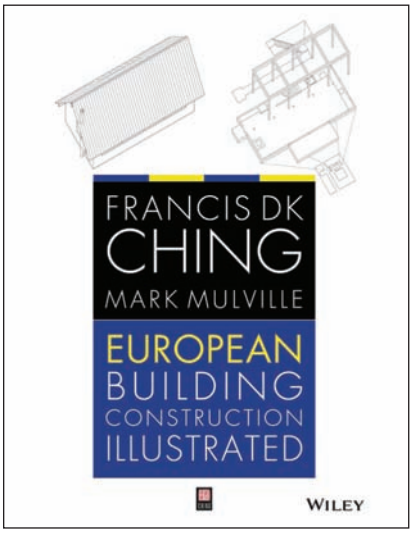
Review

Institution Fellow, Bob Wilson, suspects that previous titles by Francis Ching notwithstanding, this latest offering might be of more interest to architects than structural engineers.

European Building Construction Illustrated



Authors: Francis Ching and Mark Mulville
Publisher: John Wiley & Sons
Price: £34.99 (paperback)
ISBN: 978-1-119-95317-3

This book is a typical A4 format 'Ching' book with the cover depicting two of the drawings from its contents. It is illustrated in the lead authors immaculate style, and I suspect that some of the drawings have already appeared in Ching's other books. It is no secret that this book follows the style of the very popular *Building Construction Illustrated* titles.

The difference here is the emphasis placed on the European Codes and Standards; although it has perhaps a missed chance to compare the American and European values, so that we can see where the differences lie. If you are already in tune with the European values then you will hardly notice anything out of the ordinary; unlike the not infrequent strangeness of the all-American editions of Ching's books.

Mark Mulville's contribution is difficult to identify. It probably lies in the content because his interests appear to be related to 'Comfort', 'Health' and 'Efficiency' and the '...adaption and rehabilitation of existing buildings'. Perhaps he is responsible for the environmental assessment methods of BREEAM and LEED etc.?

The Contents list has a surprising chapter concerning 'Construction in the Middle East'; but its inclusion is explained by Ching, as being due to the influences flowing from the Middle East into the European marketplace. To a structural engineer, these are most noticeable in the work on tall buildings and in some aspects of sustainable design. However, the engineer reader will find little to linger over in this section; whereas architects might find it more to their interest.

In fact, there are considerable portions of the book of greater interest to the architect; the structural engineer will have to ferret around among the pages for nuggets of information, which is very reminiscent of Ching's *A Visual Dictionary of Architecture*. For example, on the subject of trees, the architect is reminded of their structure and shape, seasonal qualities and their landscape value. However, the structural engineer must content him/herself with this brief note: 'Care must be taken when placing trees near to buildings as root systems can interfere with building foundations'. In a similar way, a number of commonplace issues, such as 'Loads', are treated rather superficially and have no values quoted.

Fortunately, a number of issues such as 'Stability' are well illustrated and worth reading (or at least given more attention) if only because they remind us of these matters, and the illustrations give us a clearer visual grasp of the subject.

There is quite a bit about 'house building'; all good stuff that structural engineers could well learn more about, if only we could 'find the time among our busy schedules and complex computer programs'!

This book should redirect us towards the practical building side of our craft but I fear it won't do so. Part of the trouble is that there are plenty of British books about building construction – maybe not so beautifully or widely illustrated – that are, in my opinion, more relevant to the British scene. Had it been 'A Review of British or European Building Practice Compared to American Building Practice - especially in relation to work in Developing Countries', then it would have perhaps been more enthusiastically received by this reviewer.

I believe that there is a small error on page 4.28 where the joist hanger does not, in fact, hang over the joist but relies entirely on the nailing to carry the load. This might need attention in the reprint. Fortunately, I have several of Ching's excellent books already on my shelves and upon these I rely!

Bob Wilson
A Fellow of the Institution, Bob qualified as a structural engineer in the early 1960s. He concentrated on concrete, although widened his interests to include foundations and basement technology, temporary works and structural steelwork. He moved to Scotland as Regional Engineer for the C&CA and became a Marking Examiner for the Institution. Although retired, he still has an absorbing interest in the CM Examination and offers advice and tuition to candidates. Consequently, he is always on the lookout for books that would be useful to these graduate engineers.