

ANNIVERSARIES 1957.

THE 750TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LIVERPOOL BOROUGH CHARTER

IN Volume 105 of the TRANSACTIONS the editor gave us two reasons for the Society's celebration of the bicentenary of William Roscoe, the facts that it was founded in Liverpool and that it exists to promote the study of local history. The same reasons made it imperative for the Society to celebrate the 750th anniversary of the foundation of Liverpool; and there could have been no more fitting way of doing so than to ask him to give a lecture to the Society on this theme. The lecture, open to the public, was delivered on 21 February 1957 in the Royal Institution to an audience which by its unusual size and evident appreciation attested both the interest of the subject and the talents of the speaker. He dealt, in a manner at once clear, scholarly, and absorbing, not only with the letters patent of 1207 but also with Henry III's charter of 1229, which added precision on so many points to the vagueness of the original grant and remained the basic charter of Liverpool for nearly four centuries. Those present who had ever tried to expound the meaning of *liber burgus*, as difficult to understand as it is frequently encountered, were struck by Mr. Bagley's masterly treatment of the phrase, which he characterized as "a technical term, like 'free house'." The numerous questions which followed the lecture were a further witness to the interest aroused by this excellent address.

The 750th anniversary of Liverpool's foundation has been notably saluted not only by the Society's editor but by its secretary. To celebrate the occasion the Liverpool City Council has sponsored the publication of this impressive history of the city by its city librarian. The generosity of the Council is evident in this volume in the combination of the sumptuousness of its appearance with the moderateness of its price. In addition to half a dozen maps the book has more than three hundred illustrations, many of them in colour. Most of them are either reproductions of manuscripts or of contemporary prints; they are well-chosen and add much not only to the appearance but to the value of the work. As befits the breadth of modern interest in history, the scope of the book is wide. The first four

chapters, on "Kings and Castles", "Barons and Strongholds", "Lords of the Manor and Manor Houses", "Mayors and Town Halls", deal principally with the political, constitutional, and ecclesiastical strands of the city's history, as well as the story of its leading families and citizens. In Chapter 5 we are reminded of the dominance of agrarian pursuits in Liverpool until after the Civil War, and in the surrounding villages, now swallowed up in the city's expansion, until the nineteenth century. The next chapter traces the commercial and maritime development of Liverpool, and Chapter 7 tells of its industries. Especially interesting is Chapter 8 on "The Poor and Underprivileged"; it shows very clearly the magnitude of the problem with which the city authorities were faced from the late seventeenth century onwards, and gives a valuable survey of the Corporation's exertions to deal with the problem. In this, as in the other chapters, particularly good use is made of the city's remarkable series of Town Books, now preserved in the Picton Reference Library. As these are still unpublished, except for the first volume to 1550 edited by J. A. Twemlow, it is especially useful to have numerous quotations from them given in this book. (It is cheering to be told that the volumes from 1550 to 1832 are soon to be published). Not only the Town Books but many other classes of records from the Picton Library's rich collection are drawn on in this work. This is especially evident in the last chapter on "Liverpool's Tradition: Cultural Life and Pastimes". So wide and varied a theme is not easy to treat; yet Dr. Chandler has here provided an appropriate ending to his impressive work. After a survey of Liverpool's speech, amusements, and achievements in the arts, scholarship, and literature, he concludes that the city's essential tradition is its connection with the sea; "the essential Liverpolitan . . . is Man who goes down to the sea in ships". The volume ends not only with an index but with a bibliography including numerous articles in the TRANSACTIONS combined with a list of dates of Liverpool history right down to 1957. Members of the Society will in years to come add under this date the remarkable contributions made to the celebration of the 750th anniversary of the foundation of Liverpool by their secretary and their editor.

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