

## Book Reviews

**The Lost Architectural Landscapes of Warwickshire: Vol. 1 – The South**, by Peter Bolton (hardback, 160pp., 93 figs.). Landmark Publishing, Ashbourne Hall, Cokayne Ave., Ashbourne, Derbyshire DE6 1EJ, 2003, ISBN 1 901522 98 9. £19.95.

The changes that have taken place in English villages and country towns over the last fifty years have been enormous. Peter Bolton's book sets out to document, town by town and village by village and in considerable detail, change and loss within each town and village in the area of the Stratford on Avon District Council. Buildings of every sort have gone – country houses, pubs, churches, railway stations, schools, cottages and more – but the loss is more than the sum of the parts. The phrase 'lost architectural landscapes' in the title is just: the built environment has changed as much as the natural. Nor is Peter Bolton afraid to criticise new buildings where criticism is merited, and he prefaces the book with a page of quotations from philistine and complacent councillors who permitted so much of this destruction and crass rebuilding.

It is good when a book raises questions as well as providing information, and *Lost Architectural Landscapes* certainly does that – to the extent, perhaps, that one wishes that there was more in the book than it would be realistic to hope for. In a book about lost landscapes it would be good to have more pictures to show what these vanished buildings actually looked like. Bolton gives very little idea of the character of the lost building stock, and even major houses and institutional buildings are often minimally described. There are no maps to show where buildings stood. For those who want to follow up particular leads, Bolton's sources are not always clear. But all of this would have called for a much fatter (and more expensive) book, and in documenting these changes one has to start somewhere. It must already have taken a huge amount of work to have amassed the information summarised in *Lost Landscapes*.

There are other ways in which the information that Bolton provides might be used – to illustrate, for example, the impact on the historic environment of the broader social and economic changes that have taken place in the area, discussion that could increase our understanding of its recent history and might help us to manage these pressures better in the future. It would be interesting, too, to use these dates and facts to test how effective measures for the protection of the heritage have actually been. (There have been some successes as well as failures – successes which the author has sometimes noted but often without telling us why a building, once threatened, has since been saved.) Such work, based on the facts collected by Peter Bolton, would give the information in this book a more than parochial interest.