

Preface

'If we knocked at the doors of the master manufacturers, we presently saw a house full of lusty fellows, some at the dye vats, some dressing cloths, some in the loom...all hard at work and full employed upon the manufacture and all seeming to have sufficient business'

Daniel Defoe, 'A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain', 1726.

Malcolm Cooper

The United Kingdom's first tentative list of world heritage sites, prepared in 1985, included only one industrial site, that of Ironbridge Gorge. Ironbridge was justified as representing 'the birthplace' of the Industrial Revolution, where crucial technological innovation first took place. There was, however, a very real shift in emphasis in the UK Government's second list of tentative sites submitted in 1999. Of the 15 English sites seven were industrial. These included Saltaire, Derwent Valley Mills and the Cornish Tin Mines. As Sir Neil Cossons (then Director of the Science Museum in London and one of the advisors to the UK Government) remarked, industrial innovation was the UK's one major contribution to world history.

The inclusion of both Manchester/Salford and Liverpool on the 1999 list reflects the importance of the North West of England. Manchester/Salford is seen by many as the world's first industrial city, attracting social and political commentators from across Europe to witness the 'filthy sewer from which pure gold flows'. Work has commenced on the nomination document and management plan. Liverpool's nomination based on its role as the gateway to the world is already with UNESCO.

It would be naïve though to look to these two rapidly developing urban complexes alone and expect to understand the rapid development in industrial technology, let alone the far-reaching social, economic and political changes which were developing. Nor would it be wise to expect to gain a full understanding by concentrating on the 18th and 19th centuries. It is clear that a complex range of factors were at play, both geographically and chronologically.

This volume helps provide a context for the major changes which are seen in Liverpool and Manchester/Salford and *vice versa*. The papers allow changes and expansion in Manchester in the 17th and 18th centuries to be readily contrasted with the development of the manufacturing base on the Lancashire-Westmoreland border or with declining settlements in east Lancashire. The social structures underlying industrialisation in Tameside or Furness are described and it is possible to look at the nature of the physical remains in rural settings such as the Castleshaw and Piethorne valleys in the Pennines

or in urban settings such as Chester. Specific industrial processes such as textile finishing are also discussed.

The studies presented here, while wide-ranging, cannot be comprehensive. They do, however, emphasise the importance of not considering the major industrial urban settlements in isolation. The contemporary changes in smaller urban areas and the countryside are important both in their own right and for our wider understanding. Across the volume, the focus of attention shifts from specific technological developments to social changes; from individual buildings to entire landscapes. Each shift raises problems of approach, of methodology and philosophy. The introductory chapters help the reader to chart this emerging archaeological territory but the sheer diversity of subject matter, of emphasis and approach only becomes clear as the reader progresses. This helps emphasise the excitement of moving in previously uncharted waters. This volume is thus important not only in revealing the detail of particular places and their changing nature, but in giving an opportunity to see the gradual development of a discipline.

But the process cannot be too gradual. We must continue to develop and refine the methodologies which identify the significance of our industrial past to allow us to respond effectively to the changes which threaten its survival. Major urban areas such as Liverpool and Manchester are undergoing very rapid change, driven by regeneration strategies, planning policies which encourage brownfield development and a return to city-living. Recent studies by English Heritage and others in Birmingham, Sheffield and Liverpool have sought to develop methodologies to help characterise and avoid the unnecessary loss of important industrial urban landscapes but more of such studies are becoming urgent. While there are good examples of the adaptive reuse of cotton mills and textile warehouses in the region, very significant numbers continue to be lost. Many other types of historic buildings - engineering works in Manchester for example - are in danger of being lost entirely without study.

Pre-1919 terraced housing in Greater Manchester, East Lancashire, and Merseyside has been the focus of Government attention in its recent *Sustainable Communities*

initiatives. It is argued that the terraced housing is 'past its sell-by date'. Worryingly, the rhetoric supporting demolition is familiar from slum-clearance campaigns in Birmingham and Manchester in the late 19th century and in the inter-War period. We need to draw on arguments of sustainability and local distinctiveness to help justify preservation and adaptive reuse, but we need also to develop methodologies to identify which battles to fight.

The biggest challenge relates to the problem of 'image' and our industrial past. Wherever one travels in the North West, there seems to be a deeply held feeling that our industrial past is something to be embarrassed about; something which was not good at the time; that we must now move on. The roots of this view are complex and we cannot discuss this here. The massive 20th century industrial decline in Western Europe has left us with significant numbers of highly visible, but derelict, buildings and structures in both urban and rural areas.

For many of those responsible for either proposing change in our great industrial landscapes or for managing the process of change, the starting point is an assumption that these have no merit and their loss is to be welcomed. If the North West has one enduring characteristic, it is of technical ingenuity and innovation and this holds out hope for re-branding our industrial heritage in a forward looking way. We certainly must gain a far wider understanding of the importance of the region's industrial past and its survivals. But we must also promote these remains in a manner which will help others recognise their potential for helping the region's future and as a positive contributor to the region's image. The papers in this volume are an important part of this process.

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