Book Review

MANAGING THE BUILDING DESIGN PROCESS.

G. Tunstall. Reed Elsevier, 2000. ISBN 0 7506 50699, 320 pp.

This book is aimed at the 'one-off' client, to introduce him or her to the building design process. In so doing it is assumed that the reader knows little about building design or the procedures/process of building. The concept is sound but to explain to a supposedly totally uninformed individual all the various facets of the building process in 320 pages, is not feasible. This is borne out of the fact that: (a) 320 pages are far too much for an 'uninitiated' reader to assimilate; and (b) as can be expected from trying to cover such a massive subject, some sections are rather lightweight while others are dealt with in relative depth. Not surprisingly, those parts of the building process with which the author himself is unfamiliar are treated in a relatively summary fashion whereas the aspects or topics also at which he, as an architectural lecturer, is knowledgeable, are dealt with in depth, for example the section on aesthetics.

Dealing with more specific matters, for example if this book were to be used as a reference document for a new/inexperienced client, then there are certain statements or views expressed which are obviously personal to the author and not necessarily correct. The author describes the well-trying traditional contract achieved through competitive tendering as inherently confrontational, which is not necessarily the case. To support his own views, various comparative programmes are described which indicate that traditional competitive tendering is also a longer process than others that he clearly prefers, but there is no proof given to support or explain the presumption.

Similarly, other sweeping statements are made which could mislead an inexperienced reader, for example on page 202. The opinion is expressed (more as a fact) that shorter spans in an 'expensive steel framework' would be more economic than longer spans and therefore he proposes intermediate supports. This generalisation does not recognise the cost of the intermediate supports and their foundations, particularly if they are to be built on poor or complex ground conditions.

While the book can spell out some most obvious and rudimentary matters in detail and yet gloss quickly over others, the section on aesthetics for instance is far more advanced and

dealt with in detail and makes for a much more interesting read.

The book is well-written and most aspects are clearly and simply explained but the author should have tried to disassociate himself from architectural matters and given more time and recognition to the input of the other members who make up the building team.

Finally, I gave the book to a 'one-off' client who knew nothing about the 'building process' but was just starting out for the first time as a client on a £100 000 project. The book was returned to me within a very few days with the explanation that it was far too lengthy and 'heavy going' for someone without a 'building' background. I would agree that the book does not achieve its aim or objective but could well be used as a reference book for a student in the building industry, provided he or she bears in mind that these are the opinions formed by one person's sometimes unfortunate experiences of the building process.

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LEARNING FROM CONSTRUCTION FAILURES – APPLIED FORENSIC ENGINEERING.

P. Campbell. Whittles Publishing, 2002. ISBN 1 870325 63 X, £60, 301 pp.

The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 and the series of rail crashes in the UK have made all of us aware of the vulnerability of the infrastructure of developed countries. As engineers we need to learn from the causes of structural failure, whether due to the activities of ruthless fanatics or the shortcomings of designers or constructors. Forensic engineering is the study of the causes of failure and the practical application of the lessons learned. This outstanding book comprises contributions from a number of distinguished international experts in forensic engineering.

The book contains numerous case studies ranging from the leaning tower of Pisa (Professor John Burland) to the Oklahoma City bombing (Gene Corley). It covers risk assessment, aspects of construction law and insurance as well as structural failure

and remediation. This is a remarkable book which ought to be essential reading for construction professionals.

The book was being printed at the time of the 11 September catastrophe and therefore does not cover the collapse of the

Twin Towers and the surrounding buildings. Could a second edition of the book be already in preparation?

S. MOY