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& A S S O C I A T E S



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Mechanical Engineering



Building Manuals



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ENCHIRIDION: [LATIN] A SMALL MANUAL OR HANDBOOK

The Cairn of Barnenez, located in northern France, is the oldest building in the world, dating back to 4,850BC. The monument comprises eleven chambers which are entered by separate passages. But....did the Neolithic (New Stone Age) occupants provide handover documentation at Practical Completion? Probably not....thank goodness we don't have to deliver manuals made from stone tablets these days!

All of this history is interesting, but when did buildings become more complex, civilisation start to create handover documents and building owners actively maintain their buildings and the building services within them?

History suggests that the first, more complex buildings were Greek and Roman baths, built around 2nd century AD. Not only were the structures elaborate and ornate, they exhibited the first type of central heating and steam generation systems anywhere in the world.

The construction and maintenance of buildings was a major part of ancient Roman practice. Slaves generally performed the maintenance of buildings, with records showing that a slave from an imperial household was labelled "Maintenance Man of the Baths" (Vilicus Thermarum). We would love to believe that the Vilicus Thermarum had their version of a Building / O&M Manual written out on scrolls for reference as they carried out their duties, but in reality, we will never know.

As we've moved through the ages, new empires have been created and castles built across Europe and civilisation have grown more sophisticated. Buildings, structures and services have become more intricate, requiring routine repairs and maintenance to ensure integrity, to the point where current legislation requires the provision of handover documentation for Practical Completion in addition to ensuring optimum performance and lifespan.

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