NEW BOOKS

Peterloo: *The Case Re-opened*
by Robert Walmsley
(Manchester University Press, 1969, xx + 585 pp. Price 90s.)

Peterloo is still an emotive word. Even after 150 years, most of us cannot recall the incident without indignation and censure. It lives in our imagination more clearly than many bigger, more recent horrors, for all who have experienced the helplessness of being trapped inside a great crowd find it easy to understand the plight of those simple, expectant people gathered together on St Peter's Field on that August morning in 1819. Besides, we have eloquent Samuel Bamford to fire our imagination and guide our thinking. In *Passages in the Life of a Radical* he has vividly described the events of the fateful 16 August —the early morning assembly at Middleton; the resolution to eschew violence and ignore provocation; the gay, jovial procession that set out; the way in which the various processional tributaries joined together until a strong flow of people surged through the narrow Manchester streets onto the Field; the boisterous good humour of the crowd as it waited impatiently for Orator Hunt and the platform party; the beginning of the speeches; the first sight of the Yeomanry; the sudden realisation of danger, and the mad scramble to get beyond the swish of sabres and the pounding of horses' hooves. Ten minutes later, Yeomanry and Hussars were undisputed victors: all that remained of the monster meeting were a few corpses, a much bigger number of wounded, a litter of broken banner poles, abandoned flags and lost bonnets, and crowds of distraught men and women making for home as fast as they could. The day which had dawned in high hopes and buoyant spirits had suddenly collapsed into angry despair and heaviness of heart.

Passages in the Life of a Radical has long been the source of the authorised picture of Peterloo. But Bamford only published his book in 1839, twenty years after the event. That does not necessarily impair its authenticity, but since historians ever endeavour 'to pick truth out of partiality', it must set them seeking more immediate reactions and descriptions. Memory plays tricks, time allows hindsight to modify a man's opinions, and the constant telling of a tale tends to magnify some incidents and to lose other details altogether. Moreover, Bamford saw the events through the eyes of a leading demonstrator. It is unlikely that Peterloo appeared the same to a non-participant, or to the magistrates who were responsible for maintaining law and order. A generation ago Robert Walmsley began to investigate this historical problem. He was particularly interested in William Hulton, the chairman of the magistrates. Already he was familiar with the Hulton family history, and he could not believe that young and handsome William was the unfeeling brute of Radical tradition. The outcome of Mr Walmsley's labour of love is this attractive, voluminous book.

In almost six hundred pages, Mr Walmsley has gathered together the testimony of many witnesses. He has examined the contradictions and incompatible details in the newspaper reports, contemporary writings, and subsequent evidence given in the courts, and he has come to the preordained conclusion that Hulton and his fellow magistrates were justified in taking the action they did. He reviews the events immediately leading to the climax of Peterloo—Hunt's assembly on St Peter's Field in January 1819; the turbulent Sandy Brow meeting in February followed by the rapid proliferation of Union Societies the many reform meetings of the early summer culminating in the massive

gathering at Stockport addressed by Sir Charles Wolseley and the Methodist minister, Joseph Harrison; the constant reports of reformers drilling on the moors, and, finally, the defiance of the demonstrators in holding the rally of 16 August without permission. A week earlier, the magistrates had turned down the Radical leaders' application to hold a mass meeting on the same site to consider, among other 'dangerous' things, 'the propriety of the unrepresented inhabitants of Manchester electing a person to represent them in Parliament.' Now the people were holding that same meeting without asking the magistrates. Everyone who assembled on St Peter's Field was challenging the authorities to stop them. The magistrates could not afford to ignore the challenge: once given an inch, the Radicals would have taken a yard. Besides, Henry Hunt was a rousing speaker, and already the agitation for parliamentary reform had raised extravagant and unreal hope of immediate improvements in the lot of the working classes. In such circumstances, an ebullient crowd, half as big as the total population of Manchester, could wreak havoc if it got out of hand.

William Hulton and Robert Walmsley probably win that point, but there remain two more difficult questions to answer—why did the magistrates allow the crowd to assemble at all, and what action did they take on the Field? The magistrates who met at the Star Inn and then took up their position in a house overlooking the Field were the combined magistrates of Lancashire and Cheshire. Their authority was not restricted to Manchester. Quite easily they could have intercepted the demonstrators *en route*. Indeed, Bamford confesses he expected them to do so: 'I had scarcely expected that we should be allowed to enter Manchester in a body . . . I had even fancied that they would most likely stop us at the then toll-gate, where the roads forked towards Collyhurst and Newtown . . .'. The Radical leaders had openly announced what they intended to do, and had instructed their followers not to resist the constables or the soldiers. They were to carry no weapon more lethal than 'a self-approving conscience'. But only when the thousands were packed into the Field did Hulton issue the warrants for the leaders' arrest.

Mr Walmsley's explanations do not absolve the magistrates from the charge of irresolution and dangerous delay. Nor does the evidence he assembles settle such points as Nadin's need for military assistance when lines of constables held open an avenue of approach to the platform; or the wisdom of using the inexperienced Yeomanry instead of the disciplined Hussars to enforce the arrests; or the attitude of the crowd to the soldiers. We still cannot be certain whether the people greeted the first sight of the Yeomanry with ironic cheers or shouts of defiance, or how far sticks and stones goaded the soldiers into using their sabres. There is eye-witness evidence enough, but it is so inconsistent that it allows each reader to make up his own mind according to his judgement and his preconceived prejudices.

If Mr Walmsley has not written the last word on Peterloo, he has certainly, as he claims in his subtitle, reopened the case. In this commemorative year, he has both reconstructed the picture afresh from the primary sources, and has redressed the balance of judgement. He has raised Hulton's bowed head, so that once again he is facing those who reproach him, and putting forward a credible explanation of the action he took. Hunt and Bamford can no longer take History's verdict for granted.

J. J. BAGLEY

Tudor Cheshire
by Joan Beck
(Cheshire Community Council, 1969, viii + 111 pp. Price 25s.)

Volume Seven of *A History of Cheshire* (ed. J. J. Bagley) carries forward what is one of the most welcome ventures in local history in recent years. Miss Beck, a former president of the Historic Society, has a deep acquaintance with Cheshire historical material and she has distilled into this book all her wide experience of

lecturing on the history of the county for the Adult Education and Extra-Mural Department of the University of Liverpool. It will be very much used.

Inevitably there are points where the author should be cross-examined. Why recapitulate the myth of the slaughters of the Wars of the Roses, especially with the support of Michael Drayton (1563–1631)? Was 'the enclosures of common land' the most vexed of Tudor agrarian problems (p. 47)? Was weaving in the early sixteenth century 'lending itself to small-scale 'factory' organisation'—unless we define 'factory' in a very special way? The general balance of the book would have been improved by a conclusion and although the bibliographies after each chapter are excellent guides to further reading, they do not help in the tracing of any particular reference. Perhaps the General Editor is responsible, but without the location of at least the quotations, Miss Beck's substantial use of manuscript extracts is robbed of much value.

Nevertheless, the author has produced a book which will be of interest to a wide public which wants to know about the life lived in Cheshire four hundred years ago. After a brief introduction on the union between 'the country of Cheshire' and 'the country of England' in the 1530s and the 1540s, Miss Beck discusses first the city of Chester and then the county, describing the life of the inhabitants in their various degrees, and the concerns of society, ranging from plague, fire and petty bickering, to the problems of a rising standard of living and the erection of new manor houses. Internal trade and industry come next, with salt boiling taking its proper place as the premier but not the only industry in the shire, although the wider trade of the far-flung 'Port of Chester' is naturally considered in the account of the city. 'Social Life' and 'The Church' each receive a chapter to themselves and the final one deals with the effects of the monastic dissolution. One danger of this sort of approach is that evidence from different generations is run together, but Miss Beck triumphantly avoids a pastiche 'Tudor England' by putting her datum line firmly in the middle of Elizabeth's reign so that much of the book could be entitled 'Society in Elizabethan Cheshire'. Another danger in such a close study could be confusion but the reader is supplied with an excellent end-map of the county and seven clear specialised maps in the text; there are also a dozen good illustrations. Perhaps Miss Beck too rigorously excludes the impact of national affairs such as the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Rising of the North, but few aspects of the county elude her.

There is often, however, a price which has to be paid for this sectional method, a loss of a sense of motion; it offers a still photograph, not a moving picture. This price Miss Beck pays. She alludes to the obvious theme for the history of Tudor Cheshire in her first chapter, the integration of the county with the rest of the nation, and there are others—for example the working of faction and patronage in a region where established gentry families may have been especially numerous and where more than the usual number of royal offices were available for competition—but her book deals slightly with them. And it is not the author's fault. Cheshire is rich in historical records but they are largely unread—Miss Beck cannot analyse themes which have not even been transcribed. Professor Barraclough's paper (*Transactions*, 103) has been followed by no detailed account of the working of the palatinate; most of the records lie in the huts in the Chilterns where the Public Record Office stores little consulted material. There is no *Victoria County History*, to say nothing of the sort of study which Cheshire really needs, with an account of the formulative effect of changing ecology in the Dee Valley and the tracing of the social as well as the manorial history. Is it beyond hope that a trust could be set up—civic authorities, universities and colleges, local learned societies and patrons—to preserve Cheshire material, collect microfilms of collections abroad, agitate for the transfer of Chester records from the PRO and, above all, to encourage and finance a series of basic research studies into the history of the county palatine? Until this basic research is done, students of Cheshire history will be forced, with Miss Beck, to be satisfied with sections through the tissue and no more than guesses at the organic whole.

E. W. IVES

The Last Days of the Lancashire Monasteries and the Pilgrimage of Grace

by Christopher Haigh

(Chetham Society, Third Series, Vol. 17 (1969), 172 pp. Price 50s.)

The glittering services of the eleven pre-Reformation Lancashire monastic churches must have been among the most splendid sights of the county. Yet within one decade between 1530–40 royal supremacy had triumphed. The monasteries became those dull silent ruins which we visit to-day at Furness or Whalley or that vast expanse of field at Cockersand. Many questions nag us about this disaster more final than any modern blitz. Why did it happen? Who were these last monks of Lancashire? What was the resistance from local people, if any? What finally happened to the monks?

Dr Haigh's fascinating and scholarly survey answers all these questions and gives us a vivid picture of these dramatic events. National histories of the Tudor period as of any other often do not take into account regional variations. Dr Haigh rectifies this omission and proves that there are several features in the suppression of the Lancashire monasteries unique to this county.

Perhaps the most striking feature was that in spite of its poor condition Lancashire people were far more strongly attached to the Catholic Church than others in the rest of the country. They were not ready for the Reformation. Dr Haigh begins by surveying the state of the seven independent religious houses and the four dependent priories. Then he gives an account of the biased visitation in 1535 of Richard Layton and Thomas Legh. These two commissioners of Henry VIII could find less than one fifth of the Lancashire monks guilty of moral lapses and even discovered religious enthusiasm in north Lancashire. Cockersand Abbey was still attracting new recruits. Whalley Abbey, at the peak of its glory, showed luxury and worldliness but not a hint of scandal.

The many links between the local people and the monasteries are then discussed. The gentry were concerned as stewards and business associates of the monks. Many local people had relatives in the monasteries. Some were monastic tenants. The Lancashire houses were popular among the commons because of their very generous almsgiving, their hospitality to travellers and for their colourful and splendid services. Dr Haigh details how the Lancashire houses fitted in with the points raised by the leader of the Pilgrimage of Grace when he objected to the Act of Suppression. Local people were drastically affected when, as a result of the visitation, eight monasteries were closed down.

The monks of the doomed eight, if given any choice, almost invariably would have preferred to remain in religion by being transferred to larger houses. However, half were made to leave monastic life against their will. Cockersand was fortunate. In spite of its size it was able to buy exemption from the Act. Conishead made two offers to the king—the final one was of one thousand one hundred marks. This was not accepted and the suppressors moved in.

The commons of north Lancashire reacted violently to the ejection of the monks of the lesser monasteries. Within a month they restored the monks of Conishead. Dr Haigh shows how Lancashire became involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace. He gives vivid cameos of the main characters caught up in these dramatic events. The Earl of Derby, true to family tradition, dilatory and not trusted by either side. Abbot Paslew paid with his life for his part in the rebellion. Was he really one of the leaders or was he only involved because he wished to save the lands of Whalley from devastation by the Pilgrims? One very real fact was the complete collapse of Derby's authority north of the Ribble. The Lancashire movement was far too bound up with national events to have any hopes of lasting success. Henry VIII's duplicity in negotiation, and the defeat of the rebels elsewhere, resulted in the collapse of the movement.

The severe example made of the Carlisle rebels resulted in the petering out of the local rising. The retribution began. The monks of Whalley and Cartmell

were the most harshly treated. Eleven were condemned for treason and either executed, imprisoned or fled. Of the laity ten husbandmen of Cartmell were executed. The rest of the rebels learned their lesson and there were no more operations to save the monasteries. The monks of Whalley and Furness were ejected and those of Cockersand surrendered.

Dr Haigh concludes with a survey of the ex-monks. The number receiving royal pensions was far lower than the national average. A few received local benefices, two thirds were without benefice or pension. Since many had local ties they were assimilated in local society. The one hundred and thirty two monks had been displaced. The chief gainers from the dissolution were the new monastics. Monastery lands were granted by sale or lease not to new men but to old established county families who were not even in sympathy with the new religious ideas. Out of fourteen families considered by Dr Haigh twelve were still largely catholic in Elizabeth's reign. The conservative character of the county was unchanged.

Dr Haigh's research has given us a vivid picture of one of the most intriguing episodes in Lancashire history, more than adequately supported by excellent statistics.

ENID L. BROWN

North Lancashire
by Nikolaus Pevsner
(Penguin, The Buildings of England, 1969, 275 pp. Price 15s.)

This book is published as a book of reference and, so far as the plates are concerned, it is very good. But I cannot say the same about the text, For instance, on page 17, there is no evidence to show that Lancaster Castle Keep was built by Roger of Poitou. He was banished in 1102 and at that time only two stone keeps existed, both royal, the White Tower of London and Colchester. He may have constructed a mott and bailey at Lancaster. Another error in date is on page 50: Ashton Hall 'The Tower only was built then.' The Tower is fourteenth century and the new part was built in 1856 and existed in 1884. I cannot believe that the author has ever been to Carnforth for on page 86 he states that 'it is also a town of ironworks'. The works closed down over thirty years ago and only a section of the outside wall remains.

Moving on to Silverdale Professor Pevsner refers to 'the tower at *Senovy* Brown's Point [my italics]', which should be the chimney at Jenny Brown's Point. On the other side of the Lune, on page 92, he states that at Caton is 'the White Cross Mill of 1838.' I assume he means the Caton Low Mill owned by Storey Bros & Co. Ltd of White Cross Mill, Lancaster. At Heysham, he discovers a new inn, 'N of the village the Middleton Arms.' There is no such place: perhaps he refers to Heysham Old Hall, now The Old Hall Inn. Or has he confused Heysham with Middleton, which he does not mention at all although there is in it a Tudor one-time school and house and the Old Roof Tree Inn? This inn was once Middleton Hall, so the author may have named it The Middleton Arms and located it in Heysham.

In Lancaster itself I have space to refer to only a few items. The monument in the Churchyard (p. 155) is that of the Rothwell family and not of the Rawlinsons, and on page 162 the most important part of the Royal Grammar School, which attracted so much attention that the plans were exhibited in the Royal Academy, is not mentioned. In referring to Church Street (p. 159) there is complete confusion as to the situation of buildings. No mention is made of the College of Further Education on Morecambe Road with its building of original design, and on page 161, the campanile of St Bernadette's is stated to be of concrete: it may have a concrete core but it is stone faced.

In addition to these observations there are a variety of other errors in the Lancaster area alone, not necessarily trivial but too numerous to recapitulate. As the book is clearly full of errors of fact when dealing with this area, it is not unreasonable to doubt its value as a work of reference.

K. H. DOCTON

The Story of Merseyside
Part Two, Elizabeth I to Victoria
by J. J. Bagley
(Parry Books Ltd., 1969, 96 pp. Price 8s. 6d.)

The growing interest in regional history is well catered for by Mr Bagley's two attractively produced booklets on the history of Merseyside. The second of these, now under review, is written in that attractive conversational style which has made the author so much in demand as a tutor of extra-mural classes in local history from the extreme north of Lancashire to the confines of West Cheshire. It consists of twelve short chapters on a variety of subjects from the Reformation to Victorian Merseyside, which rightly include four chapters on those transport developments by road, river, canal and sea which were fundamental to the growth of the regional economy from about 1660 onwards. There is inevitably a heavy bias towards social and economic history, but the repercussions of the Civil War and the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 on Merseyside are effectively demonstrated. One of the most useful features of this series of talks, originally delivered on Radio Merseyside, is the short list of books and articles for further reading at the end of each chapter.

W. H. CHALONER