

Introduction to the 2004 edition

My father-in-law was a civil engineer who worked on water schemes and it is thanks to him that I was introduced to the early editions of W.B. McKay's *Building Construction* some years ago. The most attractive feature is the sheer volume and quality of drawings with which it is illustrated. These show construction details and processes in such clarifying detail.

Many practitioners still have a copy of the old McKay beside their desks, because it is an intensely practical textbook. His grandson, Neil McKay, tells me that architectural students are still urged to beg, steal or borrow the books. This facsimile publication should avoid the temptation to break the law! *Building Construction* was regarded as a classic at McKay's untimely death in February 1958, when he and his wife were killed in a road accident.

William Barr McKay came from Consett, County Durham and started his career in architectural training before 1914. He also qualified as a structural engineer, becoming a member of the Institute of Structural Engineers in 1927, and he served on the institute's council.

He spent most of the First World War with the Royal Engineers, and much of that in France. When he was demobbed went to Leeds College of Technology, becoming head of its building department when it was established. He became the first honorary secretary of the Yorkshire Educational Association for the Building Industry. In 1928 he moved to Manchester to become Head of the Building Department at Manchester College of Technology, where he remained until his retirement in December 1956. One of his early successes was to establish a degree course in building.

The first volume of the original three-volume *Building Construction* was published in 1938, and the next two volumes were produced over the next six years. After McKay's death, his son J.K. McKay was responsible over the next 30 years for reprints of the books,