

## NEW BOOKS

*Cheshire 1630-1660: County Government and Society during the English Revolution* by J. S. Morrill. Oxford University Press, 1974, x+357 pp. Price £5.50.

*The Great Civil War in Lancashire* by Ernest Broxap. Manchester University Press, 2nd edition 1973, xxv+226 pp. Price £4.20.

Dr Morrill provides an admirable account of Cheshire's response to the English Revolution. Skilfully and perceptively he manages to trace the county's complex relationship with the central government and with neighbouring shires without in any way neglecting the characteristic social fabric, administrative structure, religious sympathies and political disposition which had helped to determine its posture in the first place. In this way he acknowledges that, while the Civil War was imposed on the country at large by decisions taken at the centre, each county because of its own particular circumstances made of it something which was uniquely its own. Spared the divisive influence of a politically committed and ambitious peer and blessed with a puritan minority more notable for moderation than militancy, Cheshire was not among that small group of counties which had already shown clear signs of future alignments during the 1630s. Despite widespread hostility to the Personal Government, the two gentry factions contesting the election of March 1640 did so primarily on grounds of personal animosity rather than because of any clash of principle; and as the war drew near the senior gentry, in Dr Morrill's opinion, contemplated using force in order to impose their neutrality on both king and parliament. Ultimately they too were drawn, awkwardly and reluctantly, into the conflict in a manner so untidy that neat categorisation is impossible. By analysing party back-grounds however, Dr Morrill concludes that while the county's abundance of ancient gentry families was more or less equally divided between the two sides, the royalists were usually superior in rank, wealth and experience of local office. But among the parliamentarians was Sir William Brereton of Handforth, the only Cheshire gentleman of this period to achieve both national and local prominence, as a leading Independent MP at Westminster as well as the dominating wartime influence in the county. Brereton's many lively and mostly practical interests reflected the busyness of mind of a man of emphatically Calvinist conscience; but before the war he had kept his militancy veiled. During the war, however, he was so much in control of Cheshire that his presence may well have discouraged the emergence of the county and divisional committees found elsewhere. Dr Morrill has a valuable chapter on Brereton's almost invariably vigorous war policy between 1643 and 1646 and on the tactical and personal reasons why many of his fellow gentry opposed it, a discussion which incidentally serves as a reminder that Sir William's own Civil War letter books are currently being prepared for publication by the Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire under the editorship of Mr R. N. Dore. The 1650s, so often a neglected decade, receive ample attention from Dr Morrill and he also manages to offer a new slant on Booth's rising of 1659.

When he turns from politics to local government Dr Morrill's touch is

perhaps marginally less sure. One side effect of Brereton's dominance has been to deprive later generations of county committee order and minute books; and in his bold and always interesting examination of the relative merits of pre-war and post-war local administration, Dr Morrill concentrates his attention on the commission of peace and Cheshire's plentiful supply of quarter sessions records. This comparative exercise is a formidable undertaking, for in this context a nominal starting date of 1630 hardly provides an adequate span of time in which to judge peacetime Stuart government; and, sensibly, Dr Morrill is at pains to range more widely. He concludes that, despite certain continuing deficiencies, administration in the later 1640s and 1650s was at least as effective as, and in some respects actually superior to, its pre-war counterpart. But although the general tenor of his argument is almost certainly sound (for at the very least the middling gentry in the post-war commissions were anxious to exercise authority hitherto denied them), there are points on which more decisive evidence would be welcome. It would be useful, for example, to know more about the antecedents of the groups of responsible parishioners and ministers, referred to by Dr Morrill as 'committees', who in the post-war period certainly took a prominent part in the management of parish affairs. This may indicate a sudden access of presbyterian concern and desire for involvement, as Dr Morrill suggests; but this interpretation would be more persuasive in a part of England where select vestries had long been established if more was known about pre-war parish administration. There are a number of other queries of a similar nature. Was the standard pre-war practice of referring local problems to the 'next' JPs necessarily an example of inefficient decentralisation, when such JPs presumably had most familiarity with these cases and were in any case expected to refer their decision back to the sessions bench where it was still possible to enforce a corporate policy? Were the peacetime JPs really so indolent in their dealings with alehouses that they rested content with trying to enforce licensing and only rarely attempted suppression? Probably almost everyone had more to complain about during and after the war, but was there quite such a marked contrast in the degree of outspokenness between earlier and later grand jury presentments—the latter of a kind familiar enough in other counties for at least half a century? Were no Cheshire parishes, overburdened with poor, given any financial help from other parishes in the same hundred despite the provision in the 1598 poor act and the encouragement of the 1631 orders and directions? Earlier in the book, the existence of an idle but aristocratic group of JPs during the 1630s also seems in doubt: some at least were not even in the commission during the Personal Government period. These are however relatively minor criticisms of an excellent book which makes a substantial contribution to civil war studies and adds much to our knowledge of early modern Cheshire.

Ernest Broxap's *The Great Civil War in Lancashire*, first published in 1910, makes a welcome reappearance with a new introduction by R. N. Dore and an updated bibliography. This modestly written but always scholarly work has worn well; but the record sources available to its author were strictly limited, and a comparison with Dr Morrill's *Cheshire* provides some indication of the strides which local history has been able to make in the last couple of generations.

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B. W. QUINTRELL

*Victorian Lancashire* edited by S. Peter Bell. David and Charles, 1974, 196 pp. Price £2.95.

*Victorian Lancashire* consists of eight essays. Dr A. F. Davie contributes a dry description of the administrative structure of the county between 1838 and 1889. Mr R. L. Greenall provides a livelier description of the way in which, owing to the efforts of a group of textile manufacturers and merchants, Salford, Broughton and Pendleton eventually formed one borough, whose complex administrative structure hindered the provision of amenities. A study by Dr J. Lea of Baptists and the working classes—the most polished contribution in the volume—shows how religion could be a powerful instrument of social control and concludes that the Baptists' success in winning working-class support 'suggests that the findings of some recent research on the period need revising. The separation between the churches and the working classes in Victorian England was not as complete as is often assumed. The chapel was one place where rich and poor could, and did, meet and work together.'

Mr P. J. Lucas attempts to demonstrate the vitality of the Furness press and reckons that 'a district with newspapers was healthier than a district without'. An examination by Mr J. H. Fox of the social origins and careers of 70 Lancashire textile entrepreneurs, of whom only 16 may be described as 'working class', underlines the obvious point that 'a man born into the middle classes was far more likely to become the owner of a business than one who had begun his life in a family lower down the social scale'. It is difficult to know what separated these 16 from the rest of their class, but one, at least, was spurred on by a strong puritan streak. Richard Haworth, a Wesleyan Methodist, who believed in 'a small house and a big factory', was reputed to have said that 'the eyes of other people are the eyes that ruin us. If all but myself were blind, I should want neither fine clothes, fine houses, nor fine furniture.' Mr A. T. McCabe, after examining trends in mortality and living conditions, the insecurity engendered by cyclical unemployment, rising food prices and stable wage rates, concludes that 'there is little evidence which points to an improved standard of living in Merseyside between 1850 and 1875', despite the widely-held view that living standards in general rose in the second half of the nineteenth century. Mr W. R. Cockcroft summarises the main problems facing the Liverpool police force and the achievements of its head constables between 1836 and 1902, and Mr M. B. Smith describes changes in two popular forms of entertainment in Lancashire cotton towns—the theatre and the fair.

This collection is not as exciting and valuable as it seems. Much of the chapter 'Victorian entertainment in the Lancashire cotton towns' has already appeared in the *Local Historian*, and readers of the last volume of *Transactions* will be familiar with the gist of Dr Lea's views on the Baptists. Above all, the authors, particularly the less experienced, have been ill-served by publishers and editor. Authors were not given enough space to develop their points. Thus Mr Cockcroft was unable to take full advantage of the material in the Liverpool Record Office to show in illuminating detail how the Liverpool police operated, for example, by using informers to combat fenianism in the 1860s. Nor do authors appear to have been given much guidance. Mr Lucas could have restricted his rhetoric in order to produce more useful illustrative material, while Mr McCabe's ample evidence could have been more attractively presented. Finally, there is no introduction to draw out the significance of these essays for the study of Victorian Lancashire, and the impression of an insubstantial and ill-produced book is underlined by the unequal lines of print. In sum, parts of *Victorian Lancashire* may be read with profit but with little pleasure.

*The Lancashire Watch Company, Prescott, Lancashire, England* by N. H. Fitzwilliam. U.S.A.: Ken Roberts Publishing Co., 1973, 88 pp. Price unstated.

This is a most enterprising piece of Anglo-American collaboration and a direct result of the City of Liverpool Museum's splendid horological display. Alan Smith who, as Keeper of Ceramics and Horology, was mainly responsible for this, has continued his research interests in this field after leaving the Museum. He contributes here an essay on the efforts of the Lancashire Watch Company to maintain Prescott's reputation as a watchmaking centre. In it he draws upon reminiscences of old employees, some ledgers and the sale catalogue of 1911 after the business had foundered. The volume also includes four papers reprinted from the *American Jeweler* of 1893 written by George K. Hazlitt ('Henry G. Abbott', the historian of the American watch industry) which describe in some technical detail a number, but not all, of the operations carried on at the new factory and a photographic reproduction of a trade catalogue issued in c. 1905, written in flamboyant American style but including sale details, with photographs and prices of the various watches then being produced. The volume also includes many other well chosen photographs.

Mr Smith rightly points out that the factory made too many types of watch and never managed to sell enough of any one sort to secure real economies of scale. It is a pity, perhaps, that he does not relate his findings to some of Professor Saul's work about British industry's responsiveness to American methods at that time. It is also curious that this concern should go out of business, not in a period of depression but in 1910 when trade was picking up and a powerful boom was developing. There are reasons for believing that the company was not well managed. This volume, however, which concentrates mainly—and very well—on technical matters, tells us little about this. It is nevertheless a most welcome publication to be going on with.

University of Kent

T. C. BARKER

*The Social and Economic Development of Crewe, 1780–1923* by W. H. Chaloner. Manchester U.P., 1973, xx+326 pp. Price unstated.

The Manchester University Press is to be congratulated on reprinting this thorough study of the development of Crewe, first published in 1950 and now recognised as one of the pioneering works of British urban history. Chaloner's scholarship wears well; we find here, for instance, a very early example of the use of census enumerators' schedules. In style and structure, too, the book is an example to younger scholars. Social and labour historians of a newer generation may question Chaloner's portrayal of placid labour relations in an 'improving' community, but his interpretation rests firmly on working-class as well as official sources, with particular use made of trade union and friendly society records. Company paternalism and the high proportion of skilled workers no doubt made the railway towns untypical, but Chaloner's work continues to shed valuable light on the formation of attitudes among the upper working classes.

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