

REVIEWS

B. G. Blackwood, *The Lancashire Gentry and the Great Rebellion 1640-1660*, Chetham Society, 1978, xiv + 184 pp. Price £10.

Dr Blackwood's book is based on his doctoral thesis and, as he makes clear in his Preface, is concerned especially with the social and economic aspects of the gentry's fortunes between 1640 and 1660. For the Lancashire historian the book is thus a valuable supplement to Broxap's account of the campaigns. Dr Blackwood is never less than methodical, and his findings are based on an impressive acquaintance with both central and local archives. His principal conclusions are that the Lancashire gentry as a whole were rural in character, localised in outlook, comparatively under-educated and poor even by Northern standards. Although there was little movement within the ranks of the established gentry before the Civil War, many others gained or lost gentle status despite an inactive land market. To economic uncertainties the county added deep religious divisions, with Roman Catholic gentry outnumbering puritans by two to one in those cases where affiliations may be firmly established. This divide was clearly reflected in wartime alignments. The puritan parliamentarians proved in victory to be moderate men, however, even after the greater gentry among them had yielded ascendancy on bench and committee board to lesser men, as they did in many other counties. Little land changed hands permanently as a consequence of the Rebellion but, by way of emphasising Lancashire's susceptibility to change in the upper reaches of society, over half the major county families had disappeared from the gentry by 1695, the former parliamentarians among them apparently handicapped especially by their loss of local power after the Restoration, the royalists by failure to produce male heirs. There was more social change in Lancashire after the Restoration than before it: an important and interesting conclusion.

For those readers with a taste for tabulation, this is a book to relish: its five chapters contain no fewer than 56 tables supported by three statistical appendices, so strong is the author's impulse to categorise and to quantify. Yet even they may have one or two reservations. No one would deny the need for labelling and counting if sense is to be made of an obdurate past and Dr Blackwood is scrupulously careful to warn his readers of the dangers of the statistical approach; nevertheless doubts creep in. He does not always seem to heed his own counsel. On page 31 (note 52) he warns us that Dr Cliffe's definition of 'gentry' in Yorkshire is more precise than his own equally acceptable one, but then in Table 5 compares the wealth of the Yorkshire and Lancashire gentry without making it clear that the Yorkshire total almost certainly understates the numbers of lesser gentry. Elsewhere he seems in two minds about whether he is dealing with 774

gentry in 1642 who were first sons (p. 17) or with a total of 774 gentry families in the county (pp. 12, 46). His wish to establish gentry incomes in 1642 is commendable; but he still seems to rely unduly on a questionable calculation first set out in *Northern History*, xii (1976), p. 56, applying to the 1641 subsidy assessments a multiplier sweepingly suggested by Cranfield in another context almost thirty years earlier which takes no apparent account of inflation in the meantime. On p. 22 his calculations do not save him from confusion over the relative antiquity of the Lancashire and Cheshire gentry; and earlier he follows W. K. Jordan in accepting without demur Thorold Rogers's misprint in the 1636 ship money ratings, which 'reduced' Lancashire's liability by three-quarters and thus lent undue emphasis to the county's appearance of poverty. In the event his criticism of Professor Underdown's *Somerset* for 'vagueness and lack of quantification' in its account of social changes in the government of that county does not seem particularly well directed (pp. 104-5).

But it would be wrong to end on a note of criticism. Dr Blackwood deserves our thanks for providing a mine of information about the circumstances of the Lancashire gentry in the Rebellion and for battling so hard to make sense of difficult and unyielding sources. All students of the county may read his book with profit. The Chetham Society and Manchester University Press are equally to be congratulated on producing an attractive volume, well supplied with clear and helpful maps.

University of Liverpool

B. W. Quintrell

Hugh Malet, *Bridgewater The Canal Duke, 1736-1803*, Manchester University Press, 197, xvi + 208 pp. Price £7.95.

Great credit is due to Dr Malet for achieving the ambition of most historians: the writing of a book 'designed to be read more for pleasure than for improvement' (p. xi), but which has engendered an interest in canal history amongst both professional historians and lay readers.

In this second and revised edition the main themes and arguments are the same as in the 1961 version: the formative years of the Duke's life; the technological development of his mining and transport interests; the manoeuvring of enabling legislation through parliament; the interplay between himself, James Brindley, and his Worsley agent John Gilbert; and the eventual financial success of the Duke's interlocking industrial, commercial and agricultural enterprises which formed the basis for the 19th-century Bridgewater Trust.

Access to the Sutherland Papers has afforded Dr Malet the opportunity to reconsider many of his earlier conclusions, but in the event these remain unaltered. However, he has been able to give new emphasis to the technological achievement of the Bridgewater canal as the first summit-level canal to run across watersheds in England; a technique which subsequently opened up areas previously excluded from water-borne transport.

The relative responsibility of the Duke and James Brindley is a central theme of this book, and has been much debated. Dr Malet is concerned to allow his subject as much credit as Brindley. He is a trifle partisan but we are offered convincing new evidence to confirm the Duke's importance as the inspiring innovator, with Brindley relegated to the role of consulting

engineer, additionally dependent upon John Smeaton to do his mathematical calculations and upon Hugh Henshall to draw his maps.

The more convincing hero to emerge from this debate, is John Gilbert, whose energy, engineering skill and imagination, and loyalty to the Duke, ensured the successful completion of the Worsley underground canals, the aqueducts at Barton and Stretford, the Bridgewater canal, and finally the effective administration of all the Worsley based enterprises.

It is the Duke himself who bestrides the book like a colossus, as indeed he dominated contemporary national debates over water transport, and the development of south-east Lancashire and north-west Cheshire. He emerges from Dr Malet's sympathetic study as a champion of the poor; a generous but disciplined employer; an effective business man; and a man of such dedication, that he was prepared to risk everything to realise his vision of an internal waterway system.

David Owen, *Canals to Manchester*, Manchester University Press, 1977, viii + 133 pp. Price £4.95.

This is a guide book for the non-specialist who wants an historical context and some technological details of the canals which terminate at Manchester. Dr Owen takes each major canal in turn and blends an outline history with extracts from contemporary accounts of canal journeys and with a description of the present visible remains. This is the strength of the book and it provides a useful starting point for readers interested in waterway archaeology. Surprisingly the book lacks on good detailed map (the single small scale map is printed on the end papers), and would have to be used in conjunction with a canal handbook to follow some of Dr Owen's towpath references.

University of Liverpool

Jennifer L. Kermode