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Volume 12, numéro 2, octobre 1983

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1018980ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1018980ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Bloomfield, G. T. (1983). Compte rendu de [Owen, David. *The Government of Victorian London 1855-1889: The Metropolitan Board of Works, the Vestries and the City Corporation*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982. Pp. xv, 466. Map, illustrations. \$25.00 (U.S.) / Fraser, Derek, ed. *A History of Modern Leeds*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980. Pp. xiv, 479. Tables, maps, illustrations. £17.50. / Gillett, Edward and MacMahon, Kenneth A. *A History of Hull*. Oxford: Oxford University Press for University of Hull, 1980. Pp. xi, 432. Maps, illustrations. \$53.95.] *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 12(2), 161–163. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1018980ar>

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history of a modern multi-national corporation which is far from satisfying in terms either of its breadth or its depth.

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Three very different English cities are examined in these books but each emphasizes the Victorian achievement of city building which was, in Asa Brigg's phrase, "... impressive in scale but limited in vision, creating new opportunities but also providing massive new problems."

The provision of essential urban sanitary services was one of the great administrative and engineering problems of the nineteenth century. The study of Victorian London by David Owen is a major contribution to our understanding of the complex political and financial processes involved in the creation of the clean modern city. When David Owen, late Gurney Professor of History at Harvard, died in 1968, the book was still in draft form. Four scholars completed the work — Roy MacLeod edited the whole volume, Francis Sheppard wrote three chapters and completed two others, David Reeder prepared the conclusion and bibliography and Donald Olsen contributed the introduction. The completed work is a triumph of editorial work and scholarly collaboration.

Government of Victorian London is, in a sense, a revisionist work, restoring the Metropolitan Board of Works (MBW) to a place of importance in the development of London during a critical period of growth. Historians of its successor body, the London County Council, have tended to downplay the significance of the MBW. The strong influence of the Fabians and the Labour Party in the county council affairs have emphasized the beginning of civic reform in 1889 rather than a longer and less dramatic process starting with the Board of Works.

The book is organized in two parts, the first covering the evolution of metropolitan government to 1889 while the second part discusses the operation of local government in the City and in four selected parishes. London government in the early 1850s was chaotic. The City of London, with a complex and anachronistic form of government untouched by the municipal reforms of 1835, administered a minute area of 677 acres. The population of nearly 2,400,000 in the rest of the metropolis was under the administration of three counties, 90 parish or local vestries, many autonomous paving trucks or commissions (some only responsible for a single street) as well as the Crown which was a major landlord and developer. As elsewhere, the impetus for change came from the insanitary conditions which gave rise to cholera epidemics in 1832, 1848 and 1854.

Many elements of the present form of central London were shaped by the MBW created in 1855. The Board's Engineer-in-Chief, Sir Joseph Bazalgette, designed the complex of trunk sewers and the steam pumping stations which removed the effluent from the urban area into the lower Thames. In the absence of other metropolitan authorities, the MBW took on additional functions, although its legal powers were limited as was its financial base. The Thames Embankment was constructed by the MBW as well as some well-known streets in the West End (Shaftesbury Avenue and Charing Cross Road). Suburban commons such as Blackheath and Clapham were preserved as open spaces, bridges and ferries were made toll-free, some public housing was developed and the quasi-autonomous London Fire Brigade was expanded. The Board was unable to reorganize other services like water, gas and public passenger transport which were eventually controlled by special-purpose public bodies.

The MBW was an important transitional body between the earlier chaos and the London County Council. It made several major improvements despite operating in an "atmosphere of impermanence" and being tainted with a mostly unjustified "odor of corruption." In addition to the major engineering works, the Board achieved progress with the introduction of a uniform valuation or assessment system throughout London, and was remarkably successful in raising money not only for its own activities but also for the Metropolitan Asylums Board and the London School Board.

Local administration in London was in the hands of parish or precinct vestries, which varied in size from St. Pancras with 200,000 inhabitants in 1861 to St. Martin's in the Fields which had about 23,000 residents. The franchise was equally variable and generally very restricted. The City of London was one of the biggest obstacles to municipal change in the metropolis. The City Corporation jealously guarded its monopoly rights over coal duties, portorage and markets and refused to extend its ancient area. While showing the limitations of the City, Owen also illustrates the Corporation's work in building new markets to serve the metropolitan area,

and its role in preserving open spaces far beyond its own municipal boundaries. The detailed studies of selected vestries illustrate the complexities of managing the details of local areas of London. A patchwork of services evolved, some vestries allowing tramway and electricity franchises, others not. St. Leonard, Shoreditch, for example, established a municipal technical school for its local furniture trade and built a proper town hall, library, baths and washhouses. Elsewhere, the provision of many local public services awaited local municipal reform in 1899, when the old vestries were reorganized as boroughs.

Government of Victorian London is an important book which gives a very clear understanding of the process, "in which Londoners, reluctantly but overwhelmingly became convinced that the centralizers and uniformitarians were right and the defenders of local autonomy were wrong . . ." The problems and conflicts described in Owen's work are relevant to large metropolitan areas far beyond London. The legacy of the MBW and the vestries is still apparent in the fabric of contemporary London.

Leeds was one of the great Victorian cities of England, a characteristic well emphasized in Fraser's book, which has on its dust jacket a fine colour reproduction of the magnificent Town Hall, painted at the time of its formal opening by Queen Victoria in 1858. For most later generations, Leeds Town Hall was, however, an ebony black building only restored to its original pink-yellow sandstone colour in the 1970s. Derek Fraser and seventeen contributors cover most facets of the city in three sections. The first, on the "early modern city," covers the manorial foundation, the borough charter of 1626 and the rise of the woollen industry.

The core of the book, sub-titled "the age of great cities," covers the period from 1780 to 1914. This was a period of tremendous growth in population, which rose from 53,000 in 1801 to 172,000 in 1851 and to 429,000 in 1901. Although this growth was substantial, it is useful to remember that St. Pancras in 1851 had a population almost equal to that of Leeds. The thirteen chapters in this part of the book survey many aspects of the growing and changing provincial metropolis. Chapters on demography and the built environment describe and discuss the sanitation problems, such as the back-to-back terrace houses which became a dominant feature of the working class social geography of the city. There are three substantial chapters on the development of the urban economic base — transport, industry and commerce. Other chapters cover a variety of topics including municipal government, politics and society, religion, education, middle class culture and the working class. A summary chapter provides a good overview of the Victorian city.

The final part of the book sketches developments since 1914, when much political and administrative effort went into attempting to clean up the mess left by the previous century of growth. The story ends in 1974 when Leeds lost

much of its earlier municipal autonomy in the sweeping changes brought by local government reorganization. By the late 1970s, the Victorian city was receding quickly; old firms and industries were disappearing, to be replaced in part by national distribution warehouses; motorways were replacing the old arterial roads; and old residential areas were being bulldozed to make way for new housing blocks. The decline of coal finally banished most of the smoke so that the Leeds atmosphere could no longer be described as the "vilest and the vile."

In the absence of a definitive modern civic history, Fraser's book is, as he explains in the preface, an attempt to bring the rich lode of research findings on the city to a broader audience. The final work succeeds in that aim. The book is well illustrated, has good clear maps and there are excellent bibliographical notes at the end of each chapter.

Hull is a curiously isolated English city with a popular image of docks, railway level crossings, vast hordes of cyclists and a municipal telephone system which was an early innovator in recording recipes and bedtime stories. Isolation on the north bank of the long, broad Humber estuary has been partially removed by the recent completion of a very costly suspension bridge. This book was begun by K.A. MacMahon and completed after his death in 1972 by Edward Gillett. The work is a straightforward narrative account of developments in Hull from 1299, when it received a borough charter from the Crown, to the late 1970s. Nearly six-tenths of the book is devoted to the period down to 1815 and only about one tenth to the decades since 1914.

The modern growth of Hull was closely linked to the improvement of rivers, the building of canals and a railway network which began with the opening of the line to Leeds in 1840. Port traffic based on coal exports and the import of timber, wool, grain and oil seeds provided much of the city's economic base. Until World War I, Hull was also one of the world's largest fishing ports. The growth of population from 30,000 in 1801 to 85,000 in 1951 and 240,000 in 1901 reflected the expansion of trade, shipping and some local processing industries. Twentieth-century growth has been modest although some port revival has occurred in the recent phase of British trade re-orientation towards Europe.

The preface describes the book as being, "intended to give a compact account of the history of the town both for the specialist in urban history and for the general reader . . ." While the local general reader may find several points of interest, the urban historians will be very disappointed in this study. The two maps of Hull are buried after the index and the text has little to say about the main elements of the urban fabric and structure. The Garden Village of Sir James Reckitt's starch works, Alfred Gelder's planning of the City Square and the rebuilding of the centre after the bombing of 1941 receive very little attention and the details cited are unhelpful to the outsider. One would like to know more about

the role of the municipal council, the economic effects of the dominance of the North Eastern Railway and the significance of the local business elite. There are some details mentioned in the text but a coherent structure is lacking. Bibliographic details are fairly sparse and are of little assistance to the specialist. The chapter on railways, for example, mentions only one book (published in 1879) thus ignoring a mass of specialized secondary literature relevant to the city's development.

A History of Hull is a disappointing book of marginal interest to urban historians. It is neither a mine of valuable local information nor a compact outline of how, why and where a city grew. The sense of Hull's isolation is not dispelled by reading this book.

These three studies illustrate the complexity of work in British and European urban history, in which one always has to consider the extra dimension of pre-modern development.

Urban origins and earlier phases of development require different kinds of specialization from later periods. While most of the details of the three cities are particular to the British experience, Owen's book on London government has an interest transcending the local environment. The conflict of attitudes between centralization and local autonomy remains an important contemporary issue relevant to Canadian cities. The difficulties of organizing and writing the general history of a city are exemplified by the book on Hull. Perhaps the range of topics to be covered is too great for an individual unless there is an existing body of material which can be synthesized. Assessing the city in its broader region raises even more complexities which require specialized and comparative expertise.

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