of north arcade with clerestory window over one bay); Wight, 1972, pl. 3 (looking south showing north side of the three western bays of the north arcade, north side of the three western bays of the south arcade with clerestory windows over the two central bays of the arcade). The present writer is unaware of any published photograph looking west along the nave showing the brick of the inner side of the west doorway and the brick window surround above this.
3. W.A. Copinger, The Manors of Suffolk I The Hundreds of Babergh and Blackbourn, (London, 1905), 178-181; J. Harvey, Suffolk Domesday: the Latin Text extended and translated, (Bury St Edmunds, 1888 and 1891); B.A. Lees, 'Domesday Book', Victoria County History of Suffolk I (1911), 357-582; A. Rumble (ed.), Domesday Book: Suffolk, (Chichester, 1986). Polstead is holding 27.5.



## REVIEW

R.W.Brunskill, Brick Building in Britain, London, Victor Gollancz Ltd in association with Peter Crawley, 1990. 208pp, 180 b&w illustrations, 28 colour illustrations. Price £18-95. ISBN 0-575-04457-8.

This book is a replacement of English Brickwork, co-authored with the late Alec Clifton-Taylor and published by Ward Lock in 1977. 'Sadly,' writes Dr Brunskill (p11), the revision 'has to be an individual effort. Alec Clifton-Taylor died in 1984...'. Under a new publisher the book has been extensively revised, especially in its first section, and has been issued in larger format to match the same author's Timber Building in Britain (Gollancz, 1985). As the new title indicates, the work has been extended to include Wales and Scotland, although English examples (inevitably for earlier periods) still predominate and Scottish buildings are relegated to an appendix.

First impressions are of a very beautiful book. The use of a high-quality, very white paper has increased the clarity of line and half-tone illustrations alike, whilst the colour plates are a particularly attractive feature of the book. The quality of the photographs - mostly by Peter Crawley - is exceptionally high and the jacket photograph of Rye House, Herts is enticing. Some photographs are taken over from the earlier book, though most are new, even where the same building is illustrated. Some buildings have been omitted, and I was rather saddened to see the loss of the Ouse Valley Viaduct at Balcombe, Sussex (ill. 31 in English Brickwork), Newnham College, Cambridge (ill. 34, 35), Wren's work at Hampton Court Palace (ill. 118), and the fine brick vaulting at Houghton Hall, Norfolk (ill. 122). The new photograph of Guildford Cathedral (ill. 173) somehow fails to convey the scale of the building in the same way as ill. 149 in the earlier book. The photograph of Little Wenham Hall, Suffolk (ill. 1) - a building of no small significance - is over-reduced and tucked away in a margin well away from the most relevant text. It would have been good, too, to have had a colour photograph of the brickwork panels on the Quentin Kynaston School in St John's Wood, which more than any other building illustrate the remarkable effect of mortar colour, since the striking patterns here are formed entirely by the use of coloured mortars and not by the use of coloured bricks. Such an illustration might well have taken the place of the colour photograph of Holy Trinity Church, Newcastle-under-Lyme (opp. p.161, top), a building already represented by two black-and-white photographs (ill.156, 158). To compensate, there are some excellent additions, including some favourite buildings of my own: Rye House, Herts (colour, opp. p.32; ill. 105, 106); Kirby Muxloe Castle, Leics (ill. 111, 112), Wainfleet School, Lincs (ill. 113); St John's College, Cambridge (ill. 116); Bracken House, London EC4 (ill. 176); Robinson College, Cambridge (ill. 177); and the Hillingdon Centre, Uxbridge (ill. 179, 180).

As mentioned above, it is the first section of the book, in which the character of British brickwork is explored, that has been most fully revised. There is now an expanded account of brickmaking and products, occupying the first two chapters. These chapters will surely serve as models of their kind: packed with information, clear in their explanations, and yet still managing to be fairly succinct. The next chapter concentrates on the use of bricks in various contexts, and is followed by a chapter on brick-tiles (mathematical tiles) and terracotta. At long last a 'popular' book manages to avoid - indeed, to dispel - the strangely long-lived mythology that brick-tiles were introduced in order to avoid the Brick Tax of 1784-1850, and here Dr Brunskill makes full use of recent research into the subject. The same is true of his consideration of terracotta, a material whose full significance and qualities are only now beginning to be properly appreciated. A separate chapter considers brick chimneys - possibly, in this case, a little too succinctly. A concluding chapter draws together the main points of the preceding essays, stressing the particular characteristics of brick as a building material.

Section Two is an illustrated Glossary of terms, partly taken over from English Brickwork but once again expanded: 199 main entries compared with 135 in the earlier book; some of the additions concern brickmaking and kiln-types. There are, inevitably I suppose, further terms that one might have been glad to see included: 'hatched', 'Hiort's Patent Bricks', 'Roberts' Patent Bricks', 'Wilkes' Gobs', for example, some of which are mentioned elsewhere in the text. But the Glossary remains a most valuable aid to the study of brickwork - especially, perhaps, for those of us who can never remember the names of the more obscure bonding types!

The third section is an historical survey, divided into periods, and amply illustrated by English (not British) examples. Surely, though, there should have been at least something on Roman brick in Britain, on the Anglo-Saxon re-use of Roman material, and on the vexed question of actual Anglo-Saxon manufacture? The short introduction to each chronological period is necessarily condensed and thus inevitably contains generalisations (e.g. concerning diaper-work in the medieval period) which a fuller text would want to qualify. The question of Norman-made bricks (e.g. at Polstead, Suffolk) as opposed to re-used Roman bricks (e.g. at St Albans Abbey or St Botolph's Priory, Colchester) is not discussed, although the matter now seems virtually certain in the light of the poor-quality bricks found in an early Norman context at Goltho, Lincs. Subsequent chapters ably characterise the brickwork of their respective periods and note changes in architectural fashions as these are reflected in brickwork. Significant omissions - changing tastes in colour between red and 'white' bricks, for example - are compensated for by the excellence of the visual survey provided by the photographs and their captions. Strangely, however, the chapter on modern

(post-1914) brickwork gives a rather gloomy impression, not borne out by the accompanying photographs. There is much fine, and sometimes vigorous, brickwork being created these days - not all of it in the Netherlands! - and the photographs in this chapter to some extent illustrate this, although there might have been more on the most up-to-date brickwork in the country. Experiments using calcium-silicate bricks on-edge with frogs exposed in the wall-face to give a textured surface (as, e.g., at King's School Preparatory School, Rochester); the in situ carvings of Walter Ritchie, J. Rothwell, and others; or the re-adoption of Rat Trap Bond by Howell, Killick, Partridge and Amis in their Cambridge buildings at Sidney Sussex and Darwin Colleges might have been usefully included. So too there might have been more on the re-introduction of polychromy in many 'Post-Modern' buildings. A lighter note might have been struck with a representative illustration of modern pictures created from coloured bricks, such as the celebrated steelworker at Sheffield, the delightful single- and double-decker 'busses at Nottingham Bus Station, or the refreshment kiosk decorated with a tea-cup at Millwall. Perhaps, though, these are no more than personal preferences: there is so much good contemporary brickwork that no-one's selection is going to satisfy everybody else! The whole section of the book remains a very helpful visual survey of eight hundred years of English brickwork.

Appendix I considers the Brick Tax and its effects, and quite properly questions some of the received views on this topic. Appendix II discusses cavity walling and its development, both in theory and in practice; this is an issue which has long engaged Dr Brunskill's attention and one in which he, virtually single-handed, has advanced our knowledge immeasurably. Appendix III looks at brickmaking and brickwork in Scotland. There are lists of references and a fairly full bibliography. In the latter, it is gratifying to see frequent appearances of BBS Information; and the work of individual BBS members such as Martin Hammond and David Kennett is quite properly acknowledged.

First impressions, as was said, are of a beautiful book. Final impressions are, additionally, of a scholarly synthesis which takes account of much of the most recent research. This is augmented by Dr Brunskill's own researches and observations carried out over many years. As with his previous publications, it is a credit to Dr Brunskill's ability as a writer that the text never once becomes dull, even when he is dealing with fairly technical matters. The book is a worthy successor to English Brickwork. Bearing in mind the book's high quality, the price of £18.95 is, by current standards, moderate. Dr Brunskill's book is most strongly recommended.

Terence Paul Smith



## REVIEW

Terry Cash, Bricks, London, A. & C. Black, 1988, 25pp, numerous colour illustrations. Price: £4-50. ISBN 0-7136-3048-5.

At a time when education and learning seem scarcely valued except for their material rewards ('What can you get by doing this, Sir?') it is a great pleasure to welcome this little book aimed at children of primary school age. In a series of brief chapters Terry Cash looks at many aspects of the subject, inviting children to look at bricks and brickmaking for their own sakes, to take delight in the transmutation of an unprepossessing lump of clay into an attractive building material. Children are asked to look at the patterns in brick walling - aided by sketches of three different (unnamed) bonding types, and to experiment with their own toy bricks. They are encouraged to look - really look - at individual bricks and to feel them: rightly so, for texture is important, as anyone who has compared a genuine medieval brick building with a Victorian copy will know. Ways of recording bricks, either by taking rubbings with crayons or by pressing modelling clay into frog-marks and textured surfaces, are described, together with methods of measuring bricks.

Methods of brickmaking, by hand and by machine, are then described, and children invited to make their own bricks from modelling clay. An experiment to test whether bricks are waterproof is suggested and the ways in which bricks are employed in actual buildings are briefly described.

Finally, there are further 'Things to Do', including a teaser for all of us: 'Can you find out why the dip in the centre of some bricks is called a frog?'

The book is superbly designed and beautifully produced, with colour illustrations on every page (many of them specially-taken photographs by Ed Barber), and its attractiveness is enhanced by the charming and carefree youngsters shown playing with bricks. And in the end, that is what it's all about. We may give our learned papers high-falutin titles and decorate them with an abundance of erudite footnotes. We may deliver well researched lectures or make telling points at conferences. But what we are doing (Isn't it?) is playing with bricks. And why not?

From the ancient rabbi lost in the pages of the Talmud to the young child making a crayon-rubbing of a brick surface, learning is at its best when it's being done for no other reason than that it's what you want to be doing at that particular moment.

And that, at the very end of the fiftieth issue of Information, seems the perfect note on which to hand over the editorship to a friend whom I have known from our schooldays together.

Terence Paul Smith

(Good and Proper Materials: the fabric of London since the Great Fire, ed. H. Hobhouse and A. Saunders, London Topographical Society, 1989, a copy of which the Society has received, will be reviewed in our next issue. TPS)