



# Book reviews

## Christmas reading, with Ian Wall

IAN RANKIN'S REBUS IS VERY POPULAR AND HIS recent **The Naming of the Dead** justifies an entry in the Christmas list because his arch enemy has become a property developer.

Set during the G8 conference at Gleneagles when 2 million people marched against poverty in Edinburgh, its locations include the Craigmillar urban regeneration company and the Scottish & Newcastle Fountainbridge development site.

As usual with Rankin, the plot threads are complex and may or may not be woven together, providing a satisfying read.

As an aside, would anyone care to speculate on why so many fictional crooks are property developers (see previous reviews)? Responses welcome.

Many fictional detectives are lonely individuals up against a corrupt or uncaring society, but the same can be true of property professionals too as Theodor Storm's powerful novella describes.

**The Dykemaster** is a self-taught, visionary engineer who earns responsibility for creating and maintaining the dykes that protect the community from the sea.

Although respected, the limited, parsimonious and selfish attitude of the community makes for social tension and potentially disaster. The climax of the book is powerfully understated and its theme still resonates today in any substantial engineering works.

### FLASH IN THE PAN AM

As the reopening of London's St Pancras has shown, railway stations old and new can give great pleasure and be sources of civic pride. One of the greatest is Grand Central Station, New York, but its design and neo-classical appearance are dominated by **The Pan Am Building and the Shattering of the Modernist Dream**.

Designed by two famous architects, Belluschi and Gropius, instead of being the triumphant culmination of their careers it became one of the symbols of the decline of modernism. Meredith L Clausen's book gives a fascinating description of the genesis of a building, including funding,

construction and letting, together with the entertaining story of the heliport on its roof.

While the commercial property and residential markets suffer from the cupidity of the banks, our fine art colleagues' market continues to boom. Not just for them, however, is Jenny Uglow's biography of Thomas Bewick, one of Britain's finest wood engravers.

In **Nature's Engravers: A Life of Thomas Bewick**, she describes a life geographically limited but intellectually and artistically unbound in a book full of warmth which, not surprisingly, is well illustrated.

Also well illustrated is **Penguin by Design: A Cover Story**, which documents 70 years of Penguin covers. The book provides a useful analysis of the development of book design.

Finally, a great book that would make a good stocking filler for the property person in your life. **Looking for Mies** takes a single photograph of Mies van de Rohe smoking a cigar in one of his buildings and, from that, analyses both the building and Mies.

Ian Wall is chief executive at EDI Group



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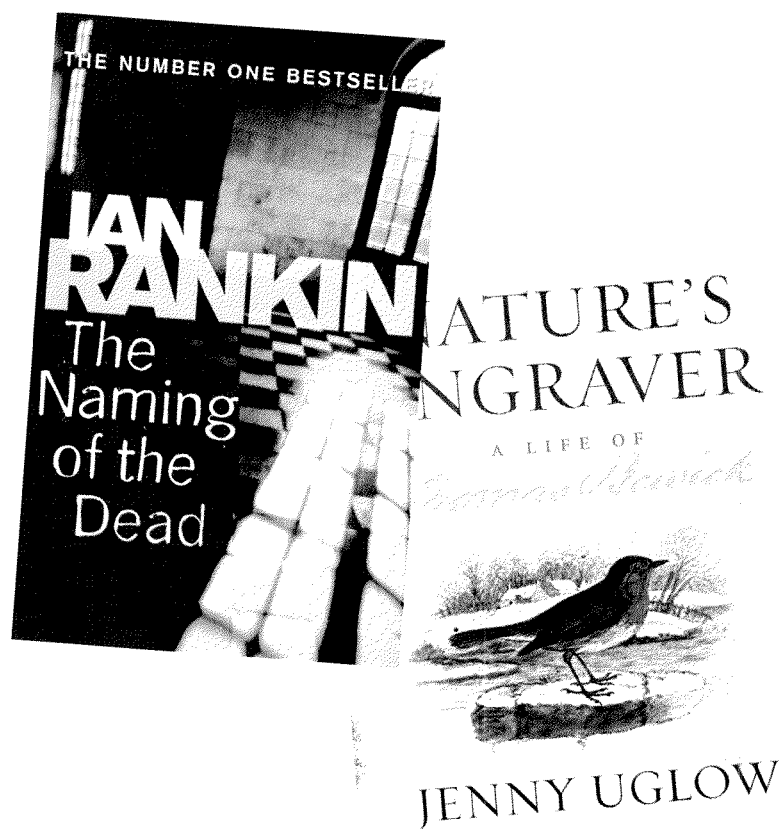
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**The Naming of the Dead**  
 Ian Rankin  
 Orion, £6.99

**The Dykemaster**  
 Theodor Storm  
 Angel Books, £8.95

**The Pan Am Building  
 and the Shattering  
 of the Modernist Dream**  
 Meredith I. Clausen  
 MIT, £14.95

**Nature's Engraver: A Life  
 of Thomas Bewick**  
 Jenny Uglow  
 Faber & Faber, £9.99

**Penguin by Design: A Cover Story**  
 Phil Baines  
 Penguin, £16.99

**Looking for Mies**  
 Ricardo Daza  
 Birkhäuser (out of print but  
 copies are available online  
 at [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) and  
[www.alibris.co.uk](http://www.alibris.co.uk))

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