

58/68.OLD CRAFT LEARNS NEW WAYS.

Near the foot of Snowdon lie rich deposits of one of man's oldest building materials - slate, that curious rock which might have been designed by nature for the convenience of the human craftsman. Millions of years ago, it was clay - but tremendous pressure has converted it into rock with laminations like the leaves of a book, which can be sawn like wood.

Splitting the heavy blocks is a delicate task - but years of training give a man the knack of producing six roofing tiles from every inch without spoiling one.

North Wales supplies the bulk of Britain's slate - but new building techniques demand new methods from the quarries. Crushed and mixed with concrete, slate is now making durable bricks - yellow, brown, marigold, red and natural. This dinorwic plant is semi-automatic, with ten men producing up to 70,000 bricks a week, though the quarry as a whole employs nearly 2,000 men. So an ancient craft keeps abreast of the times.