NEW BOOKS

An Edition of the Cartulary of Burscough Priory
by A. N. Webb

The edition of the cartulary of Burscough Priory is welcome on two counts: it is the only cartulary surviving from an Augustinian foundation in Lancashire and the last derived from a major Lancashire house which needed publication.

Mr Webb describes in the introduction the make-up of the cartulary, gives as date of compilation the late-fourteenth century and discusses the benefactors. Pedigrees of the principal donors, the families of Lathom and Scarisbrick are added. Where the originals of the deeds existed these are printed instead of the cartulary version and a further forty charters not included in the cartulary are printed in an appendix.

One major difficulty confronting the editor lay in the absence of witnesses to approximately two thirds of the charters and in the only minor importance of local witnesses which had left no trace in the national records. This made the dating of the copies hazardous. Another difficulty lay in the method of describing the granted property which only in exceptional cases and only for small areas was shown in precise measurement, while the majority of the grants and any more extensive land grants were described by boundaries and landmarks, natural or artificial such as ditches, prominent trees or crosses and other boundary marks. It was therefore impossible to state the date of the major grants with precision or to indicate their extent on the map.

The interest of the cartulary lies, nevertheless, in just these loosely defined boundaries which should be of great use to the local topographer studying the area of Lathom, Burscough, Martin Scarisbrick and Harleton, and to the economic historian because the grants reflect the undeveloped state of the lands, the preponderance of rough pasture and pannage over arable, and the field system characteristic of Lancashire. The several charters which refer to the important royal writ de mensuratione pasture might have repaid further study since they show different application of the writ; one group of deeds protecting the rights of the villagers against the donee, the other group protecting the rights of the donee.

It would have made the study of the texts easier if the Chetham Society had seen fit to use different type for the abstracts, texts and editorial notes or, if that proved too expensive, had at least emphasized the beginning of every charter by a bolder serial number or a wider space between the charters. One small point should be noted. H. abbot of Chester, witness of the charter n.166, should surely be extended to Hugh not Henry since Hugh Grylle was abbot 1208–1226.

DOROTHEA OSCHINSKY

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Dr Wilson's edition of the Chester customs accounts, extending from the reign of Edward I to that of Elizabeth I, is a useful addition to our knowledge not only of Palatinate administration but also of the trade of England in late-medieval and early-modern times. Although a nationwide customs system was gradually created after 1275, Chester remained independent of direct royal control for very much longer. Part of the introduction to this edition is devoted to explaining how the administration of collecting customs dues was developed in the Palatinate until, in the mid-sixteenth century, it was incorporated into the national system only a few years after the City and County had begun to be represented in Parliament itself.

Naturally, and properly so, much of what the editor himself has to say is of local interest. But his documents, which are rendered in a convenient and readable form for the modern student, have wider implications. The port of Chester (it controlled several landing places on the east bank of the river Dee, the most important, up to the end of the fifteenth century, being Redbank, situated between West Kirby and Heswall) served more than the immediate hinterland, for it was, in effect, the main maritime outlet for north-west England and, seemingly, for parts of the Midlands, too. Its geographical situation determined where its trading links were chiefly to be forged: Gascony and the Charente; Brittany; Spain and Portugal; and, naturally, Ireland. Gascon wine paid duty; hence its movements are recorded in the accounts. War (or peace, paradoxically enough) affected this trade, for the loss of Bordeaux in 1451 and again, this time finally, in 1453, reduced that trading link to almost nothing for some years, a situation which appears to have been turned to advantage by the more politically neutral Bretons. From Spain came wine, but above all it was for iron that this connection became important after 1464, as the accounts make clear. Leather and hides, the other ‘dutiable’ commodity, was to assume its own importance in the sixteenth century. Some interesting tables give us further important information. The wine trade was largely in the hands of denizens until 1464, but less so after that date: the iron trade, on the other hand, was monopolised by aliens until 1496, after which date it began to pass slowly into the hands of denizen merchants.

The volume is carefully printed, and I have found only a few slips, mainly in the spelling of French place-names. It is, however, a good many years since the départements of the Seine-Inférieure became the Seine-Maritime. By the same decree the Loire-Inférieure became the Loire-Atlantique; both versions have crept into the index and notes. But these are small errors, which do not detract from the value of an interesting and important collection of documents admirably presented.

C. T. ALLMAND

The Trade of Elizabethan Chester
by D. M. Woodward

(University of Hull Occasional Papers in Economic and Social History no. 4. 1970, pp. 150, Price £1.75p.)

Early in Elizabeth's reign the palatine port of Chester was at last brought into the national system of customs administration when, in November 1559, it was made the head port for north-western England with Liverpool, Conway
and Beaumaris as its principal members. Even at the highest point of its medieval prosperity, Chester had been of only moderate importance in national terms. Beset by the problems of a silting river estuary, a geographical position which made trade with the Low Countries and the Baltic difficult, and a thrusting rival in Liverpool, its prospects under Elizabeth did not appear promising. Yet, as Mr Woodward makes clear, the port not only managed to cope with the frustrating uncertainties of the Elizabethan economy but even prospered modestly by concentrating its energies on trade with Ireland and with southern Europe. Indeed the main conclusion which emerges from Mr Woodward's very competent study is that Chester remained more than a match for Liverpool throughout the sixteenth century and perhaps did not yield its primacy until the years after the Restoration. By careful use of the port books (whose shortcomings are discussed in a valuable appendix) and the customs accounts in the Public Record Office as well as the sheriffs' customs entry books at the Chester City Record Office, Mr. Woodward demonstrates how in the main area of rivalry, the trade with Ireland, the activities of the merchants of the two ports were generally complementary rather than in competition. Liverpool, fittingly, developed as the region's principal importer of raw materials, especially the linen yarn required by the textile towns in its hinterland—which were seemingly growing fast at the century's end—while Chester captured much the larger share of the export trade. In this way Chester took advantage of the superior range of merchandise which it could offer exporters anxious to make up mixed cargoes, the wider variety of services which its craftsmen and skilled artisans could provide and the readier access it allowed goods travelling north by road from London and the Midlands. The value of its shipments to Ireland touched new peaks, increasing from £360 in 1565-6 to over £9,000 in 1592-3 when the Irish trade accounted for nine-tenths of all its exports. The volume of its imports from Ireland rose too, making up two-thirds of the grand total by the 1590's, worth just over £2,000; but by the early 1590's the balance of trade had, in marked contrast to the situation in the Middle Ages, swung firmly in favour of the English port.

Chester's Irish trade nevertheless continued to be dominated by the merchants of Dublin, and the city's own merchants had to turn to the more hazardous and less regular trade with southern Europe to find the best expression for their initiative and enterprise. In so doing they precipitated a split in the mercantile community between a minority of 'mere merchants' who joined the new Spanish Company established in 1577, and the main body of 'merchant retailers' who found themselves faced with exclusion from the trade, a dispute not finally settled until 1589. By then Chester's continental trade—shipping out cottons and tanned calfskins among its mixed cargoes, bringing home iron and wines—had demonstrated its capacity to survive the Anglo-Spanish war, which had begun in 1585 (in contrast to Liverpool's similar trade); but the narrowing down of the controlling merchant body continued: by 1603 it was entirely in the hands of a very select group, headed by the outstanding local family of Aldersley.

By the standards of Bristol and Exeter, however, even the Aldersleys were small fry, with no expectation of a burgess's place in parliament. In a particularly interesting chapter Mr Woodward traces the diversified interests of his merchants, showing how often they retained an interest in farming and property management, besides seeking injections of fresh capital by the traditional means of shrewd marriages and making rewarding investments by loaning money to the drovers engaged in the profitable cattle trade with London and the graziers of the south-east. Recruits to the mercantile community usually had local origins, but Thomas Parker came from as far away as Essex, perhaps as a consequence of a connection with the stock trade.

Altogether Mr Woodward has added substantially to our knowledge of Chester in the second half of the sixteenth century. It is good news that he hopes to carry his investigations forward into the Stuart period.

B. W. QUINTRELL
With the appearance of volume two of the diary of Nicholas Blundell, Mr Frank Tyrer introduces an elegant addition to the growing list of published Lancashire diaries of the eighteenth century. It will be warmly welcomed by historians. Mr Tyrer, in fact, is accomplishing for Nicholas Blundell the service which Mr E. S. de Beer performed for John Evelyn. The volume is superbly presented; there are seventeen plates, three maps, two indexes and a host of informative footnotes. Details from Blundell's disbursement book and other papers occupy no less than fourteen appendices. These annotations form a valuable complement to the main text. For instance, it is not from the diary but from Mr Tyrer's research amongst Blundell's accounts that the reader learns of the financial anxieties inherited by the diarist after the sequestration of the family estates and the payment of a considerable sum to secure their recovery—evidence of the sort of problem faced by roman catholic recusants at this time.

Volume two covers a slightly shorter period than its predecessor, but this is formed by the most eventful years in Blundell's life. It includes his flight from Little Crosby and his 'Long ramble' in Flanders in the aftermath of the Jacobite rebellion of 1715. How does Blundell record all these events? He differs markedly from so many eighteenth-century diarists. One finds here none of the pious introspection of a Richard Kay, none of the strident radicalism of a Sylas Neville. Blundell's most noticeable characteristic is his consistency, his method of expression being based on the terse, factual sentence with comments on the weather appearing unfailingly at the end of each month and year. In this predictability of style there are signs of an exact mind and of an acute eye for detail.

This volume begins in January 1712 and immediately concerns itself with the themes found in volume one, revolving round Blundell's life at Little Crosby. This local element will arouse the greatest interest. The Blundells were a significant Lancashire family and two of them, though not the diarist himself, are accorded entries in the Dictionary of National Biography. Blundell's way of life as a landed gentleman and farmer is amply illustrated; by 1712 he had already been squire of Little Crosby for ten years. This way of life was interrupted by his enforced absence in London and Flanders between November 1715 and September 1717. Afterwards he had little apparent difficulty in returning to his accustomed local role. Accordingly, the familiar agricultural topics recur: wages, the affairs of tenants, marling and the ailments of farm animals all feature prominently. There are indications, moreover, of the legal difficulties besetting a landowner of Blundell's stature. A dispute with a neighbour over access to certain fields ended with his payment of a fine (4 September 1718). This was a period in which much local attention was given to the construction of water-courses to prevent flooding. Blundell himself displayed concern over this question and made repeated efforts to empanel a jury to order the provision of such courses. The longest wrangle sprang from the diarist's attempts to secure the construction of a bridge over the Farmosspool Gutter, on the road from Liverpool, and to establish the legal obligation of the hundred of West Derby to provide and maintain it. Consequently, the name of the Liverpool lawyer John Plumb appears frequently in the earlier pages of this volume. Disputes with tenants, rights of access and similar problems occupied much of Blundell's time but did not deter him from participating in local affairs. Though a roman catholic, he served as churchwarden of the parish of Sefton in 1714–15. This is a particularly interesting episode, since it enabled him to acquire several anglican friends, notably the Rev. Richard Richmond, rector of
Sefton and of Walton. A further testimony to Blundell’s local standing was the possibility of his becoming a parish constable in January 1719, a duty which he avoided. In the course of his labours he naturally made many visits to Liverpool, where he noted such details as the purchase of a swine in ‘Daile Street’ (16 May 1718), the hurriedly prepared fortifications of November 1715 and the change of ownership of the Woolpack Inn. He was impressed more by people and places in Liverpool than by events; there are only three references to parliamentary elections and none of them can be described as revealing.

All this was temporarily disturbed by the Jacobite rebellion. Although Blundell himself took no part therein, he was, as a catholic recusant, a target for suspicion. The rebellion profoundly affected his life. Yet the diary makes only the most meagre allusions to its events, usually when they concerned Blundell personally. The house searches by ‘Some Foote’ from Liverpool (the last as late as July 1718) are duly recorded. Blundell at times had to hide to evade possible arrest. The pressure became so intense that in November 1715 he left secretly for London, where he remained for several months before embarking for the continent. He was well aware of the political atmosphere. On 9 December 1715 he wrote ‘I saw the Preston prisoners come into town’. He heard of the execution of some of the Jacobite leaders and on 27 February 1716 he noted ‘There was High Mass for Lord Derwinwater at the French Envoys, several Persons of Note were there’. The latter entry marks Blundell’s nearest approach to sympathy or partisanship. The reader will find no trace of regret at the failure of the rebellion, no sign of bitterness at his own consequent discomfiture.

The rebellion, of course, led to Blundell’s sojourn in Flanders. He landed at Ostend on 15 March 1716 and did not feel able to return to England until August the following year. This is in many ways the most stimulating feature of the diary. For Blundell travelled extensively between Dunkirk, Gravelines, Bruges, Ghent and Liege, rarely remaining in one place for more than a few weeks. The architectural and artistic majesty of Flanders inspired him to regale his diary with long descriptive passages. There is something approaching lyricism in his accounts of the Carmelite monastery at Antwerp, the Jesuit church at Lille, the church of St James at Liege and the painting of the Emperor Charles V in the Town Hall of Ghent. Indeed, Blundell visited churches with the avidity of a connoisseur; he claimed to have examined twelve in one morning at Liege in June 1717. His descriptions are informative and interesting, the more so since many of the churches he saw no longer exist.

Blundell’s exile on the continent was by no means a lonely affair. His wife and daughters joined him and the latter both entered convents. Moreover he had important connections in Flanders. He had himself been a pupil at the English Jesuit College at St Omer and enjoyed family links with a number of religious foundations. He mingled with scores of English Jacobite exiles. The celebrated names flit briefly across Blundell’s pages—Lord Waldegrave, Lord Rivers, Lord Kilmuir, Sir John and Lady Webb, together with some one hundred roman catholic priests. Although he was very much the eighteenth-century Englishman abroad, Blundell met few of the inhabitants of Flanders, even when he betook himself to the health-giving waters of Chaudfontaine. There was a large group of English people in exile and he fitted naturally into it. Some of his most detailed observations are to be found in this section of the diary. Their presentation is enhanced by judicious annotations by Mr Tyrer, who has followed in the diarist’s continental footsteps.

Both before and after his exile, Blundell was a highly respected figure in his own county. He was well connected, a great socialiser and accepted in the highest circles. Through his wife, he was related to the third Lord Langdale of Holme. He could claim friendship with Viscount Molineaux and with many other members of the catholic nobility and gentry. He dined with Lord Derby at Knowsley in June 1718. Moreover he knew some of the more prominent catholic priests. Father Hugh Tootel, author of The Church History of England, from the year 1500 to the year 1688 and pastor to a congregation at Fernyhulgh, was one of Blundell’s friends. There remains a slight feeling of disappointment, however, that although he knew so many men of status and intellect, he recorded almost nothing of their conversation, their ideas or their opinions. This might have been the result of Blundell’s discretion at a time of political
insecurity. It is also possible that his concise and economical style excluded what could have been a fascinating insight into the inner thoughts of early-eighteenth century catholic intellectuals.

What sort of man was Blundell? Clearly he was generous in his distribution of charity to the poor. There is no difficulty in discerning his interests, which were predominantly local. Blundell showed little or no concern for Westminster politics. The diary does not mention the death of Queen Anne, and 'national affairs' have only two references in the index. One unusual example of political participation occurred in December 1719, when Blundell signed a petition to parliament in favour of the controversial Weaver navigation scheme, a project not effected until several years later. On the other hand, the diarist has much more to say about his personal pursuits; hare-coursing, cock-fighting and shooting were among them. Blundell was intrigued by medical matters, by watchmaking and by animal freaks. Yet he reveals little of his intellectual tastes. Occasionally he saw a Shakespearian play—Macbeth at the New Market in Liverpool (13 October 1714) and Titus Andronicus at Drury Lane (16 August 1717). He never felt moved to express an opinion upon what he saw. Similarly, Blundell is tantalisingly vague with regard to his reading inclinations. He was obviously a man of intellect who catechised in the catholic faith and possessed a collection of 'Schollastical and Phisick Books'. It is perhaps surprising, therefore, that only one theological work is mentioned by name—Juan Eusebio Nieremberg's Treatise of the Difference between the Temporal and the Eternal. For the rest, the reader must be content with laconic notes on the lines of 'I read in a Spirituall book' (17 April 1712). Only when he was hiding in a priest-hole at Crosby Hall at the height of the Jacobite rebellion did Blundell think it worthwhile to mention the titles of other books.

For all his travelling in England and on the continent, this fascinating character must ultimately be placed in a Lancastrian context. It is Blundell the squire, the gentleman and the farmer who offers most to local historians. All those interested in eighteenth century Lancashire will feel deeply indebted to Mr Tyrer, for he has provided them with material for decades to come. There is a wealth of historical information throughout the pages of Blundell's diary. Much of it is subtle, parenthetical and unselfconsciously expressed. This undoubtedly renders it all the more valuable.

G. M. DITCHFIELD

Liverpool and Merseyside. Essays in the economic and social history of the port and its hinterland
edited by J. R. Harris
(Frank Cass and Co. Ltd. 1969, xiv and 287 pp. Price £3.75p.)

The Industrial Archaeology of Lancashire
by Owen Ashmore
(David and Charles 1969, 352 pp., ill. Price £2.50p.)

The Curse of the Factory System
by John Fielden, edited by J. T. Ward
(Frank Cass and Co. Ltd. 1969, xlix and 74 pp. Price £2.50p.)

The first of these books, an interesting volume of essays edited by J. R. Harris and consisting in the main of the work of his graduate pupils at Liverpool, poses the question what is the case for thematic monographs on a regional basis? The editor is convinced that the study of economic change is much more manageable if pursued within a region rather than nationally: 'the best hope we have of a reliable national picture, he says 'comes from the assembly of a number of regional ones' (x). He believes that themes of national importance can and
should be exemplified within the regional context. Such a view cannot fail to be of great interest to the members of a regional Historical Society.

The source materials for such studies are of three general kinds. Most eagerly sought after, and inspiring the greatest hope of some quantified test of a significant thesis, are comprehensive sources on which may be based one or more time-series. In the present book there are two examples of this. F. Neal uses the Statutory Registers of Merchant Shipping to investigate shipowning in Liverpool in the early nineteenth century, and D. M. Williams takes as the basis of his study of the Liverpool cotton trade in the same period the Customs Bills of Entry. Secondly, there are the records of an individual, an institution or an organization, upon which, suitably augmented from other sources, can be built a comprehensive view of performance over time. On this basis G. W. Oxley discusses the old Poor Law in South-West Lancashire (using petitions presented to Quarter Sessions by those seeking relief, together with the surveys of the poor taken in certain townships); P. N. Davies gives an account of the Liverpool based African Steam Ship Company (using the records of three firms); and B. L. Anderson derives the core of his study of the role of the attorney in the early capital market in Lancashire from the records of three men, John Plumbe, Daniel Lawson and Edward Deane. Thirdly, there are those sources of a dispersed and fragmentary kind that are brought together by a scholar who has started with a problem or an event rather than with a more or less consolidated collection of information. In this way it is possible to illuminate a particular trade or industry, as in F. A. Bailey and T. C. Barker's study of Lancashire watch-making, or to present accounts of economic-political struggles, as with the editor's essay on early Liverpool canal controversies, B. H. Tolley on the Liverpool campaign of 1812 against the Orders in Council, and D. E. Baines and R. Bean on the General Strike on Merseyside.

Of the two quantifiers Neal has the harder task, for though he can establish the amount of shipping belonging to Liverpool in his period, there are serious difficulties in relating this to the volume or value of the trade of the port. He does not attempt to value the shipping stock, thus failing to make a contribution to the history of regional capital formation—would it have been too difficult to arrive at an estimate of the cost of shipping per ton? But he does analyse the distribution of ownership by the occupations of owners, thus giving an indication of the sectoral sources of shipping capital. His main conclusion is that ship-owning, like many other sectors, was until the mid-century a local affair in the hands of smallish firms; with the advent of capital-intensive ships with advanced marine engines and iron-framed hulls the large firm working under oligopolistic conditions had to come. Williams takes the statistical scalpel to the cotton merchants. He shows that the general merchant with his wide spread of interests had been superseded early and that the large operators were dominant in cotton by 1820 (191); the next threshold, making necessary a further move toward functional specialization, came with the Atlantic cable and the futures market. Both Neal and Williams, though they give much greater depth and precision to our understanding, end by admitting that their enquiries tend to substantiate prevailing notions (179, 201).

Oxley's principal object in his Poor Law study is to test the orthodox view that the establishment of workhouses belonging to Liverpool after the Act of 1723 was very largely a failure. In his informative study he argues that in south-west Lancashire, though the system was not perfect, it worked (45). He is perhaps too ready to equate the continuance of the system for a century with its success. In his region, he concludes, the main features of Poor Law administration were similar to those elsewhere, but 'there were some significant differences' (45).

Davies, in his highly readable account of Sir Alfred Jones's African Steamship Company, adds to our slender galley of documented major firms that have gone through the cycle of great prosperity and total eclipse. It is an interesting conjecture as to whether any formal economists' model could be constructed to embrace a complex story of this kind. Anderson's essay, in addition to presenting the activities of leading Lancashire attorneys, makes an important contribution to the study of capital formation in pre-institutional times.

The Bailey-Barker account of Lancashire watchmakers reveals an area of special skills thriving within a regional context: it is a pity it is impossible to
make a direct link between the special skills of the Lancashire watchmakers and the rise of mechanized and powered industry in the area.

The three economic-political struggles convey a strong sense of groups of men in varied contexts seeking to out-manoeuvre others. The reader of studies like Harris' on canals is always left with the question how far were transport systems the result of impersonal factors such as geography, communication needs, weight loss, and how far were they the result of the tactical struggles of contending projectors? Harris tells us that though the effort to promote the Liverpool-Wigan canal failed, the effect of the agitation was to improve Liverpool's coal supply. Tolley's contribution elaborates the role in Liverpool of its trade with America in 1812, and the political fight by those concerned in it to end the Orders in Council. From the handbills of W. and E. Corrie he provides figures of the volume and prices of American imports from 1810 to 1814. Though these give precision to his account, the shortness of the time span makes them of limited use. Messrs. Baines and Bean show in detail how the General Strike was conducted in a single city. The Liverpool experience was characterised on the workers' side by a 'very strong' sense of solidarity (265), very little dispute between unions or religions, minimal violence, great pains by strike leaders to maintain discipline and order, and a local enthusiasm much greater than that at the centre.

These are discrete monographs, with very little inter-connection. Not all of them realize the hopes expressed in the preface of contributing to a national picture, at least in any obvious thematic sense. But they are all thorough pieces of work, done at a depth that gives them authority; together they constitute a volume which, though disjointed, makes rewarding reading, not least because of the variety it provides within the context of a single city and its region. The index has gone wrong: to locate a reference it is necessary to add two or three to the pagination given.

Owen Ashmore's *Industrial Archaeology of Lancashire* records the greatest concentration in the country of physical remains of the Industrial Revolution. It follows the lines already established in the David and Charles series, that rapidly growing guide to what must be the fastest expanding branch of archaeology. Part I provides the geographical and historical background followed by a treatment of each sector of industry and transport. Part II is a gazetteer of sites together with extensive bibliographic notes. The illustrations are an essential element of the book, though one or two, like the photography of a length of abandoned (and removed) track, carry a slight air of obsession. The book admirably conveys the scale of things—in terms of industrial plants in their relation to one another and to hills, plains, watercourses and coasts. Many readers will share the author's intense satisfaction in a precise plan, section and elevation. Trend and generalized quantification are at a severe discount: we are close to the entrepreneur and his projects, and to the labourer, his skills and his conditions of work. Over it all hangs a kind of pathos for things that are gone. This, added to Mr Ashmore's scholarly merits, will help to sell his volume.

John Fielden's *Curse of the Factory System*, by carrying us back to the time when these relics were revolutionary, shatters this nostalgia. Dr J. T. Ward has revived a document written by a factory master who was appalled by the uncontrolled power of the new system. To Fielden the now almost quaint mills recorded by the industrial archaeologists were giant 'Molochs' capable of devouring the people. Ashmore quotes (49) an epitaph of 1844 from the churchyard of St James, Oldham. Fielden might well have used it had he known it:

> 'Returning to my work at noon
> No thought of meeting death so soon
> But Alas! dear friends how sad to tell
> The fireproof mill soon on us fell
> Leaving husband child and parents dear
> To mourn my fate and short career.'

The new edition of Fielden brings back with painful freshness the real meaning of the early factory system. The well-documented introduction gives the back-
A History of Merchant Taylors' School, Crosby, 1620–1970
by H. M. Luft

Many authors of school histories take too restricted a view of their task. They tell their story as if a school were an isolated community and not an element in a wider society. They stress petty domestic events which are insignificant to the outsider, and recount at length incidents and school lore which only the initiated can appreciate. Their main purpose appears to be to put into the hands of old scholars a sentimental, and often idealised, remembrance of their schooldays. At best, they are no more than chroniclers.

But Mr Luft, the headmaster of Merchant Taylors’ School, Crosby, has a far more comprehensive concept of what a school history should be. He has set the life-story of his school against the changing social and economic background of the area which it has long served, and within the framework of the development of English education. Not only does he explain in some detail such local matters as the religious divisions and lack of parental ambition against which the first two headmasters struggled, or the effect on the school of the rapidly-growing Liverpool of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, but also, in his account of the two Waring headmasters and of Joseph Clark, the ‘waterman, resting on his oars, in full pay’, he illustrates, for example, the national lack of provision for elementary education in the late-Stuart period, and the rejection of traditional, classical, grammar school education by the developing middle class in the first half of the nineteenth century.

As long as anyone living can remember, Merchant Taylors’ has always had an honoured place among Merseyside schools. It has a reputation for academic attainment. Neighbouring schools respect its ability on the sports field, and, to outsiders at least, it has always appeared to be a happy school. Yet during its long life, Merchant Taylors’ has known failure as well as success, and faced hostility as well as enjoyed popularity. Its story follows the zig-zag course of most grammar schools. The School was founded in 1620, in the midst of that enthusiasm for founding grammar schools which is usually termed ‘Elizabethan’ but which, particularly in northern counties, is just as much Stuart. The founder, John Harrison, was the son of a Crosby boy, who in 1555 had gone to London and prospered. Like other Lancashire exiles both before and since, he wished his family to be remembered back home, and so endowed ‘one free grammar school for the teaching, educating and instructing of children and youth in the grammar and rules of learning for ever’. And because he and his father were prominent members of the Merchant Taylors’ Company, Harrison instructed his executors that the new school should be ‘called by the name of the Merchant Taylors’ School’.

This connection between the Company in London and the School in Crosby was to prove both a curse and a blessing. Before the days of the railways, the two hundred mile journey prevented the Company from exercising efficient superintendence. From 1651 to 1861, for example, the Company appointed its headmasters unseen, on recommendation only, and relied upon intermediaries to keep it informed of the School’s progress. Moreover, the property with which Harrison endowed the School was in London. It was destroyed in the Great Fire, and for a time the School could not even pay its way. On the other hand, the site and rebuilt property so appreciated in value in the nineteenth century, that the Company was able to help its energetic Victorian school-master, Samuel Armour, turn Merchant Taylors’ into a flourishing day school.
for the sons of middle-class parents. It moved the School to its present site, built the 'Gothic' building which the Countess of Derby opened in 1878, and fully approved Armour's reorganization of the School on the lines of Arnold's Rugby. Merchant Taylors' rightly remembers Armour with respect for his achievements, and the scene when present-day rugby football and cricket matches are being played on the field in front of those Victorian schoolrooms and that Boys Own Paper clock tower helps one to picture what school life at Crosby must have been like in Armour's day.

The tie between Crosby and London finally broke in 1909. Merchant Taylors' came under the control of a local board of governors unconnected with the Company, and the School sensibly met the rising costs of efficient, twentieth-century education by opening its doors to His Majesty's Inspectors and qualifying for support from public funds. Today Merchant Taylors' is a direct grant school in which the Merchant Taylors' Company still takes an avuncular interest. It finances prizes, offers a close exhibition at Trinity College, Cambridge, and always sends a leading member to represent it in Crosby on speech day.

Mr Luft's book is worthy to be the official history of so distinguished a School. Its sumptuous binding and good illustrations make an immediate appeal to the most casual eye, but to members of this Society the text will undoubtedly prove far more satisfying. Not least among the book's attractions for the local historian are the quotations and detailed references to be found in the notes, bibliography and some of the appendices.

J. J. BAGLEY