

BOOK REVIEWS

REMAINS OF THE REVOLUTION

Industrial Archaeology

An Introduction. By Kenneth Hudson. (University Paperbacks.) Pp. 183+59 plates. (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1965.) 18s. net.

THE term "industrial archaeology" is little more than ten years old, yet the ideas behind it and the activities associated with it have acquired a remarkable popularity. Mr. Hudson's handbook, first published in 1963 and now appearing in a paperback edition, is a useful and interesting guide, which also includes a bibliography and a gazetteer. The last important chapter on the documentation and recording of industrial archaeology is of great practical value in itself.

The first chapter, on "What is Industrial Archaeology?", is somewhat over-preoccupied with terminology. Clearly industrial archaeology, as it has developed, is not so much a "subject" as a "field". Many of its practitioners would have got by in the past as economic and social historians, and large sections of subsequent chapters are straight economic and social history. At the same time, the term includes the history of technology—still a neglected subject and one which is certainly not exclusively dependent on an archaeological approach—and a sizable element both of architectural history (particularly the history of the "functional" tradition) and of historical geography. It also pulls together the work of railway and canal historians—a well-established and flourishing body—and of people interested in "houses" ("furniture historians" are a more recent group). Yet another element incorporated into the term is "pictorial history" of the kind developed so imaginatively by Hoskins and his school, although "archaeology" is only one side of this, and interest in industry—at least so far as Hoskins's own work is concerned—is only one aspect of an extended and more systematic interest in local history, examining landscape and environment as much as "things".

Hudson is anxious that "industrial archaeology" should be treated as a "subject" rather than that an archaeological approach should be used along with other approaches in inter-disciplinary work on the history (including the recent history) of industry. His healthy enthusiasm seems to me to lead him astray at this point, and he tilts at too many windmills. Who are the "economists, historians and archaeologists" who denigrate industrial archaeology "partly for reasons of sheer conservatism, partly from resentment against an upstart"? As for those who have "serious and genuine doubts that industrial archaeology can be made into a satisfactory academic discipline", one at least is more worried about what the term "a satisfactory academic discipline" means than about the name "industrial archaeology" which, so long as it attracts added interest and stimulates more thorough scholarship, is at least as good as any other term.

There seem to be various reasons for the very genuine interest. Britain's industrial past is being re-scrutinized from many angles, in the middle of the twentieth century, and references to the "industrial revolution" are becoming as frequent and as varied as American references have long been to the Wild West or to the "open frontier". Some critics have detected nostalgia in this, others the search for myth: at a more mundane level, the interest in old steam engines may be not all that different from

an interest in vintage cars. It is not only the character or the range of the field, however, which attracts. The method itself—getting outside and around, digging (where relevant), measuring, photographing, keeping logs and record cards—is a source of attraction: it is a method which lends itself also to group activity, and it is not surprising that the growth of interest has been associated with extra-mural education. Some practitioners—and many of their friends and well-wishers—have also been inspired by a sense of urgency. "Things" are being rapidly destroyed—the theme of Hudson's second chapter. Can they be kept or, if they are not kept, can a full record of them be made? Hudson is a forceful and persuasive advocate of realistic proposals to "protect" Britain's industrial legacy, and he catalogues the various attempts already being made to maintain and develop records and to prevent both neglect and total destruction. His book is in places a manifesto as much as a handbook, and he is particularly and rightly concerned to get his "message" over to industrial firms. He quotes with approval, for example, an article by Maurice Barley in the *Journal of British Industry*, a publication where one would hope the lesson would strike home: "Only the most enlightened management realises that to preserve specimens of past machinery and products may create prestige, rather than damage the image of industrial enterprise".

Seven of the eleven chapters deal with particular aspects of the industrial legacy—a general background chapter on "the pace and pattern of the industrial revolution" and chapters (of varying length and depth) on coal and metals; power; textiles, pottery, glass, brewing and distilling (an oddly assorted group); railways, inland waterways and roads; building materials; and farm buildings. He does not have space to go into detail about disappearing evidence relating to more recent technology, although he has a section on cement and two interesting pictures (supplied by Shell-Mex and B.P., Ltd.) of a nineteenth-century "petrol filling point" (not located) and the oldest surviving railway tank wagon for petroleum, now kept at the Museum of British Transport, Clapham. Certain aspects of post-industrial revolution technology, to use conventional terminology, are of immense interest, and when archaeological methods are relevant or necessary to their study they should be encouraged and developed. Knowledge of the present shifting into the future is invaluable in this context. Just as Marc Bloch said that the master gift of the historian was to understand the living and that if you could not understand the living you could not understand the dead, so the most interesting "industrial archaeology" will be that which throws light on past technologies or on past societies so that both the technologies and the societies "live" again. In these terms, the archaeological approach is clearly relevant to much else which is modern besides industry. Urban studies are also beginning to boom, and there is ample scope for an archaeology of the Victorian city. The difficulty and fascination always come from the intelligent relating of the archaeological approach to other approaches. Very seldom do we have to rely on archaeological evidence alone.

For all other kinds of evidence and for understanding the relationships between the different kinds, industrial archaeologists, like others, will still have to rely on historians, historians with no qualifying adjective.

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