

## REVIEWS

David Lewis, *The illustrated history of Liverpool's suburbs*. Derby: Breedon Books, 2003. 174 pp. £14.99. ISBN 1 85983 353 5.

There is a sense in which Liverpool has often been thought of as greater than the sum of its parts. This book goes some way towards disputing that judgement. The author published *The churches of Liverpool* in 2001 and his latest effort will appeal to the ever-growing numbers of local history enthusiasts.

The book is arranged into twenty chapters, each dealing with areas from Bootle in the north to Halewood in the south, although four chapters include more than one suburb. Many of the familiar suburban names can be traced from Anglo Saxon origins: Aigburth, Speke, Childwall and others; and Lewis shows how so many of the field tracks of that period can still be followed in some of the main routes. Some other locations such as Kensington are of more recent origin occurring because of a convenient location on the coach road to Prescott and beyond. The reader is given a brief but clear account of the transformation of the area from a landscape of farms and woodlands by stages, through the building of mansion houses for merchant princes to a mixture of housing—terraced or semi-detached—for accommodation of a constantly expanding population. A striking example here is the Walton area, the 'oldest village', with a population in 1801 of 700, rising to 19,000 in 1881. The author is particularly interested in the architecture and buildings of his subject and of the effect on an area of the development of docks, railways and canals.

As may be guessed by those who have read his previous book Lewis enjoys walking around and looking at the features he discusses and his book is handsomely illustrated by a splendid range of black and white photographs, mostly bearing dates. These have been chosen to show either a building of particular interest or a street scene with people and transport in evidence. On p. 38 there is for this reviewer a wonderfully evocative picture of the narrow section of Breck Road between Sedley Street and Esmond Street: the road devoid of traffic, and with shop and trade signs all visible. The selection on pp. 142–43 is another of great interest. Those on p. 143 show a prefabricated tenement block in Eldon Street, c.1905. This is a very early (if not the first) example of such housing and Lewis pays tribute to the architect, J. A. Brodie. Brodie—really the city engineer—and Sir Lancelot Keay, the city architect and director of housing in the 1930s, between them

achieved a transformation of Liverpool in civic planning and municipal housing terms. It was Brodie in 1904 who launched the construction of Queen's Drive, intended to be the first of three concentric rings. Brodie's inspired phrase for this was a 'circumferential boulevard'. The construction of the ring road opened up huge areas of the rural hinterland for housing and Keay provided council houses which are 'among the best examples of municipal houses undertaken at the time'. Certainly the credit given here to these two men could stimulate further research into this crucial phase of Liverpool's development. Lewis provides some human interest where, for example, we get an amusing mention of a youthful W. E. Gladstone playing cricket at Seaforth; Paul McCartney and Ken Dodd appear briefly, and the influence of the major football clubs is not overlooked.

The author has drawn on the out of print series *The lost villages of Liverpool*, by Derek Whale, and various other printed works which are acknowledged in the reading list at the end of each chapter. The many excellent photographs are ascribed solely to the Liverpool Record Office, from whence the author obtained them, but as many of them are obviously from the wonderful City Engineer's collection deposited in the Record Office it seems a pity that that source is not acknowledged directly.

Alan W. Andrews, Liverpool

Richard Brooke, *Liverpool as it was, 1775–1800* (1853). Liverpool: Libraries and Information Service, 2003. xxiii, 558 pp. £17.50 hbk. ISBN 0 902990 225. Peter Aughton, *Liverpool: A people's history*. Revised edition. Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2003. 294 pp. £20.00 hbk. ISBN 1 85936 114 5.

Mike Fletcher, *The making of Liverpool*. Barnsley: Wharnccliffe Books, 2004. 192 pp. £9.99 pbk. ISBN 1 903425 53 0.

Published in 1853, Richard Brooke's *Liverpool as it was, 1775 to 1800*, gave joyous expression to the Merseypride so prevalent in Victorian times. Long since evaporated, this confident frame of mind is suddenly back in fashion. Hence the handsome republication of Brooke in the series of reprints published by Liverpool Libraries and Information Services as the city prepares for its 'year of heritage' in 2007, the 800th anniversary of the granting of letters patent. Hence too the flood of new popular histories, designed to cash in on the heritage market as Liverpool, belatedly regenerated through conservation, looks forward to opening its ninth century as European Capital of Culture. It should be said straightway that for all its faults and obvious signs of age, Brooke's meticulous research-based study of a single generation comes considerably closer to capturing

the essence of Liverpool's past than the broad brush sweep of the populist histories.

As Jane Longmore notes in a most helpful and useful introduction Brooke's book, part scholarly history, part recollection, part antiquarian study, was also a tribute to his recently-deceased father, the last of the 'old school', a Cheshire in-migrant who had arrived in Liverpool at the time of the American war of independence. Drawing upon the crystal clear recollections of the nonagenarian prior to his demise, Brooke displays some occasional nostalgia, as in the remembrance of the talent, wit and eloquence formerly on display at Liverpool hustings, but there is no desire for a return to the past, no evocation of a past golden age. Indeed, the narrative is defiantly forward-looking and progressive: the decline of rhetorical talent was as nothing compared to the advance in electoral behaviour, no longer stigmatized by bribery, corruption and 'treating'. Liverpool, Brooke delights, reached pre-eminence through commerce, the civilising force which, having eradicated darkness, barbarism and electoral corruption, brought 'opulence, increased knowledge, useful arts and intellectual pursuits'. The horrors of the slave trade, an 'odious and inhuman source of emolument' are not denied, but in Brooke's progressive narrative (echoed in the town guides and histories which began to celebrate Liverpool's distinctive identity) the enterprise and acumen by which Liverpool came to dominate the 'odious trade' were soon applied to higher effect.

Commerce, the essential dynamic leading to the economic and moral wealth of nations, carried Liverpool through war and riots: its continued progress brought an end to the slave trade, the adoption of an elevated morality and the opening of new markets (with profits which proved more sustainable). Viewed through Brooke's mid-Victorian perspective, commerce and culture were in perfect harmony. Publication of his book came in the immediate aftermath of celebration of the centenary of Roscoe's birth, festivities recorded in one of the (lengthy but useful) appendices. Roscoe, Samuel Holme observed on the occasion, 'taught us that elegance is not incompatible with commerce, that the Athenaeum was an adjunct of the Exchange, and that our Botanic Garden and our Royal Institution were perfectly consistent with our commercial transactions, docks, warehouses, the essential dynamic leading to the economic and moral wealth of nations and counting-houses'. For Brooke and his contemporaries, mid-Victorian Liverpool, having shed its slaving links, stood forward as second metropolis, a capital of culture dedicated to the culture of capital.

While revelling in Liverpool's Victorian pre-eminence, Brooke does not deny its former insignificance (a lesson which needs to be learnt by those currently writing popular accounts celebrating 800 years of history). Despite an antiquarian relish and reverence for archival retrieval and the

'historic' past, Brooke was unable to reconstruct a venerable chronicle for 'ancient' Liverpool. After lengthy exegesis of the medieval charters, he spent less than a page on what Ramsay Muir later categorized as 'long centuries of small things', hastening over Liverpool's insignificance as 'quondam village' to extol its subsequent exponential growth to become a great world port city, the second city of empire. In charting Liverpool's 'progressive increase' in the formative last quarter of the eighteenth century Brooke, the gentleman scholar, draws upon what Muir, an unduly harsh academic critic, described as a 'hodge-podge' of documents. Often reprinted at tedious length in the text, footnotes or appendices, these written sources do not make for easy reading but they are invaluable as points of entry for those seeking to explore the past in greater depth.

Neither of the popular histories under review here offers such an essential service, leaving the reader unable to confirm or question their generalizations and assertions. References are either banished altogether or rendered exiguous to the point of uselessness, precluding any socially inclusive process of open debate or further study. It is to be hoped that other studies scheduled to mark Liverpool's 800th anniversary will find some middle way between Brooke's antiquarian excess and the disregard for referencing displayed in populist accounts. To be fair, in the absence of proper references, Aughton and Fletcher offer a wealth of illustration. Fletcher draws for the most part on his own private collection: in this respect (as in much else in this introductory survey), he is overshadowed by the range and style of Aughton's second edition. Now published in hardback, this 'people's history' has the look and feel of a top quality art exhibition catalogue, worthy of pride of place on the coffee table. As well as the new 'Liver-cool' look, it includes an upbeat foreword by the leader of the City Council (whose name is one of several misspellings in Fletcher) and a new final chapter, fittingly entitled, 'The world in one city', the strapline of the successful Capital of Culture bid. It looks good and reads well but does not provide the authoritative history—the new Ramsay Muir—which regenerated Liverpool deserves.

*John Belchem, University of Liverpool*

Stephen J. Roberts, *A history of Wirral*. Chichester: Phillimore, 2002. [xiv], 210 pp. £20.00 hbk. ISBN 1 86077 236 6

In the 1950s, the *Liverpool Echo* published a weekly ramble, with sketch-map, of a suitable area in West Cheshire or South-west Lancashire. If you lived on a Wirral farm at that time, as this reviewer did, and your area was favoured that particular week, then hundreds of *Echo* readers would take part. They would be told how to get there (ferries and buses in the case of

Wirral), where the cafés were situated, and something of the history of the places they would see.

There is a long history of the production of historical guidebooks for the Wirral visitor, beginning with W. Mortimer in the railway age, Philip Sully, Mrs Gamlin and H. E. Young, for the bicycle and tram era, moving into the beginning of that of the motorcar. It continued in the twentieth century, until it reached David Randall's excellent *The search for old Wirral* in 1984. There was an assumption that underlay all these works, namely that the intelligent visitor would want to have the 'antiquities' of a place explained to him or her in a lively and accurate manner. Some of the books are more heavily laden with historical explanation than others, and some are less accurate than their fellows. Three generations of local historians have tried to eliminate the fantasies of Hilda Gamlin's '*Twixt Mersey and Dee* from the collective memory.

Stephen Roberts' book would certainly benefit the intelligent traveller, but it is much more than an historical guide-book—it is the first proper, comprehensive history of Wirral to be published using the full range of both published and unpublished sources. It draws on another tradition of Wirral historiography, that established in the last decades of the nineteenth century, of which the greatest exponents were John Brownbill, William Fergusson Irvine and, to a lesser extent, Ronald Stewart Brown. They were responsible for opening up the vast treasures of the Hundred's official records to be found in the church court and palatinate records. Their findings were often very technical, but it is salutary to remember that large numbers of original records were published in a Birkenhead local newspaper (collected as *Wirral notes and queries*), as well as the majestic series that appeared in a succession of Chester papers collected as *The Cheshire sheaf*.

Roberts' book, which is aimed at the intelligent general reader, is comprehensive, well-researched and well-illustrated. It begins with the geology of Wirral, takes us through its pre-history and medieval and modern history, up to the twentieth century. Its approach is through the political, economic and social history of the Hundred, set in a chronological framework. It is difficult to pull off such a feat in an era of extreme specialisation, but the author does it very well indeed. The medieval section, for instance, deals with the Domesday evidence, the palatinate of Chester, the forest, and the monasteries. Good use is made of the proceedings of the 1353 trailbaston court, which was held in the presence of the Black Prince, as earl of Chester. In particular, the somewhat disreputable history of the Stanley family, Wirral's master-foresters at this time, is well brought out. Less good is the section on Wirral monasteries, since no use is made of Bishop Blythe's visitation records of the early sixteenth century, which include an account of Birkenhead priory.

The only section I could happily do without is the description of Wirral in the early nineteenth century through the eyes of George Ormerod, whose dismissal of almost all Wirral villages as not worth bothering with, except for those that had a manor-house, preferably on an 'eminence', and inhabited by a manorial lord, is notorious. Compare that blinkered view with the fine work on the social and cultural history of Wirral by Canon Abraham Hume in the mid-nineteenth century.

This fine, if rather expensive, book deserves to be read widely by 'Wirralites' (a term that dates back to the early seventeenth century). The specialists can inform the author of mistakes to be put right in a new edition, and it will certainly hold its own until that time when substantially new research on sources for Wirral's history is available.

P. H. W. Booth, University of Liverpool

Michael Nevell & John Walker, *Denton and Dukinfield Halls and the archaeology of the gentry and yeoman house in north west England 1500 to 1700*, 2002. viii, 116 pp. £7.99 pbk. ISBN 1 871324 27 0. Michael Nevell & John Roberts, *Park Bridge ironworks and the archaeology of the wrought iron industry in north west England 1600 to 1900*, 2003. viii, 102 pp. £7.95 pbk. ISBN 0 00030 37 6. Michael Nevell & John Walker, *The archaeology of twentieth century Tameside*, 2004. viii, 115 pp. £9.95 pbk. ISBN 1 871324 29 7. (All three volumes are published jointly by Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council and the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit (UMAU) and can be obtained from Tameside Local Studies and Archives Unit, Staleybridge Library, Trinity Street, Staleybridge SK15 2BN).

These three books are the final components of two series totalling no fewer than eleven publications which together form a comprehensive review of the history and archaeology of Tameside from mediaeval times to the present day.

Given that the local authority name 'Tameside' has yet to be fully absorbed into the national consciousness, this enlightened set of publications goes a long way in identifying the particular character and historical development of the communities which have been absorbed into the sprawling urban edge to the east of Manchester. The authoritative authorship, and the structured and comprehensive approach, has provided a valuable source of reference as well as a key to local identity and civic pride.

As paperback books published by a local authority, they might be mistaken for typical local history publications of great interest to the locals but not much wider than that. In fact they are of both regional and national importance—regional because each one carefully sets its topic in the context of north west England, and national because they represent a

demonstration of UMAU's considered approach to the study of archaeology within its social environment.

The authors spend some time explaining the 'Manchester methodology' and analysing their fieldwork within the polarised framework of lord, freeholder, and tenant, and the relative contributions made by each of these social strata. They acknowledge that while this approach appears ideally suited to the understanding of Tameside's transition from a rural to an urban economy, it has not yet been tested in other geographical contexts. The archaeological theorising may be rather too heavy-going for the average reader ('sigmoidal curves' and 'seriation' make their appearance as early as pp. 6 and 7 in the *Twentieth century* book) and this is a pity because the books will be of interest to a wide readership. (It almost comes as a relief that the sub-heading 'rural dissertation' is not another obscure term but simply one of the frequent misprints suffered by all three books—perhaps one day archaeologists will unearth the various missing lines of print from the *Twentieth century* book!)

'Transition' is a theme which occurs again and again, and which helps to structure the books—Tameside's transitions from rural to urban; from agriculture to industry; from a hierarchical to a more democratic social structure; as well as the geographical transition so obvious today as one travels from Manchester city centre across Tameside to the tops of the Pennine Hills. The origins are the two long-established lordships of Ashton and Longdendale, the latter extending beyond the modern borough boundary into Derbyshire. Earlier books in the series deal with these lordships during each stage and aspect of their transition, and the theme is followed through in these volumes.

The study of Denton and Dukinfield halls is a combination of social and architectural history and archaeological fieldwork, for little now remains of these once fine mediaeval houses which were the homes of the prosperous Holland and Duckenfield families. Denton Hall was destroyed by fire in 1930, and Dukinfield Hall was demolished twenty years later after six centuries of continuous occupation. The excavation of their sites has thrown light on the development of the gentry and yeoman house in the region, and how they were at first adapted and remodelled to meet rising social expectations. When in spite of modernisation they could no longer keep up with their owners' growing aspirations they were let to tenants and eventually ended their days as farmhouses. These changes are explained through typological analysis of the development of similar halls, and comparative floor plans.

Regional gazetteers add value to the *Denton and Dukinfield Halls* and *Park Bridge* books. The former gives the locations and brief descriptions of no fewer than sixty-three gentry and yeoman halls in Greater Manchester alone, and the latter describes forty-two associated archaeological and

historical sites in the Medlock valley, plus a further eighteen ironworks sites in north west England.

The Park Bridge ironworks was founded in 1786–89 in a steeply sided valley, with little room for expansion. The eventual result was an intricate and congested site, the development of which is analysed thoroughly in the *Park Bridge* book. It is an important industrial archaeological site about which one gains a much clearer understanding by reading the book rather than by visiting the location where the remains were rather crudely consolidated some years ago. The site was involved in the secondary processes of iron production, examples being the production of iron rollers for textile machinery in the early nineteenth century, and the reprocessing of scrap iron from the 1870s until the 1940s. Once again it is the contextual approach which makes this book stand out from others, relating the development of the ironworks to their social and regional contexts.

Three principal industries of Tameside were textiles, coal mining and hatting. All three had their origins in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the growing influence of landowners and tenants. The former promoted the transport routes and mineral rights, while the tenants developed the handcraft-based industries which were rapidly mechanised through sequential technical innovations. Taking 1870 as its starting point, the *Twentieth Century* book makes an excellent job of reviewing the history and archaeology of these and other industries—as always in their social and regional contexts.

The review of hatting is particularly interesting, pointing out that by 1860 (and the first bowler hats) Denton, Hyde and Stockport were dominating the British hatting industry. Also it is surprising to learn how extensive was coal mining, with collieries strung from north to south across the borough. Little now survives from the mining era.

The 'transition' theme again helps to structure the book, and chapters analyse the influence of changes in local government, new urban communities, rural landscape, and industrial change. In order not to interrupt the flow of the text, a variety of particular topics are picked out as separate insets within the chapters, and these provide interesting browsing. The book concludes with more discussion of archaeological methodology as applied to the recent past. Again this worthwhile explanation of a modern approach to archaeology may be too philosophical for the general reader.

The Metropolitan Borough of Tameside has gained a valuable historical and educational asset in these two series of publications, which also make an important contribution nationally. For completeness, the eleven volumes are listed below. They represent a remarkable achievement over twelve years by Dr Michael Nevell of UMAU (who is also Endangered Sites Officer for the Association for Industrial Archaeology) and his colleagues



including John Walker who co-authored five of the books and is now Chief Executive of the York Archaeological Trust.

First series: *The history and archaeology of Tameside* (8 volumes)

- 1 Michael Nevell: *Tameside before 1066* (1992)
- 2 Michael Nevell: *Tameside 1066–1700* (1991)
- 3 Michael Nevell: *Tameside 1700–1930* (1993)
- 4 Michael Nevell: *The people who made Tameside* (1994)
- 5 Tom Burke & Michael Nevell: *The buildings of Tameside* (1994)
- 6 Michael Nevell & John Walker: *Lands and lordships in Tameside; Tameside in transition 1348–1642* (1998)
- 7 Michael Nevell & John Walker: *Transition in Tameside; The archaeology of the industrial revolution in two north west lordships 1642–1870* (1999)
- 8 Michael Nevell & John Walker: *The archaeology of twentieth century Tameside* (2004)

Second series: *The archaeology of Tameside* (3 volumes):

- 1 Michael Nevell & John Walker: *Portland basin and the archaeology of the canal warehouse* (2001)
- 2 Michael Nevell & John Walker: *Denton and Dukinfield Halls and the archaeology of the gentry and yeoman house in north west England 1500 to 1700* (2002)
- 3 Michael Nevell & John Roberts: *Park Bridge ironworks and the archaeology of the wrought iron industry in north west England 1600 to 1900* (2003)

Ken Catford, Oxton

T. C. Dickinson, *Cotton mills of Preston: The power behind the thread*. Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2002. viii, 200pp. £12.00 pbk. ISBN 1–85936–096–3; Alan Fowler, *Lancashire cotton operatives and work, 1900–1950* (Modern Economic and Social History Series). Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. xv, 236 pp. £47.50 hbk ISBN 0 7546 0116 1.

The steady stream of books about the Lancashire cotton industry continues to flow, as each generation brings new views and perspectives, fresh assessments and reassessments. The topic does not become stale and weary, and the central position which it occupies in the history of the county since 1750 remains clear. Analysis of the cotton industry in social, economic and political terms began almost as soon as the trade itself loomed large in the eighteenth century, but by the end of the nineteenth century historical analyses were appearing, and twentieth century historians wrote of a trade which was increasingly seen in terms of the past, not the

present. In the post-war period a new dimension to research and analysis was added, as historians began to consider the architectural and archaeological aspects of the industry, an interest which grew as mills closed and the survivors were valued by those who sought to retain and conserve these dramatic legacies of the immediate past. Here we have two recent books which are totally different in character, looking at different dimensions to this hugely-varied and extensive subject—one deals with the workforce in the first half of the twentieth century, the other the infrastructure of mills and engines.

Colin Dickinson is well-known locally for his work on the industrial archaeology and industrial architecture of the Preston area. For well over thirty years he has been recording and researching the cotton mills of the town, and has taught courses and classes on the subject across the district. This book brings together much of his material in an attractively-produced and realistically-priced paperback, with many excellent illustrations. While the title implies that it provides a wide-ranging account of the Preston mills and the town's cotton industry, the particular emphasis of the book is the steam engines which powered those mills. Therein lies its overwhelming weakness. There are ten chapters, each covering a single period, from 'The first engines' and 'Post-war developments of the 1820s' to 'The Golden Autumn: 1900 to the Great War' and 'The Final Years'. Within these the mills are described in sequence according to the date of their construction, and the subsequent history of most is recounted. This can be an awkward arrangement, because the narrative (such as it is) jumps to and fro from opening to closure and then back again—there is not enough sense of an overview.

A great deal of information is packed into these 200 pages, but it is extremely difficult to find out where it is. A book of this sort needs a really good index, but that provided in *Cotton mills of Preston* is, unfortunately, pathetically poor. The so-called 'General Index' has a mere 13 entries, on topics such as *Handloom industry* (one reference), *Cotton Famine* (one reference) and *Rope Drive* (one reference)—it is thus minimalist to the point of futility. The remainder of the index comprises a list of just over 100 mills, almost all of them with a single reference only. There is no indexing of people, companies or firms, or of almost any of the innumerable subjects and themes covered. So, even before starting to read the book, the user is likely to be frustrated unless he or she intends to begin at p. 1 and work through to p. 197.

That would be an option, of course, but the text is not of the sort which would encourage such action except on the part of the truly fanatical or dedicated. I reproduce a typical short sample, to illustrate why this is so:

During the nineties, in their McNaughted form the engines were driving 760 looms, each having identical high pressure cylinder bores of 29" x 3' stroke and 33" low pressure cylinder bores x 6' stroke. Average corresponding working pressures in one engine amounted to 20 and 5.3 psi to give respective ihps of 72 and 48.9 at 30rpm. Figures for the other engine were 22 and 5.8 psi for 80 and 53.5 ihp respectively.

Apart from the fact that the first sentence reads as though each of the 760 looms was the fortunate possessor of these attributes, I am afraid that none of this really meant anything at all to me. It is incomprehensibly esoteric and so although I am very interested in the cotton industry, and I live in Preston and know many of the sites discussed, I found much of the book well-nigh unreadable. Colin Dickinson clearly has an encyclopaedic knowledge of steam engines and their use in the cotton industry, but if the aim was to impart understanding and information to a general readership this was not the way to go about it.

There is another major problem. The book is entirely unreferenced and has no bibliography. The text makes it plain that plenty of primary material has been consulted, but in only a couple of instances is it stated, in passing, where that is to be found and what it is. While only the most fervent would want to verify the facts and to check the reliability of the endless lists of bore dimensions, ihps, psis and strokes, it is essential that in any work which purports to be a definitive account the sources should be given.

To criticise in this way grieves me, for I am well aware of the love and devotion, and the many years of meticulous and painstaking work, which have gone into this book. But it seems to me tragic that such a worthy research project, whereby one man almost singlehandedly recorded a vanishing industry, should have produced such an unsatisfactory volume, one so conspicuously and almost wilfully lacking in essential requirements and so very unfriendly to most potential readers. A better structure would surely have been a series of overview chapters which looked at the history of the industry in Preston, then an annotated gazetteer of all the mills, alphabetically arranged and giving all the technical minutiae which makes reading the book so—well let's be honest, so tedious. Tabulated lists of, for example, types of engine, builders and suppliers, or opening and closing dates, could have been included as appendices, a proper index given and a full bibliography and referencing offered. The jacket blurb says that the book will 'enthral those who worked in the mills'—but of that I have considerable doubts, and the thought saddens me.

The second book comes from an entirely different world. It is an academic history of the later industry in which the mills are the vast and shadowy backdrop to human experience. Alan Fowler has written what is surely destined to be, for a good many years, the definitive account of the circumstances of the Lancashire cotton workers in the first half of the

twentieth century. The book is Harvard-referenced (marks are deducted for that) but the sixteen-page bibliography is admirable and the detailed twelve-page index is likewise exemplary. Stylistically the writing sometimes leaves a little to be desired, with clumsy and awkward constructions and too many over-long sentences, but this is a very rewarding book which can be read as a narrative or used as a source. Some sections, such as those on the health of the workforce which describe the diseases peculiar to the industry (notably cancer of the scrotum and the issues associated with steaming and the inhalation of dust in the cardroom) are gripping. This may seem an odd term to use in the context of an academic textbook, but there is in this work a powerful sense of the human dimension which greatly strengthens its value.

*Lancashire cotton operatives and work, 1900–1950*, is in seven chapters, each of which takes a key theme: the historical overview; family, factory and leisure; cotton operatives in the depression; trade unions and politics; health and safety; and cotton operatives in war, austerity and decline. It draws upon a very wide range of sources, extending beyond government reports and anecdotal autobiographies to include trade union histories and internal union reports; published works on, for example, sport, leisure and holidays; and contemporary reports of meetings and conferences. Very little primary source material has been used for the book, which is essentially a synthesis of published work and unpublished theses and dissertations. There are six illustrations, placed in a rather old-fashioned way in a separate plate section at the back of the book—one is an indifferent map of the cotton towns (which apparently include Huddersfield, Halifax, Blackpool and Southport, but not—for example—Walton-le-Dale, Eccles, Middleton, Radcliffe or Kearsley). The pictures could probably have been omitted without any loss to the value of the book, and to have done so might have helped to bring down its price from the £47.50 which will doubtless ensure that few people other than those with access to institutional libraries will ever read it.

If such is its fate it will be a great pity, for this book is rich in detail and written with a clear but not cloying or unvarying sympathy for the workforce. It is particularly strong on the debates and arguments over issues, touching matters such as health and hygiene, working conditions and hours, the relationships between different groups of workers within the industry, the role and status of women and young people, and the impact of the vast and traumatic changes which economic depression and boom brought. Whereas Dickinson's book suffers from being the product of a passionate enthusiasm, which means that it is grossly overburdened with highly-technical detail, Fowler's is a cool and measured assessment of the circumstances of the workers in the greatest industry of north-west England. It is neither sensationalist nor impersonally detached, and it

will be required reading for anybody who wants to understand the realities of the twentieth century cotton industry.

Alan Crosby, Preston

Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby, *The diaries between 1878 and 1893: A selection*, ed. John Vincent. Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 2003. xxxii, 920 pp. £40.00 hbk. ISBN 0 904920 45 3.

With the publication of this fourth volume of the diary of the fifteenth Earl of Derby, John Vincent completes a project which began more than thirty years ago. To it he has devoted much time, skill, scholarship and, because of the reluctance of commercial publishers to join him in the endeavour, money. Only when Vincent was already engaged in this work did the full extent and significance of the diary become apparent. The existence of a journal relating to the 1850s had been known since at least the 1920s. Then, in 1974, building workers at the Knowsley Social Club, adjoining the Derby family Muniment Room, came across a trunk containing diaries from the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. Finally, Professor Vincent himself discovered a further series running from 1861 to 1875. In fact Derby's diary runs continuously from 1861 to just three days before his death in April 1893. Now that publication is complete—though it is worth noting that all the volumes are abridged from the original entries which Derby made on a daily basis in large Letts's diaries—it is clear that the diary represents one of the most important political documents of nineteenth-century British history.

The present volume begins with Derby out of office following his resignation from Disraeli's cabinet in 1878 after a series of disagreements over the direction of the country's foreign policy. By the time of the General Election two years later Derby had severed most of his formal links with the Conservatives and was in practice a supporter of the Liberal party, claiming that there was little to distinguish moderate Liberalism from moderate Conservatism. His scruples, however, compelled him to decline office at the formation of the new Liberal government, headed by W. E. Gladstone, who had returned to the political frontline following his celebrated Midlothian Campaign. As Derby explained, 'I shall give a cordial support to the new govt., but cannot take office, as I think that, when a man is compelled by convictions or circumstances to change his party connection, he is bound to show that he is not a gainer by the change' [14 April 1880]. But Gladstone remained keen to secure his services and when, in December 1882, Lord Kimberley moved to the India Office, Derby took the latter's place as Colonial Secretary. Serving for two and a half years in Gladstone's cabinet, he thus achieved the singular distinction of holding

high office under both of the colossal and rival figures of mid-Victorian England. The diary is particularly important in these years. In the absence at this time of cabinet minutes (first introduced by Lloyd George at the end of 1916), Derby provides a uniquely informative, fly-on-the-wall insight into the inner workings of Gladstone's government with its diverse concerns ranging from Ireland to Egypt and the Sudan via the intricacies of franchise reform. He vividly shows how, by 1884, the Prime Minister's failure to take a controlling lead in cabinet discussions produced something approaching governmental paralysis. By the middle of the decade it was the problems of Ireland which dominated all else. After a brief interlude of Conservative government, Gladstone returned to power, committed now to the introduction of Home Rule. Derby, opposed to this policy, declined to take office and from 1886 until his retirement from public life in 1891 he led the Liberal Unionists in the House of Lords.

Derby was an astute observer of the world in which he lived. Much of the diary can be read with delight as well as historical interest. It is littered with cameo biographical sketches of the famous and of the not so famous, often written as potted obituaries. In 1879 he noted the death of the minor writer and historian, William Hepworth Dixon, 'a busy, pushing, active-minded, clever, and vulgar man of letters who by a succession of books on popular subjects had contrived to make his name widely known. His style was detestable in point of taste, but vigorous in its way: his biographies and histories are worthless from utter inaccuracy, but they as well as his travels can be read by those who are not fastidious, for they are never dull, whatever faults they may have' [29 December 1879].

While the diary's status as an unrivalled chronicle of Victorian high politics may be its greatest claim to fame, it is by no means its only value. There is much more for the reader to savour. Here too is an invaluable document of social history, depicting the life of a great territorial magnate at the dawning of the democratic age. Even when in office Derby was careful to divide his time between his duties in London and his responsibilities as a landowner in Lancashire and elsewhere. An efficient rail service eased his task and evokes the envy of a reader from a later generation: 'Often as I have noted the ease of travelling between London and Knowsley, I never did so more than today. Luncheon was half an hour earlier than usual, dinner half an hour later: otherwise the day's arrangements were not more disturbed than if we had taken a long drive in the afternoon' [16 June 1881]. Derby occasionally voiced misgivings over whether the lifestyle of aristocratic privilege into which he had been born could endure. He was particularly concerned that his principal estate at Knowsley, sandwiched uncomfortably between the sprawling conurbations of Liverpool and St Helens, and with its trees 'apt to look as though they had been used to sweep a chimney' might become untenable [29 September

1881]. 'I often wonder—will another generation be willing to live here? If the towns continue to extend as they have done, anything like country life at Knowsley will be out of the question' [17 June 1880]. Such worries proved unfounded and, unlike his father, Derby became a successful landed proprietor. He accumulated a large fortune, paid off all the inherited debts on his estates, avoided extravagance and died a millionaire. In the process he increased his family's total acreage, while making a huge profit from the sale of urban land for building development.

Derby once wrote that 'a certain indolence, mental and bodily' was 'the chief danger against which I have to guard' [1 January 1881]. If so, he seems to have been uncommonly successful in countering his natural inclinations. Even out of office, his life was extraordinarily full. In November 1879 he found himself 'rather lost for want of occupation', but he insisted that this 'does not happen to me five times in a year' [26 November 1879]. Much of his activity derived from a strong sense of duty and obligation. He believed that his position in society created a moral imperative towards public service. Welcoming the freedom which came with his resignation from the Foreign Office in 1878—for he cared 'nothing for the show or appearance of power and much for freedom in personal relations', he added an important caveat: 'so far as a great peer can be a private man' [2 April 1878]. This attitude meant involvement in activities which were not always congenial, but in which he felt obliged to engage. 'I made a short speech about the Stanley Hospital,' he noted after an open-air meeting in a Liverpool park, 'the object for which the bazaar is held: we then bought all sorts of rubbish at the stalls, as is expected on such occasions' [10 June 1878]. Cheered by crowds in Southport, he regretted that 'more of them insisted on shaking hands than was altogether pleasant' [26 October 1878].

The same sense of obligation appears to have determined his involvement as a local magistrate. 'It is really work for a police magistrate, and below my position: the only reason for continuing to perform it is that it keeps me before the public here as engaged in local business, which otherwise I shall not be: and it is good that a local magnate should be known to take his share of personal trouble' [28 October 1879]. This work meant, as Vincent notes, that 'he knew more than any other leading figure of the ways of the drinking classes' (p. xxvi). But his status and birth inevitably created an unbridgeable separation from many of his fellow men. In July 1878 he found the roads 'full of excursionists: who find pleasure in driving out, packed as tight as they can manage to be, in open vans, blowing horns and shouting: they then stop at a public house on the road, dine, drink and come home rather noisier than they went. It is well that amusement can be found on these terms' [6 July 1878]. Such thoughts, confined to the privacy of his diary, do not show Derby at his best. More

generally, the man's essential decency shines through these pages. Particularly revealing are the references to his charitable donations. A sizeable part of his daily postbag seems to have consisted of begging letters and Derby responded positively to a considerable proportion of these, sometimes against his better judgement. 'Sent £5 to a literary beggar,' he noted in 1881, 'which I half regret, believing the fellow to be a rascal: but it is done' [12 July 1881].

In sum, Vincent has placed all students of nineteenth-century Britain firmly in his debt. This diary is a far more valuable and certainly more readable source than the more celebrated Gladstone journal in its many volumes. Nor does the story end here. As Vincent himself points out, the rest of the 15th Earl's archive remains largely unexploited. This, together with renewed interest in Derby's father, the 14th Earl, curiously neglected despite having served three times as Prime Minister and being the longest serving party leader in Conservative party history, offers the tantalising prospect of a significant revision of the historiography of Victorian England. The dominant presence of Disraeli in the annals of nineteenth-century Conservatism may well need to be modified by an increasing appreciation of the 'view from Knowsley'. In this process Professor Vincent will have played a crucial role.

*D. J. Dutton*, University of Liverpool

Stuart Hylton, *A history of Manchester*. Chichester: Phillimore, 2003. xi[i], 244 pp. £18.99 hbk. ISBN 1 86077 240 4.

There has been for some time a need for a good, general, and up-to-date introduction to the history of Manchester, as an alternative to Alan Kidd's more academic approach, and in spite of some criticisms noted below, Stuart Hylton's new book fills that gap: it is, in fact, a good read. The author was born, and now lives again, in Berkshire, but spent five years at Manchester University gaining qualifications in social sciences and town planning, and worked for several years in the city as one of its planners. The publisher's blurb, from which these personal details are taken, also informs us that 'he soon developed a keen interest in Manchester and its rich history', and this shows through in his writing. His prose style is popular, even at times journalistic, but it reads easily and will appeal to that somewhat unclassifiable person, 'the general reader', for whom this book is intended. He is swept along at a good pace, and within the limits imposed on the author, the Manchester story is well told, but just occasionally I suspect that Mr Hylton would have preferred a little more space to tell the tale: I felt that the Peterloo episode, for instance, though occupying five pages, was no more than adequate, and the chronological



approach has meant that the development of the textile industry, particularly the cotton industry, is divided between chapters—here I would have preferred a subject approach, the story being told within one all-embracing chapter.

There is a good account of the development of local government (Chapter 11: The Borough), but I felt that the sections on Belle Vue, and Manchester and the Irish, were out of place: the latter would have been better incorporated into the following chapter, an excellent account of 'The Condition of the Working Class in Manchester'. 'The Iron Road' (Chapter 10) has sections on the influence of Manchester's railways, and its effects on the competition; the chapter concludes, somewhat perversely, with a section on Manchester's roads! Again, a subject approach here, on communications: road, rail, canal, and air, would have been preferable. The final chapter includes sections on the trams (communications again!), multi-racial Manchester, the 1996 IRA bomb, with a far-too-small reproduction of EDAW's masterplan for the redevelopment of central Manchester, and concludes with a section on 'Looking to the Future'.

Having a chronological approach, and to get away from the obvious titles ('Roman Manchester', 'Norman period', etc), the chapters have titles such as 'The Edge of the Empire', or 'The Work of Titans', which may not immediately give a clue to their content. One might successfully guess that the first example refers to the Roman period, but would you guess that the second example (Chapter 7) is about canal building? And the title of Chapter Two, 'The Lost Castle', is totally misleading: this should have been entitled 'Medieval Manchester'; as the castle only merits one paragraph!

The clearly-printed text (I have only spotted three misprints) is not cluttered by footnotes, and references are gathered together at the end of the text, just before the bibliography. The bibliography itself is more than adequate for our general reader, but could with advantage have made more use of papers in specialist journals: there is one reference to the *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, and another to one of its separate publications; there is no reference to the Chetham Society, and only one reference to a thesis (unpublished). Nor is the standard work on a subject always listed: Robert Reid and Joyce Marlow on Peterloo are both in, but not Robert Walmsley's magisterial study—perhaps this was thought to be too much for our general reader?—and I noticed the omission of two or three other titles which I would have thought might have interested him.

Illustrations, particularly the photographs, have reproduced exceedingly well, even if the one on p. 101 is a strain on the (certainly my) eyes, but one or two of the maps and diagrams might with advantage have been enlarged. The photographs are mainly well-known, though one or two were new to me, and I suspect that one or two others were taken especially for this book. The index is adequate, no more; to give three examples: the Luddites are

mentioned in the text but are not indexed, while other subjects are (nor is there a reference to them in the bibliography); Stockport viaduct is there, but not Sankey viaduct, nor Stockport itself; and personal names seem to be indexed arbitrarily—Mark Elder merits an entry but not the Reverend Charles Ethelston.

Nevertheless, as I said above, the book is a good read, the tale well told, and I quite agree with the publisher's blurb that we have here 'an entertaining account of a vibrant city'. Highly recommended.

*Morris Garratt, Cheadle Hulme*

Janice Hayes and Alan Crosby, *Warrington at work: Images from the collections of Warrington Library, Museum and Archive Service*. Derby: Breedon Books, 2003. 207 pp. £14.99 hbk. ISBN 1 85983 365 9

'The times, they are a-changing' was a constant cry, and nowhere more than in Warrington. From small settlement to New Town, Warrington has seen a wide range of social and economic development. This book sets out to document changes specifically within the world of work over the past two centuries. It is important to emphasise this specific subject matter, since although it touches on other aspects of Warrington life, it aims to show the changing face of working Warrington, rather than attempting to be a general history of the town.

As the authors point out, Warrington is a modern phenomenon. A north west town, it has yet managed to avoid the malaise and stagnation which has characterised so many other towns in the region through their over-dependence on one industry. By contrast, Warrington's lack of any one major material benefit, such as coal or iron ore, has caused the diversification which is the basis of its continued prosperity. Indeed the one central element of transport has provided the very change which has powered that prosperity because it never stands still, both literally and figuratively.

It is arguably obvious from the title that the majority of the images will be of an historical nature, since the collections of Warrington Library and Warrington Museum are both rich in early photographs and illustrations. However, not all the images are from the collection, and the interesting text is interwoven with selections from oral history records. It is surprising, indeed sometimes shocking, especially to younger readers, to realise how radically working practices and social attitudes have changed within the compass of one person's lifetime. The quotations from this oral history, even without the emphasis of the original speaker's voice, paint a vivid picture of working life and give a personalisation to the images we see staring from the posed photographs.

Although there is much modern information within the text, past

industries figure largely. Given that the need to keep production costs down has meant that all the photographs are in black and white, even the modern photographs have a 'period' feel to them. This perhaps gives the wrong impression since the book very much aims to give a continuous analysis rather than an historical snapshot.

The chapter headings provide a flavour of the text, ranging through the expected historical heavy industries, such as wiremaking, soap and tanning. However, few would regard sailcloth and shipbuilding as typical Warrington industries, yet the authors show how they played their part in the development of the town through its location on the River Mersey and close proximity to the Manchester Ship Canal. There are also chapters on local government and the professions, as well as several more general chapters of scene setting and analysis.

The text, although frequently discussing detailed statistics, is never dull or tedious. By the use of input from many speakers and writers, the tone is constantly varied, so that the description brings the accompanying image to life. Few would forget Robert Davies' graphic description of the Royal Mail coach thundering into the old Lion Inn's yard, having its horses changed for the next leg of the journey. And yet the accompanying photograph if taken on its own would have no such impression.

The use of contrast between modern and historical practices, together with anecdotal evidence, make the book suitable both for serious study and for discussion of the 'coffee table' variety. It evokes a wide range of reaction from its readers, usually dependent on their age. To an older person, such as my 92 year old mother in law, there is the interest in recognition of the past remembered. Phrases such as 'I remember that (or him/her)' are interspersed with detailed memories of the area under discussion. By contrast, for a younger person, many of the images invoke a feeling of history rather than recollection. And yet each is a valid reaction, and emphasises the importance of the book. It can be recommended to the scholar and general reader alike and should form part of every Warringtonian's library.

*Albert Hartley, Warrington*

Steven Horton, *Street names of the City of Liverpool*. Birkenhead: Countyvise, 2002. viii, 102 pp. £5.00 pbk. ISBN 1 901231 30 5. Steve Horton, *Street names of Wirral*. Birkenhead: Countyvise, 2003. 76 pp. £3.95 pbk. ISBN 1 901231 40 2. Roy Redman & Colin Sands, *Bootle signposts: A history and directory of Bootle streets*. [Southport]: Sefton Council Leisure Services Department (Libraries), 2003. 60pp. £5.00 pbk. ISBN 1 874516 12 X

James Picton, in his *Memorials of Liverpool*, 1875, says 'there has been of late quite a crusade against the old names of streets, so many changes having been made that it is difficult to preserve one's orientation. The names of streets ought not to be altered lightly. They are historical mementoes illustrating the times and circumstances under which they were formed. If the names of Old Hall Street, Tithebarn Street and Castle Street were obliterated from the map of Liverpool, the associations of its early history would lose much of their interest'. Street names are fascinating items in an area's history and the name can remain long after the origin of its naming has disappeared. They can tend to represent the great and famous of the Victorian era when most of the streets were laid out in the large towns like Liverpool and in Bootle on its northern boundary. Victoria herself cut a great swathe through old rural names as old lanes became streets and roads named after her and were adopted and then made up by local councils.

What is the best way of laying out books dealing with street names? Are they to be reference works in dictionary form or can they be taken up and read through chapter by chapter? The above works take both approaches. The two books by Steve Horton follow the second method. They are given chapter headings linking together the categories into which streets can be sorted, such as the London influence, Royal Liverpool, etc., or in the Wirral volume by area starting with Birkenhead and moving outwards to Heswall and Gayton.

Redman and Sands take the first approach and the book is designed as a reference work in which the streets are listed A-Z, though there is a thematic approach at the end where they are listed by type, i.e. local builders, saints, 'Welsh' streets etc. This book is ambitious and states that it seeks to trace 'the origins of the names of *all* recorded streets of Bootle, Orrell, Netherton and that part of Sefton incorporated into Bootle in the 1960s'.

How well do these books work? *Bootle signposts* not only covers all the streets in the town but gives an approximate date of building and the location of where the street is or was; particularly useful for streets which have long since disappeared in clearances. Several photographs are included, including some useful aerial views, for example, of Vaux Crescent, Orrell (p. 54). Finally a bibliography is given of sources used,

including minutes of the Highways Committee and Council minutes. A lot of research has gone into this book and it should prove to be *the* source of reference on the streets of Bootle. The authors are to be congratulated on groundbreaking work on an area that is still awaiting a comprehensive history, though several books of photographic images have been lovingly compiled by Peter Woolley.

Steven Horton takes on a much bolder challenge in covering the street names of Liverpool and could never hope to list all, though he does state that he has 'attempted to be as comprehensive as can be'. He is more interested in showing 'how patterns have changed' rather than just 'a brief description of where different streets got their names from'. The book has an essential index at the end and the street names are emboldened in the text. There is no bibliography but there is a map of Liverpool in 1650. The Wirral book states that nearly 700 street names are listed and the book also has an index but no maps. The Wirral is defined as being part of Wirral MBC not south Wirral in Cheshire (thus excluding places like Neston and Parkgate).

If one thinks of street names one usually relates them to a street map and it is surprising that so few maps are shown in the three books reviewed. The Bootle title's format is A4 landscape and has plenty of room for maps, and I would have liked to see how Bootle has changed from having its own shoreline, to a heavily congested dockland community. Likewise in Horton's books a few maps would have helped to illustrate the text to advantage.

But I would not want to give a negative view of any of these books. They are all attractively presented and for all the work that has been lavished on them are very attractively priced.

*Roger Hull, Liverpool Record Office*

Len Holden, *Vauxhall Motors and the Luton economy, 1900–2002* (Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, Volume 82). Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003. xviii + 249 pp. £25.00 hbk. ISBN 0 85155 068 1

It may seem out of place for a review of a book concerned mainly with a vital aspect of Bedfordshire's history to appear in *Transactions*. But although this new history of Vauxhall Motors is primarily focussed on the company's activities in Luton, it will also prove to be of great use to those interested in the history and development of Vauxhall's operations at Ellesmere Port on Merseyside and indeed the history of motor manufacturing in Britain generally. Its author, Len Holden, has been working on the history of Vauxhall for over twenty years and this monograph emerging out of his 1983 Open University thesis has been long awaited. Ultimately it

provides a significant new contribution to the study of business history, as despite the important role played by Vauxhall in the UK economy and the great many studies that have already appeared charting the rise and fall of the British car industry, this is the first time that the development of Vauxhall has been the subject of in-depth academic research.

Holden traces the origins, growth and evolution of Vauxhall with a study of the firm's managerial policies, vehicle production, finances and employment strategies. This is done with considerable analytical skill and attention to detail while also including the personal stories of some of the individuals who made the company a success—managers, workers and trade unionists. Utilising a wide-range of well-chosen source material, the author plots Vauxhall's trajectory from a small London-based general engineering company in 1857 to a fledgling car maker by 1905, demonstrating how initial success before the First World War was then matched by weak and misguided model policies after 1921. Severe financial difficulties meant the continuing existence of Vauxhall was only secured after a takeover by US-based General Motors (GM) in 1925. Over the next quarter century, GM provided Vauxhall with the capital investment, technical knowledge and advanced marketing and distribution skills that enabled the company to secure a place among the ranks of the largest British car and commercial vehicle producers.

Yet a further factor underpinning success, Holden argues, was that of peaceful labour relations, an area left entirely to the discretion of the British management team. Key to this success was the appointment of Charles Bartlett as Managing Director in 1929. Previously, Vauxhall management had dealt harshly with the unions and uncompromisingly with its workforce. Bartlett's appointment, however, coincided with a paternalistic 'golden age' of job security, rising wages and a unique system of shop-floor consultation through the Management Advisory Committee. Holden then considers how Vauxhall's singular concentration in Bedfordshire came to a halt in the 1960s when the company's activities were dispersed under the influence of government regional policy, and a second factory successfully established at Ellesmere Port. Holden then intertwines the story of these two plants, charting their respective successes and failures over a forty-year period, examining their products, productivity and profitability. Following the story through to its conclusion, it is clear that, in part, Holden sees the move to Ellesmere Port as partly responsible for bringing about the end of vehicle production in Luton, as facing increased competition, overcapacity in its European operations and a new set of global economic conditions, when GM had to choose between its two UK plants it chose the more modern and (thanks to its production of the Astra) profitable operation on Merseyside.

While Holden's work undoubtedly provides a valuable case study, this is

not to say that the book is without its difficulties. Considering the importance given to labour relations in accounting for the success of Vauxhall prior to 1950, greater attention could perhaps be given to the justification behind the rapid dismantling of Bartlett's system in the 1960s. The resulting difficulties in management-shop floor relations could also be expanded upon, although as Holden shows Vauxhall always remained less prone to disruption than Ford or British Leyland—a phenomenon that in itself requires further analysis. Perhaps more problematically, and as the author himself acknowledges, the main focus of the book is devoted to the history of Luton and Vauxhall only up to the 1950s. Despite its attempt to look at Vauxhall as a whole from the 1960s, there certainly remains considerable scope for much more research to be done on the Ellesmere Port plant, its development, industrial relations and impact upon the local economy. Furthermore, the focus means that, despite the promise of a history which covers 1900–2002, the book is rather unbalanced in its chronological coverage. The decades in which Vauxhall's fluctuating fortunes ultimately saw the firm expand then descend into a phase of notable un-profitability, from which it emerged to become second only to Ford in the British market, before increasingly becoming subordinate to Opel in GM's European organization prior to the eventual closure of Luton operations receive an all too cursory account. As a result, Holden fails to provide the overall account of Vauxhall's business history that the company deserves.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, this remains a well-written, well-researched and enjoyable book that anyone with an interest in business history, economic history or labour history would be well advised to read.

*Jon Murden, University of Liverpool.*

Patricia Runaghan, *Father Nugent's Liverpool, 1849–1905*. Birkenhead: Countywise, 2003. vi, 68 pp. £4.95 pbk. ISBN 1 901231 39 9.

In recent years much publicity has been attracted to the unhappiness of emigrant children from Liverpool in Canada and Australia. But this book about Fr Nugent's Liverpool presents a detailed picture of the appalling deprivation of families living in the overcrowded slums, which led Nugent to have a vision of happy, healthy children prospering in lands of opportunity.

The book's title is appropriate, since the story of Nugent's valuable work of charity embraces also the contribution of others to the needs of the Liverpool poor, including the protestant clergymen the Rev. Abraham Hume and Canon Major Lester who, along with Nugent, recognised the

need for the amelioration of poverty and the provision of adequate education and health services.

Nineteenth-century Liverpool was overwhelmed by the desperate poverty in over-crowded slums, resulting from the arrival of some 90,000 people fleeing from the Irish famine in the 1840s. An inadequate supply of housing for such an influx meant that dwellings already unsuitable for their purpose became filled with many more families, while others lived on the streets. The numerous court dwellings were so unsanitary that conditions inevitably led to over 5,000 deaths from cholera in the summer of 1849.

James Nugent was born in Liverpool in 1822, the oldest of nine children, and, after starting his priestly life in the cholera year, he became convinced that the solution to the poverty he observed in the town lay in education. During the fifty years of his clerical life he set up schools, and was instrumental in providing orphanages, training schools, reformatories, mother and baby homes and hostels for single working men and women. His successful fundraising efforts stemmed from the preaching of persuasive sermons and begging businessmen for contributions.

He bought a printing press to teach boys a trade, and they became responsible for the printing of the *Northern Press* and later, its successor, the *Catholic Times*. The scandal of children who were convicted of minor offences being sent to adult prisons roused Nugent to establish the Liverpool Catholic Reformatory Association, which he set up on the ship *The Clarence*, moored in the Mersey. Although ultimately this experiment failed the training was moved to dry land with greater success.

He was responsible for pioneering the practice (now much discredited) of sending orphans abroad to Canada and the USA. He was appointed the first Catholic chaplain to Walton gaol and, realising the contribution played in crime by drunkenness promoted the Total Abstinence League of the Cross which promoted weekly concerts to draw people away from the temptations of drink. His last success was in setting up a refuge for prostitutes, a cause which had long troubled him, and with his usual enthusiasm, raised enough money to provide a home, with a steam laundry, which trained 2,000 women before his death in 1905.

Patricia Runaghan gives full details of the appalling living conditions of the Liverpool poor, which are already well-documented, but little description of Fr Nugent's ideas and attitudes, or his relationships with influential people at home or abroad, recruited by him to achieve his aims.

Although this is an adequate account of a remarkable man's life for the general reader it does not supersede the biography published by Canon John Bennett in 1949. Bennett reveals what Nugent learnt from his contacts with prisoners and destitute people and also how he co-operated with protestant clergy and others not always well-disposed to Catholicism, but who were engaged in similar kinds of social work, thus scotching anti-



Catholic prejudice to some extent. Bennett also describes Nugent's personality and behaviour, including his weak points.

Brenda Murray, Blundellsands

T. Cecil Gray, *Dr Richard Formby. Founder of the Liverpool Medical School*. London: Royal College of Physicians, 2003. xviii, 116 pp. £14 pbk. ISBN 1 86016 185 5.

Everybody knows that medical history is written by retired doctors who want to pay their respects to their more eminent predecessors or to extol the great benefits to mankind discovered in the hospital or medical school that nurtured them. It has to be said that this book fulfils most of these criteria. The more recent, sociological, approach to medical history does not apply. Yet the composer of atonal music Arnold Schönberg said 'There is much good music still to be written in the key of C major'.

Professor Gray took the opportunity offered by his house move to the township of Formby to research the antecedents and the life history of Dr Richard Formby (1790–1865) who was a member of the family from which the town's name derives and who became a consulting physician at the Liverpool Royal Infirmary. He discovered a great deal about the family which was very strong in clerical gentleman, but of which Richard was the only medical member. This is not too surprising since in the early years of the nineteenth century medicine was scarcely regarded as a suitable calling for members of the landed gentry.

Richard's father was not only a clergyman but he was also the owner of a large estate and was very wealthy. This enabled him to pay the rather large premium asked for Richard to become a pupil of Dr Brandreth, Physician at the Liverpool Infirmary. The sum was £70, which the author translates into modern money as £3,700. He does this, helpfully, whenever money is mentioned. Being a pupil at the Infirmary was a privileged position and it is hard to see why the author thinks that Richard 'must have reacted with utter revulsion', when a few sentences earlier he says 'Fourteen now seems young to have to face the unpleasantness of a hospital, but at that time it was the usual age'. Richard was probably unwilling to become a clergyman like his father and he survived the ordeal of being a medical student, for he went on to Cambridge, where he graduated in medicine, and then on to Edinburgh to further his medical studies. He then graduated MD at Cambridge—a curious and arcane ceremony, not calling for much more than a knowledge of the classical authors—and then on to candidacy and subsequent fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians of London.

After setting up in practice as a physician in Liverpool, Richard then did a most surprising thing: he started to teach anatomy. This had been

regarded as the preserve of surgeons and in the Greek tradition, not for gentlemen, who were not expected to dirty their hands. Why Richard became interested in anatomy is not really known. He was appointed to the Liverpool Infirmary in 1832 and to the Asylum probably in the same year—a time of great change in the management of the insane, particularly in the abolition of physical restraint started by Pinel, the French physician, who died in 1826, whose humanitarian ideas spread throughout the world, and were adopted by Richard Formby.

There is a good account of the establishment of the Liverpool Medical Library; of the Medical Institution, their subsequent merger and the rather unsavoury in-fighting within the medical profession which went on before the merger.

There is also a good account of the Royal Institution in which Richard conducted his anatomical teaching and where he was joined by other medical teachers who eventually, after considerable squabbling—not helped by Richard's petulance on being asked to pay reasonable rent for the room he used for his lectures—started the Royal Institution Medical School in Colquitt Street. In 1843 the school moved to an annexe at the infirmary and became the Infirmary Medical School (subsequently the Royal Infirmary). The notes, which form an excellent commentary on the text, are however, not infallible. Note 24 on 'The Evolution of the University of Liverpool', paragraph 3, says 'University College was inaugurated in 1882 (the immediate initiating factor being the need of the Royal Infirmary Medical School for a Department of Physic)'. This is quite wrong. The need was for a Department of Physics. Oliver Lodge, the true discoverer of radio, was appointed as Foundation Professor of Physics so that Liverpool students would be taught enough physics to sit the London MB examinations under the new regulations—but that's another story. There are a few minor errors, one of which has a Formby ancestor interred behind a wall in York Cathedral.

The real problem with this book is that Formby himself left very little documentation. He appears to have published nothing apart from his Harveian oration—in Latin—at the Royal College of Physicians. Gray says Formby discovered two original treatments. Chloric ether was a weak solution of chloroform in alcohol, which Formby used for pain relief and possibly gave a clue to Simpson, whom he met, and which led to the use of chloroform as an anaesthetic; the other was the inhalation of creosote for pulmonary tuberculosis. This was certainly not original for the inhalation of coal tar for this disease had been recommended since 1813.

Clearly a great deal of research has gone into this book and students of Liverpool history will find much of interest in it, including a hint of how the Grand National came to be run at Aintree and not at Maghull.

*J. J. Rivlin MB ChB MSc, Liverpool*

Susan Pedersen, *Eleanor Rathbone and the politics of conscience*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2004. xv, 479pp. £25.00 hbk. ISBN 0 300 10245 3.

Had Eleanor Rathbone, and not Nancy Astor, been the first woman MP then women would have had a doughty, much needed champion in Parliament and her country would have remembered her name. So opines Susan Pedersen in her excellent biography, reflecting on the way in which so energetic a champion of social justice has been so quickly forgotten. If further proof of this communal amnesia were needed, it was provided by the Lord Mayor of Liverpool in his speech at a civic reception to celebrate the publication of this book—having forgotten her name, he was forced to refer to Eleanor as ‘that lady’.

Who was this woman who has so easily slipped from public memory? Eleanor Rathbone was a feminist whose views were shaped partly by her family background—her father, William Rathbone VI, was a noted Liverpool merchant, philanthropist and Member of Parliament—as well as by her experience as a student at Somerville College, Oxford, in the company of other talented women. From these, she absorbed principles founded on optimism about state action and a stress on individual and voluntary service that were to govern the whole of her public life. As a young and idealistic graduate, she also ran up against the disadvantages attached to being a woman. Her tutors had persuaded Eleanor and her contemporaries of their abilities, and encouraged them to be ambitious, but there was almost nowhere to exercise ability and few fields in which to pursue ambition. They could not influence policy by standing for Parliament nor were many professions anxious to recruit women in the mid-1890s. Although depressed by their lack of opportunity, the class of 1893 possessed vigour and determination and Eleanor and others threw themselves with energy into the task of working to open doors both for themselves and for other women.

Having moved to Liverpool from London, where she had spent most of childhood, Eleanor joined a local branch of the Women’s Industrial Society, became the honorary secretary of the Liverpool Women’s Suffrage Society and a member of the National Executive of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies. She also helped to realise her father’s hope that she would engage with him in charitable activities in Liverpool and received her introduction to social work with the Central Relief Society in Liverpool. In 1902, she was recruited by Elizabeth Macadam and Emily Jones to work with them at the Victoria Settlement and immediately took responsibility for its social investigations. Together the three women transformed the Settlement and, as a result of their experiences there, helped to found the School of Social Science and Training for Social Work at the University of

Liverpool in 1905. Eleanor's feminism informed almost every aspect of her activity. Work with her father into the pay and conditions of Liverpool dock workers had shown her the damaging effects that casual labour systems had on the wives of workers, who had to try to manage a family budget on irregular and often inadequate wages, and in 1909 she produced a report that sowed the seeds for radical proposals. This was eventually published in 1924 as *The disinherited family* and argued for family endowment, an allowance to be paid to women to enable them to fulfil their role as mothers. It took more than twenty years for her ideas to receive official approval and partial implementation.

Eleanor the social scientist was also Eleanor the politician. As a suffragist she had denounced the sort of militant tactics adopted by the Women's Social and Political Union, but both in Liverpool and nationally she was active in promoting constitutional means to achieve the vote for women and in stressing its importance for social reform. Although still barred from standing for Parliament, in 1909 women ratepayers were for the first time allowed to stand for election to local authorities and Eleanor, as an Independent, successfully contested a seat in Granby Ward in Liverpool, representing it without a break until 1935. In 1929, when full suffrage was granted to women, she was elected as an Independent Member of Parliament for the Combined English Universities, a seat she retained until her death in 1946. She used it to argue for family allowances, for unemployment benefits that reflected the cost of feeding a family and other 'women's issues'. But that was not all. She was also prepared to speak—or, more often, to ask Parliamentary questions—about international affairs; to deplore British policy towards Abyssinia in 1935; to urge rearmament in 1936; to castigate the government for its policy of non-intervention during the Spanish Civil War (so consistently and fearlessly that she found herself in trouble with the Speaker); and to mount a sustained attack on the policy of appeasement. Few MPs could have been more active—and most would not have had the double disadvantage of being both female and an Independent.

In spite of all this, by and large, Eleanor's country has forgotten her name. Her work during the Spanish Civil War; her activities on behalf of all refugees but particularly Jews fleeing Europe with the help of the 'Parliamentary Committee on Refugees' (despite its official title, this was an unofficial Rathbone-funded organisation); her well-meaning but perhaps ill-judged work on behalf of Indian women—all have faded from the corporate memory. Even the fight for family endowment, metamorphosed first into family allowances and later into child benefit, has lost its association with her name and has become too easily seen as just one aspect of the Labour Party's post-war welfare reforms. We may regret that, and rejoice that this admirable biography has reminded us of her

achievements. But perhaps Eleanor would have accepted the neglect with equanimity. She was no shrinking violet, but her background in a family that believed in doing good by stealth meant that she would never have sought personal publicity. Moreover, as Pedersen has shown so skilfully, her shy, reticent—sometimes prickly—personality meant that she became skilled in developing a way of working through others, briefing well-connected allies and setting-up cross-party committees that achieved her ends while concealing her guiding hand. But although Eleanor might be content to remain in the shadows, her country should not allow her to do so and should remember and celebrate her name and her contribution. Pedersen's long-awaited study of this remarkable woman will go a long way towards reminding her city and her country of Eleanor's achievements.

*Pat Starkey*, University of Liverpool

Bob Burrows, *Cheshire's famous: A comprehensive guide to celebrity Cestrians*. Derby: Breedon Books, 2004. 192 pp. £14.99 hbk. ISBN 1 85983 397 7.

My immediate reaction when I received this book for review was 'what is its purpose—indeed does it have one?' The fact that the author is described on the back blurb as a regular contributor to *Cheshire Life* gives some of the answer—it's a coffee table book. The dust jacket shows a number of people who are indisputably natives of Cheshire (Sir James Chadwick, Patricia Routledge, Glenda Jackson, Bob Greaves, Chris Bonnington, Leonard Cheshire and Melanie Chisholm—Mel C. of the Spice Girls)—but William Shakespeare? The Bard is included because he was christened by John Bracegirdle, late of Great Budworth and because he *might* have had an affair with Mary Fitton of Gawsworth (who despite at least two references in the text is not listed in the index). On this thin evidence Shakespeare should also qualify for inclusion in a volume of Lancashire's famous, because of his connections to Lord Derby and with Hoghton Tower. Those in Worcestershire who possibly have a greater claim to him as their own might not be convinced!

This publisher has proved the ability to break into local history provision recently with some titles (also reviewed in this volume) which are of merit to the local historian. This book has some merits: its arrangement is not one of them. Although there is a serviceable (but in some cases inaccurate) index, the arrangement of the text is arbitrary (chapters have headings like 'Warriors and Soldiers', 'Entertainers', 'Scientists, Academics, Clergy') and the standard of illustrations, although generous in extent, leaves much to be desired (see the photograph of Heather Couper on page 143).

Had the book been arranged alphabetically by name it would be of

greater use to the local historian or the local studies professional. It will, however, be of interest to fans of television, popular media and sport, who will find much information on personalities in those fields. It will not, though, add much to the greater knowledge of those interested in the history of the County Palatine from a serious historical point of view. As a populist introduction to county biography it has its limited uses, but the internet would provide as much—if not more—easily accessible information on most of the subjects covered.

*John Tiernan, Liverpool*

Angela Brabin, *The Black Widows of Liverpool: A chilling account of cold-blooded murder in Victorian Liverpool*. Lancaster: Palatine 2003. 153 pp, £8.00 pbk. ISBN 1 874181 21 7.

On 14 February 1884 the trial of Margaret Higgins and Catherine Flanagan commenced at St George's Hall Liverpool before Mr Justice Butt and a jury, for the murder of Thomas Higgins, Maggie Jennings and John Flanagan junior. Margaret Flanagan was also tried for the murder of Mary Higgins. Mr Justice Butt was an Admiralty judge so presumably his list of admiralty cases had collapsed. The trial was short and the jury had no difficulty in convicting the two women of the murders. They were hanged on 2 March at Kirkdale prison. The victims of the murders had all been insured under policies with various friendly societies for sums ranging from £12 12s. to £50; on their deaths the sums insured were paid out to the two women or their friends.

Ms Brabin suggests that there may have been another fourteen victims and that there were many other women involved in these activities. She describes the streets in which the women lived, their families and friends. Particulars of all the victims, both those the sisters were charged with murdering and the others, and their deaths, together with the policies taken out on their lives are set out in detail, albeit not in chronological order, which is confusing.

Patrick Higgins was surprised when his brother Thomas died in 1884, two years after his marriage to Margaret. When he learned that Thomas's life had been insured with a number of friendly societies, he contacted a Dr Whitford, who had attended his brother. The doctor advised him to see the coroner which he did, and the next day the coroner's beadle and the doctor went with Patrick to Margaret Higgins's home. Catherine Flanagan slipped quickly out leaving her sister to be arrested. Catherine Flanagan then went on the run for some ten days and was 'supported and sheltered by the community in which [she] lived'.

The friendly societies were severely criticised by the judge and Ms

Brabin, who comes to the justifiable conclusion that 'the companies and agents bore a share of liability for the deaths of the victims'. Although she says that there were 'swingeing reforms of the insurance laws', unfortunately she does not say what those reforms were.

She also deals with the ease with which potential poisoners could get hold of arsenic, the poison of choice, and criticises the failure of the doctors to carry out adequate post-mortems. Dr Whitford had seen Thomas Higgins on a number of occasions before his death and thought he had irritation of the bowels. On being told that he had died he made out a death certificate without seeing his body and gave dysentery as the cause of death.

This is all of interest but does not seem to be the aim of the book. There appears to be a sociological subtext and a number of references are made to an article by Ellen Ross in *History Workshop Journal* 15 (1983), 'Survival networks: women's neighbourhood sharing in London before World War One'. Ms Brabin is interested in whether the sisters 'were but part of a ring of like-minded women' but does not distinguish this ring from 'the close-knit community in which they lived'. Indeed she goes further and says 'they [women poisoners] were portrayed as monsters, whereas in reality they were ordinary but poor women, with nothing extraordinary about them to separate them from their peers'.

A contrast is then, however, made between the angry reactions of the crowd as the women were driven back to prison. Earlier Ms Brabin has said that 'the Victorian image of a killer was an isolated figure but that in the case of these women they were supported and protected by a "sharing, caring working-class community"'. I am not sure if all this leads to 'the inescapable conclusion that Catherine Flanagan and Margaret Higgins were accepted by that community as normal, working-class women, even though part of that normality involved insuring people and then killing them'.

Angela Brabin—who was a Crown Prosecutor Solicitor—has used a substantial number of primary sources, including newspaper reports, trial documents and various Home Office documents dealing with the problems raised by the circumstances of the deaths.

The publisher (a subsidiary of Carnegie Publishing) does not appear to employ an editor, which leads to a number of unfortunate editorial failures. For example on p. 88 the arresting Inspector 'realis[es] her likeness to the description on the warrant', and on p. 90 the same Inspector going to the same house 'noticed her description tallied with that on the handbill'. On p. 128 a Mrs Stanton was arrested but released without charge and exactly the same happens on p. 130. Disembodied names appear, and since there is sadly no index, it is impossible to identify the people to whom they belong. In a book where sisters murder members of their families, a family tree would also have provided welcome clarification.

*Peter Urquhart, Birkenhead*

Ralph T. Brocklebank, *Birkenhead: An illustrated history*. Derby: Breedon Books, 2003. 176pp. £14.99 hbk. ISBN 1 85983 350 0.

This illustrated history of Birkenhead lives up to its name with 202 drawings and photographs supplementing an informative text. Ralph Brocklebank has combined information from popular historical sources at Birkenhead Library with his knowledge gained from working for many years as Principal Reference and Information Services Librarian for Wirral to provide a popular history of the town. The book is divided into seven sections, and Brocklebank makes good use of the prints and photographs to illustrate his easy flowing prose. Some maps of the town in relation to the surrounding area, with highlighting of the main landmarks, would have made it easier to follow, and thus help the reader appreciate the development of the town from early Roman times, while putting the history and layout of the town into perspective.

The book commences by covering the period to 1810, when Birkenhead remained a small hamlet, and discusses in detail the development of the Priory—the earliest known settlement—and the ferry links to Liverpool. Poor editing, though, means that the early prints and photographs are undated, and the chapter ends somewhat incongruously with a modern 1960s photograph of Woodside. The chapter gives details of the buildings and development of the Priory which enable the reader to have a better understanding of the buildings that remain today, though a shaded diagram of the growth and decline of the Priory would have made it even clearer.

While the drawings and photographs come from the Birkenhead Library archives, there is no list of the archives used or an illustration list (another editorial failing?) The back cover states that the book is an accessible entertaining introduction to Birkenhead's history with memorable portraits of the notable individuals who shaped Birkenhead. While this is a true representation of the book, a more detailed bibliography, with further reading suggestions for the amateur at whom it appears to be aimed, would have made it even more accessible. The index could also have been improved by highlighting photographs and cross-referencing them to the text, particularly as many photographs do not appear alongside the relevant text, and are not numbered.

These criticisms of the referencing and indexing however do not detract from the enjoyment of reading the book. The second section, covering the development of the town, is particularly interesting with collated snippets from many of the books referred to in the bibliography. Birkenhead owes its transformation in the early nineteenth century to a succession of successful entrepreneurs: Francis Price, William Laird, Sir William Jackson to name but a few and to the vision of James Gillespie Graham, the



Edinburgh architect, for the layout of the town. In Brocklebank's prose these characters come alive, though I was surprised that he failed to tell the reader that Joseph Paxton's design of Sir William Jackson's Eden of a park—Birkenhead Park—was used as a basis for the design of Central Park, New York.

Much of the anecdotal information accompanying many of the photographs is both amusing and informative: George Francis Train was not only a candidate for the US presidency, caught up in a revolution, jailed for obscenity, and travelled round the world in 80 days but also introduced the street railway to Birkenhead!

The third section of the book, although interesting, is disjointed, starting with culture and entertainment and then returning to the theme of the dock development, sectarian tension and general hardship. Photographs of old cinemas, theatres and Birkenhead Park Football are out of context with the more serious themes. I don't know if it is lack of illustrations for the period or more poor editing, but, for instance, a wonderful 1940s photograph of the Town Hall rebuilt after the fire of 1901, is opposite the paragraph describing the opening of the Town Hall in 1887—just one example of the rather odd juxtaposition of unnumbered and unlisted photographs to text.

Later parts of the book cover charity and social improvement, art and education and provide a fascinating insight into the town, going a long way to explaining the resolve of the people of Birkenhead. The history of Birkenhead contains many half implemented schemes which for a variety of reasons were abandoned, but each time the town survived. Brocklebank intersperses amusing anecdotes with the more serious themes of the town's development and this sums up the strong cohesion of town and people. Some of the photographs the author has chosen are particularly arresting—a photograph showing a Charles Thompson mission picnic with the men that had been wounded in the first World War and the Birkenhead policewomen at the Bridewell Yard in 1917, both poignantly apposite.

The pictures—and the prose—of *Birkenhead: An illustrated history* vividly explain the history and character of the area and provide an enjoyable and informative read for the interested local historian.

Sally Warnock, Birkenhead

Jon Stobart, *The first industrial region: North-West England, c1700–60*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004. x, 259pp. £49.99 hbk. ISBN 0 7190 6462 7

This thought-provoking study is not so much about industries in the North West *per se*, as about 'regions' and the ways in which they developed the

capacity to initiate and sustain economic growth. 'Rather than simply telling the story of economic development in north-west England . . . the purpose here is to respond positively to Hudson's call for theoretically-informed analyses of regional history'. 'In many ways, this region formed a microcosm of Britain as a whole' so that it is meant to stand as 'a methodological and historical exemplar', typifying the 'range of processes shaping the national space economy'.

On the one hand, much of the analysis seeks to explain the distinctiveness of the North West and why it was 'vital to national economic development'. 'In places like north-west England, as this study has demonstrated, the economy and society were changing in ways that were truly revolutionary in the half century up to 1760', and 'the juxtapositioning of industrial regions and mutual interaction between them which did much to stimulate wider industrialisation in the nineteenth century was evident within the north west a century earlier'. This is intended, therefore, as both an exposition of a thesis about regional development, and a specialist study of the North West *per se*. What it is not is a straightforward, chronological account of the latter's development.

The book begins with an extended discussion of theoretical perspectives on regional economic development, before moving on to look at the spatial development of industrial and urban settlements in the North West from the late 17th to early 19th century. The core of the book is devoted to three chapters on textiles, the mineral-based economy and the service sector. The final chapter focuses on the urban system, demonstrating the way in which it was manifested through transport links, 'executorial linkages' in probate records and selected business records. Within the region, 'the role of the urban system is seen as being central: it helped to structure spatial divisions of labour and articulated internal and external spatial integration'. 'Towns were central to both specialisation and integration, and were instrumental in the structure and dynamic of the regional economy, not so much as individual places, but rather as nodes on networks or interaction'.

But what is the North West and why is 1701–60 the critical period? For the purposes of analysis and data collection, the North West here is defined as Lancashire South of the Ribble and the whole of Cheshire. Quite why this particular area has been chosen is not made clear, especially since little industrial development occurred in mid and southern Cheshire and this area is omitted from most of the maps about the textile economy. Conversely, textile districts which were over the county border in Yorkshire are treated as 'extra-regional', even though North West towns enjoyed extensive links with them. Quite why 1701–60 has been chosen as the critical period is also not totally clear since the evidence presented here does not suggest that the scale of change over this particular period was particularly dramatic. Indeed, the region already exhibited 'exceptionally

high levels of industrial development' in, or even before, the early 18th century and more substantial changes occurred in the last third of the century. Although the source on which the study is overwhelmingly based—probate records—suggests change was not particularly dramatic, this is explained away by suggesting that 'it is probable that change was more profound among sections of the population who did not leave probate records'. Furthermore, it became 'increasingly difficult to equate one individual with one unit of production' over the period. 'In 1700 a glassmaker, brewer or even cloth manufacturer would, in all likelihood, have been one man working for and even by himself. By 1750, however, these individuals were equally likely to be employed by another person or employing many other people and operating as part of a large industrial plant'. Quite how many large industrial plants there were by 1750, however, is not clear.

The rationale for relying so heavily on probate records is that they are 'a reliable and consistent source' which provide aggregate temporal and spatial data on occupational structures which can then be presented in tables or maps. Over 40,000 were identified for the entire period, of which around 28,000 have been used (women and minors are the main exclusions). In interpreting the tables derived from analysis of these records, readers, particularly students, should be advised to read the small print and to consult an important appendix (pp. 229–33). Occupational figures refer only to individuals identified in probate records over the entire period, not to the numbers actually engaged. Even these are not necessarily raw data. 6,312 textile workers are listed in tables 3.5, 3.6 and 4.1, for example, but the latter two include a footnote to the effect that a multiplier of five spinners for every weaver has been applied to the figures, a 'conservative' estimate based on a reference in Wadsworth and Mann. Other tables, such as 4.2, include no such multipliers and relate only to part of the region. No such 'corrections' are applied for other trades since 'these other sectors have no "known" body of workers (such as the weavers) to act as a basis for any multiplier'. Although this inflates textiles in relation to other trades, Stobart thinks it is warranted 'because it provides a truer picture of both regional and local economies than would otherwise be possible' and produces a picture which accords more closely with the proportion of the population recorded as being engaged in textiles in other sources such as parish registers. This may be so, but it could be argued that it sheds doubt about the validity of using probate records in this way to describe either occupational or business structures. Fifty-three records are also quoted in detail for illustrative purposes, although only 15 of them post-date 1730 reflecting the declining quality of the information contained in them during the 18th century. There are fewer references to other primary sources so that broader interpretations of the occupational

patterns and social networks revealed by the probate records tend to rely on published works and on models of regional development.

As may be evident, this is not a book to recommend to someone who is as yet unacquainted with the region's history, who is unwilling to engage with theory, or who is fazed by statistics. Rather it should be viewed as a serious contribution to a debate about internal regional economic development and the relationships between regions in the process of industrialisation. Above all it raises important issues about the nature of social and credit networks during the 18th century and the ways in which these may have provided the internal and external integration which facilitated economic growth. It also raises questions about whether and how different the North West, however defined, was in this respect from other regions, and what indeed propelled it, rather than other regions, into being 'the first industrial region'.

*Michael Winstanley*, Lancaster University