History Mysteries
Gill Tanner and Tim Wood
A & C Black, 1992
Cooking
ISBN 0 7136 3491 X
At School
ISBN 0 7136 3410 8
Travelling
ISBN 0 7136 3492 8
Wedding
ISBN 0 7136 3493 6
£5.99 each.

Turn of the Century
A & C Black, 1991
Rubblish, Gill Tanner
ISBN 0 7136 3331 4
Keeping Clean, Eleanor Allen
ISBN 0 7136 3352 2
Babies, Jenny Wood
ISBN 0 7136 3353 0
£5.95 each.

A & C Black have published two new history series which both teachers and pupils will welcome. Here are the details of recent social history.

"Turn of the Century" is a series for junior school children. I read the ones listed with great interest but there are seven books in the series (including Breakfast, In the post and Washday).

Each book has a timeline at the beginning which lists significant developments in its topic from pre-1800 to 1980 and one or two important events for each decade: the death of Queen Victoria, and the invention of penicillin are shown separately as a general background to this. At the end each book has a "How to find out more" chart. This has suggestions about places to go and people to ask with some useful questions. Meanwhile books themselves have plenty of facts to give children an understanding of how different things were. They use quoted information from real people born in 1900 and are illustrated with many pictures of modern children personally investigating the objects.

Each book is full of fascinating memorabilia from museum displays. In "Christmas" half-forgotten rituals such as "Stir-up Sunday" and Christmas Goose Clubs, in 'Rubblish' itinerant tinkers who mended people's buckets and small boats can be investigated. 'Rubblish' also shows readers how many uses people found for things as diverse as meat bones and old-fashioned Rag and bone things which we now throw away. 'Keeping CLean' has some interesting facts about lavatories, while in 'Babies' I particularly enjoyed the illustration of a modern girl modelling a vaccination guard made of metal and rag.

The 'History Mysteries' series is possibly aimed at slightly older children. All the books feature the same family — in 1990, 1960, 1930 and 1900. Each book has twelve 'mystery objects' which are illustrated and described. Over the page the object is shown in use by members of the appropriate family and in use is explained. A chart at the end shows all the objects and their 1990 equivalents.

Finally parents and teachers are given an extra paragraph of information about each object and there is a list of things to do. Photos of actual objects are combined with drawings of them in use among the imaginary families in a very satisfying way.

Both these series are excellent and thoroughly recommended. Reading 'Rubblish' and 'Babies' will give children an understanding of the Romans, and for this year's project, Professor Barry Cublin has acted as archaeological consultant, and he has excavated at both Fishbourne and Bath, so you can be sure the details of the story are accurate. The books work both in the kitchen and in the main palace, he has a lot to be surprised by, and we are told a great deal about Roman life at this time. The detail of the attractive illustrations, the rooms, the interiors of buildings, the costume, all are based on sound archaeological evidence, much of which can be seen in the places or in museums. Here we have an authentic picture of life in the newly conquered province of Britannia. Beyond the material aspects, we also are given an imaginative poignancy of the political and social conditions of the time, issues that are rarely really raised in the story in Roman Britain from the point of view of both Celt and Roman in a narrative that a child of 12 or 13 can happily follow along.

It is a balanced and informative account that not only describes the achievements of the Romans, but also reminds us that the peoples of Britain lost some of their freedoms and did not necessarily gain from the invasion.

As a handbook CATVS is amazingly good value for money (£4.95 including postage) and will provide a welcome additional resource for teachers and families. Settlers at KS2 or The Roman Empire at KS3. It can be obtained from Tempus Reproductions, 29 Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2NP.

Collect it!
Making collections from fossils to fakes
Elizabeth Newbery
A & C Black, 1991
ISBN 0 7136 3510 0
£5.99

"Windows on the Past: Archaeology in Milton Keynes" is the book that comes with the new Archaeology Unit, 16 Erica Road, Stacey Bushes, Milton Keynes MK12 69P, £3.95 + S/P postage.

Twenty-one years of archaeological investigations from prehistory to the medieval period in one of Britain's new towns has been narrated in "Windows on the Past: Archaeology in Milton Keynes" by Marion Blochidy. Professor Blochidy has produced an easily understandable text full of maps, photographs and colour paintings, and with a good deal of research drawings she has done it all! The book is nicely designed — every page is attractive.

I particularly liked the reference back to real evidence — a photograph of a Roman box with only its iron hinges and corner strengtheners surviving is matched with a reconstruction drawing, for example.

The book is full of the sort of information children must relish, practical tips on what to collect and the do's and don'ts of how to collect it, or how to sort large collections into some sort of order. There is a step-by-step guide on how to record and store them, and a useful resources section on how to find out more. The author unabashedly parallels this practical detail with notes on where museums do it, showing that all collectors share the same problems, and nearly all giving museums a more human face.

Eight year olds and upwards will enjoy this book, which is 'must' for the library corner.

Rural Landscapes
This cross-curricular resource booklet is published by the National Trust and is aimed at teachers of Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils. It covers how rural landscapes were formed, ways in which they are managed, what lives in them and how to read them for clues to human past involvement. The 48 pages are packed with illustrations and photographs, and there are useful suggestions for on-site and classroom activities. The ideas for introducing children to the various competing groups all identified in a show in Oxfordshire countryside is particularly good. Copies are priced £2.50 including postage and packing from: The National Tour (Enterprises) Ltd PO Box 9 Melksham Wiltshire SN12 8ZD.

Mobil Greensight Pack
This pack is the result of a three year project involving secondary schools in ten local education authorities in England, Wales and Scotland in Ireland, and is intended to enable students to make their own documentary video investigating the relationship between industry and the environment. It contains a handbook for teachers, photocopiable materials for the students to research, plan and execute a production; a video in which television professionals demonstrate video production techniques, and a wall chart. The pack features five case studies covering a variety of schools, locations and industries, from open cast mining to sludge digestion and urban road construction projects. It costs £17.50 for schools and educational institutions. For further information contact:
Living Earth The Old Laundry Oxstington Buildings Moon Street London WIM 3JD Tel: 071 487 3661