

Books

U.F.O. ENTHUSIAST IS SEEING SOMETHING STRANGE

BRUCE Cathie belongs to the people who believe that unidentified flying objects are associated with intelligent beings from outer space. This is his third book which touches on UFOs, but like his previous ones, it is not likely to convince anyone of the need to investigate such matters. This judgment is not so much a reflection on flying saucers as on the author's cavalier handling of them.

Like many other UFO enthusiasts, Cathie began by seeing something strange moving in the sky. He pondered for a long time on the pathway of the object and toyed with the idea of tracing the various sightings of other people on charts in order to determine whether or not there is some regular pattern.

Up to this point the author is quite lucid and it is interesting to note his subsequent efforts to place sightings on an even grid laid over the map of the earth. After having spent many hours trying to fit all sightings, Cathie comes to the conclusion that by using an extremely small grid, it is possible to place a great number of sightings on the cross-lines, leav-

of sightings on the cross-lines, leaving only few sightings unaccounted for. Having come to this rather predictable result, the author suddenly moves to a completely different part of the puzzle.

Grids, encompassing the earth have been devised by various scientists to describe magnetic fields. Cathie presents this information as proof of the fact that various governments have been arriving at the same conclusion: there is a strange regularity in the visits of extra terrestrial objects and this is related to a world-wide energy field.

Scientists of the world have known this for some time, but have been forced by governments to withhold this information. Full knowledge of

THE PULSE OF THE UNIVERSE: HARMONIC 288. By Captain Bruce Cathie Reed, pp214, \$8.95.

***Reviewer:
BAREND JAN TERWIEL.***

it would create a heaven on earth, all energy problems would be solved in no time.

Why governments of the world would cooperate to keep the information secret is not clear, but this does not seem to bother Mr Cathie. Indeed, it does not even appear problematic to him that the magnetic field grid does not correspond to his own rectangular scheme. Intuitively, Bruce Cathie knows that magnetism of the earth and UFOs are related

of the earth and UFOs are related to each other.

At this point we have reached the end of the second chapter and the reader has been subjected to some exhausting mental leap-frog. It is, however, nothing compared to what is in store in the following 15 chapters. Most of the rest of the book deals with numbers, but in a manner numbers have seldom been handled before.

A geodetic inch contains approximately 20,600 magnetic field lines. When Bruce Cathie comes across the information that the King's chamber of the Great Pyramid is 206 geodetic inches wide, he feels he is on to something.

For those who scoff at the coincidence, he has found another link in the same chain: multiply the area of the Great Pyramid with the field strength of the earth, double the result and we get 20,594,954. This is close to 20,600,000 and there again appears the magical number 206.

Note that Cathie freely multiplies or divides by a factor ten, so that he apparently assumes that the secrets of the universe are all following the

decimal system. Note also that approximations are allowed in his system, as is multiplication by a factor 2, when it suits him.

Cathie's numerology takes us through some weird exercises. The factor light is represented in his system by number 1440. (The careful observer will note the link

careful observer will note the link with the book's subtitle). But lo and behold, if one megalithic mile is not equivalent to 1440 feet! This can no longer be a coincidence, the ancients must have had some help from outer space to work that out.

This lateral thinking approach to mathematics is applied with no inhibitions whatsoever. The critical temperature of water is 647.29 degrees Kelvin. Kelvin was almost right, the Cathie scale awards it 648 degrees.

How could it be different? After all, 200 times spiral pi is also 648. For those who are reluctant to see the clues to all natural phenomena, consider that the height of the Great Pyramid (for convenience sake divided by a factor 9) is also equal to 648.

Armed with a handful of basic figures, a calculating machine and a total disregard for the logic of physics and mathematics, Cathie manages to link the distances between the notes of a musical scale with some universal number or other. He can find something of interest in any number, be it the coordinates of a spot on the map, the atomic weight of aluminium or the average temperature of human blood.

I am quite sure that Bruce Cathie is taking us all for a ride. Having discovered that earlier speculations were publishable and that critical comments from reviewers enhanced his position, it seems he has decided to keep playing finger exercises on his calculating machine.

to keep playing finger exercises on his calculating machine for as long as his books will sell.

ALL SORTS OF HUTS AND HOVELS

‘VICTORIAN Primitive’ is a loaded title. The mutually contradictory words “Victorian” and “Primitive” immediately bring to mind opposite images.

The fuss and intricacy of iron filigree, ornately turned legs, knobs and handles, showy glass-ware, anti-macassars and velvet drapes on the one hand; on the other, sods, thatch, rude trestles, clay pots and not much else.

Nicely chosen, the title demonstrates as well, that in Australia during the second half of the nineteenth century the sophisticated paraphernalia usually termed Victoriana and the grass roots utilitarian usually called Primitive existed side by side.

Yet this is not precisely what the book is about. It is in fact, almost solely about sods, bark, wattle and daub, log, slab, adobe, pise and huts in general as they were constructed in the State of Victoria. Why Victoria? Significantly because the discovery of gold provided the building stimulus or the “cultural laboratory”, as the author calls it, out of which typical “vernacular” building techniques emerged.

Another significant fact is that the book is based partially on post-grad-

book is based partially on post-graduate research which was funded by a University of Melbourne Special Award. The author, Dr Miles Lewis, now a lecturer in Architecture at that institution has been largely responsible for the acceptance by the National Trust of buildings like mud huts as important historical artefacts worthy of restoration.

He says, "traditional crafts and basic materials shaped our first buildings". An East Anglian

VICTORIAN PRIMITIVE. By Miles Lewis. Greenhouse Publications. 87pp. \$12.95.

***Reviewer
NANCY PARKER***

thatcher, a Californian used to working with adobe, a Cumberland miner accustomed to shoring up a mine shaft, would resort, for lack of capital and a shop around the corner, to building with rushes, clay, sapling, stone, or an ingenious mixture of the lot. Sod or turf became the first method of construction for houses on the Yarra, while wattle and daub was more common in Sydney.

On the Ballarat goldfields a colonial innovation for roofs — bark held in place by greenhide — turned up; elsewhere one found grass or reeds bound with clay, wheat straw

reeds bound with clay, wheat straw held down with wire netting, heather (or strands of grasstree as at Rushcutter's Bay) bound with ropes. "She's jake mate".

The man with an axe who knew our timbers were difficult to saw but easy to split, was, in effect, the architect of the slab hut; the cracks between the panels were often filled in with mud, popularly known as "dab". Wood splitters, also, turned out shingles which were doubtless the most waterproof of early roofing materials.

Corrugated iron is not listed in the index. Yet there are several photos of slab huts with corrugated iron roofs next to outbuildings still roofed with bark. There is a photo, as well,

of a pise church built in 1883, which at the time of its demolition in 1933 was roofed in corrugated iron.

Perhaps the iron roof is a little too late or a little too sophisticated to be called primitive. But one would like to know a bit more about what has become the classical Australian roofing material.

It is interesting to know the difference between adobe, clay lump, cob and pise, since today there is a significant revival of these do-it-yourself techniques. Adobe is the Spanish Mexican term and "clay lump" the English for much the same thing — the sun-dried brick;

same thing — the sun-dried brick; says the author, "if mixed with chopped straw and carefully made these are an excellent substitute for the burned brick".

There is an illustration of a tent at one of the Victorian diggings with an adobe infill at one end. Excellent for stopping the tent fly from flapping.

Cob is different, and was rarely used in Australia. Take a dung fork and simply pitch the lumps of clay, straw and water on course in their plastic state. Here and there a timber plank is placed between courses for rigidity.

The only known pure cob building in Victoria follows a Hampshire model with rude Gothic windows and an internal spiral staircase. Built in 1847, the Victorian edifice was used for shepherds.

True pise-construction was known to the Phoenicians and used extensively by the Romans. Walls are "stuffed" rather than built, with a loamy mud, which when rammed between a wooden form sets, according to Pliny, "stronger than quarry stones". I guess it all depends whether the loam consists mostly of gravel or clay, and on whether there is sufficient overhang to the roof to keep out the wet.

Since 1823 when the Hobart Town Gazette recommended the use of pise, many a wall has slumped in

of pise, many a wall has slumped in Australia, if not for one or other of these reasons, then because of "the gradual honeycombing of walls by bugs and other vermin".

To return to galvanised iron. It is mentioned in Victoria in 1854 as a mould for "improved pise". Perhaps it would have been an even better idea to leave it on, and as well, to slip in a little cement. You might call this fascinating book a source book or resource.

Puffin party

OWING to the postal strike, organisers of the Puffin Club (Penguin Books) fear that many of the Canberra members (450 individuals and two schools, Fisher and Wanniasa) may not have learnt about the Puffin Party to be held at the Woden City Library on April 8, from 2 to 5pm. For Canberra children, it will be the first "royal" gathering. Members may go dressed as lords and ladies.