

INDUSTRY AND INNOVATION

Selected Essays

W. H. Chaloner

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Volume 13

INDUSTRY AND INNOVATION



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W. H. Chaloner

Edited by
D. A. FARNIE AND W. O. HENDERSON

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To John, Timothy and David



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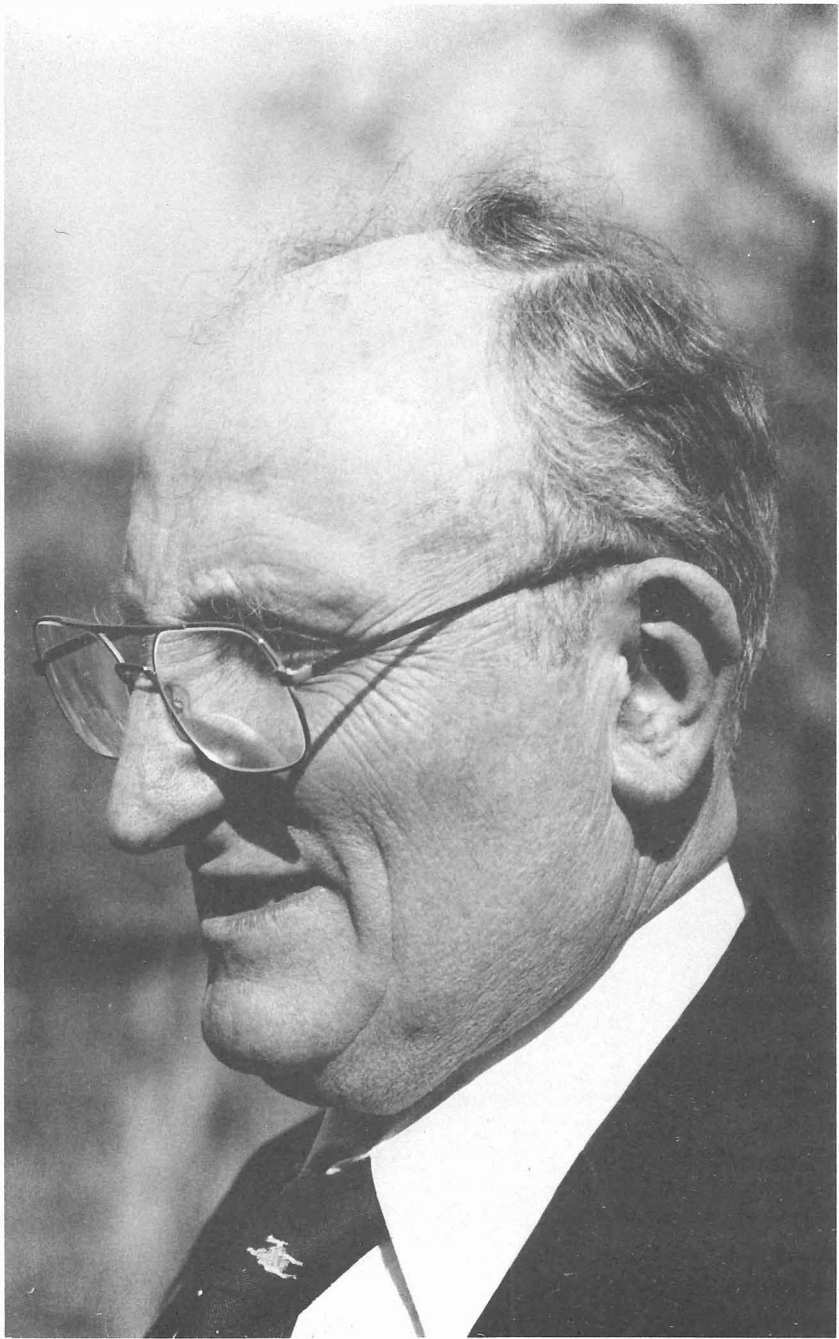
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W.H. Chaloner on Economic History

A distressing cleavage has arisen of recent years in the attitude of economic historians towards their subject. The cleavage is between those whom we may label the traditional economic historians, who regard economic history as a branch of historical studies, and those (often economists sporting the cloak of economic history for the occasion) who seem to consider economic history as a collection of impersonal, even inhuman, 'trends' or 'forces', plus a body of historical statistics of varying trustworthiness. From these, by selective extraction, the popular economic theories of the day may be illustrated and tested. This cleavage is as yet less pronounced in Great Britain and France than in the United States of America, where, owing to the humble position occupied by economic history in university curricula, the teachers of the subject often appear to their British counterparts to be economists and sociologists who have either strayed from their true vocation, or have been directed, more or less gently, away from it, rather than historians.

The author of the present collection of essays belongs to those who consider economic history as a branch of what the French call the historical sciences, and believes that it is impossible to treat usefully of the rise, decline and metamorphosis of industries and economies without some consideration of the part played by the efforts of individual men and women in these processes.

W.H. Chaloner, *People and Industries*
(Frank Cass, 1963), pp.6-7



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INTRODUCTION



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EDITORS' PREFACE

This volume commemorates one of the most notable historians of his age. The editors have brought together a selection of his writings in order to make them more widely available. Mrs Chaloner has consented to the publication of this volume and has given the editors every assistance. In particular she has made available the manuscript of the lecture on 'Working-Class History and Middle-Class Historians'.

The task of selecting the most appropriate essays presented its own challenge as they were so many and so varied. Since Chaloner's writings were distinguished by their range and their number it was difficult for even two editors to prepare a proper selection. At this point the editors were greatly helped by the advice of three of Chaloner's most distinguished pupils and associates – Professors Barker, Harris and Musson. They carefully considered our initial selection and improved it in various ways. They also helped to ensure the most effective grouping of the essays. Professor Harris gave invaluable aid in the translation of one essay from the original French. The editors are grateful to these scholars for their unstinting cooperation which has helped to make this volume better than it would otherwise have been.

There can be no doubt as to the substantial amount of Chaloner's researches. Between 1938 and 1985 he published the 136 items (including four books) listed in the bibliography at the end of this volume. The publication of his doctoral thesis was delayed by his wartime service in the Ministry of Information and by a heavy load of teaching after the war. It was published in 1950 by the University of Manchester Press. This was followed by *People and Industries* (Frank Cass, 1963), a collection of 17 articles which (with one exception) had already appeared in print and had reached a much wider readership than his monograph on Crewe. In addition Chaloner wrote two slim volumes of business history – *Vulcan 1859–1959* (1959) and *National Boiler 1864–1964* (1964) – which were published privately. Chaloner came to prefer the article to the book as the most appropriate vehicle of publication. His articles were generally published in one of two forms – either in the transactions of learned societies (such as the Newcomen Society and the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society) or in the 1950s in the

Manchester Guardian and *History Today*. It is articles from the first group which have been chosen for inclusion in this volume, partly because many articles in the second group had already been reprinted in 1963. The editors thank the societies which have permitted articles from their proceedings to be reprinted.

Certain types of articles have been excluded such as essays written jointly by Chaloner and Henderson, unpublished manuscripts (with one exception) and bibliographical articles and prefaces whose contents may have dated more than that of other articles. The editors have however printed a brief review of Chaloner's bibliographical prefaces by Mr Harry Horton.

In making their final selection of 18 of his best and most typical essays they have sought to illustrate those themes which interested Chaloner most. During the course of a long and productive career his interests expanded to include the industrial revolution with particular reference to iron and steel, engineering and transport; the growth of Manchester as the centre of a great industrial and commercial region; changes in food production and in the Englishman's diet. Above all Chaloner was interested in people both as individuals – as inventors, entrepreneurs or workers – and as members of groups such as trade unions, social clubs, and chambers of commerce.

Throughout his career Chaloner was deeply concerned with the social consequences of the industrial revolution for the workers. This interest impelled him to examine changes in the workers' standard of living. He studied the workers' diet, health, housing, education and wages. He ranged himself with the 'optimists' (led by Clapham and Ashton) who held that the standard of living of the workers had shown a marked rise in the nineteenth century and he was highly critical of the 'pessimists' (such as the Hammonds) who argued that the industrial revolution had been an unmitigated disaster for the workers.

Chaloner rarely expressed in print his own views on economic history, though his book reviews are a rich mine of penetrating judgments. A brief extract from the introduction to *People and Industries* has been used as an epigraph because it embodies sentiments to be found nowhere else. The editors trust that the following essays include the most typical as well as the most important of Chaloner's writings. They believe that the articles illuminate a distinctive and independent-minded personality as well as a large tract of history.

W. H. Chaloner: Memorial Address

Rev. Benjamin Drewery¹

William Henry Chaloner was born at Crewe in 1914. His family – not only Welsh, but Welsh-speaking – had come to Crewe, where his grandfather, and later his father, found work on the railway. He was one of four brothers, of whom the survivor, Gordon, is present with us today.

The father of Bill, as we must call him, was a Congregationalist and his mother a Baptist – a mixed marriage indeed, but all within the great flowering of the Nonconformist Conscience. In 1947, Bill produced a 22-page history of Crewe Congregational Church at its Centenary, and he never lost interest in the churches or (more especially) in churchmen. It is entirely fitting that his funeral service should be in a church built on land given in 1855 by John Platt, of Platt Bros., Oldham, then the greatest textile engineers in the world.

Bill's family life as a boy was close and affectionate. Money would not be plentiful, and his mother actually made him the suit of clothes he wore when he first went to university. This was preceded by eight years at Crewe Grammar School, from 1925. The whole of the rest of his life, except for the war, was given to Manchester University: when he retired in 1981, only one man – a porter – out of the whole academic and administrative staff, had served the University longer than he. On that very day I said to the Registrar² in the Staff Coffee Room – 'It's Bill's last day. The University will never be the same again.' 'Have no fear', said the Registrar, 'he'll be back tomorrow' – and he was!

His First Class Honours in history, followed by an M.A. in 1937 and a Ph.D. in 1939, were inevitable. His Ph.D. thesis on the history of Crewe from 1780 was expanded into a book published in 1950, which pioneered the study of urban history from an economic and social perspective. He had been brought up in the great traditions of Unwin, Ashton and Redford, and his tutors had included Professors Jacob and Namier and the young A.J.P. Taylor. Bill once told me with regard to the said A.J.P. Taylor, that Professor Jacob once sent for him and said – 'Taylor, there's a Senior Lectureship in History

going at Trinity College, Dublin. I am prepared to recommend you for it. Are you interested?' And Taylor drew himself up and replied: 'No, Professor. Until Oxford is ready, Manchester will suffice!'

Bill's academic career was interrupted by the war, in which he served as Chief Photographic Censor within the Ministry of Information in London. Typical of him was the delight with which he met the original of Sir John Betjeman's 'A Subaltern's Love Song' – named by the poet as Miss Joan Hunter Dunne.

Miss J. Hunter Dunne, Miss J. Hunter Dunne,
Tarnished and burnished by Aldershot sun,
What strenuous singles we played after tea,
We in the tournament – you against me!

In 1945 he returned to Manchester University as Assistant Lecturer in History, rising through all the grades to a Professorship in 1976. And it is here that the humble preacher stands helpless before his mass of material. Bill was Director and Chairman of the Higher Degrees Committee in the Faculties of Arts, Music and Theology, where he was of inestimable value to me when I brought him Ecclesiastical History students aspiring to a Doctorate. How he dealt with the musical aspirants I never knew, because his knowledge of that art was limited to the 'Pirates of Penzance' – but there were no complaints! Within the University his greatest contributions, alongside his specialist productions, were to the life of Dalton Hall, to the development of the Library (where he and Dr. Fred Ratcliffe³ were both zealous searchers for books), to the University Press, to the many outside bodies on which he represented the University, such as the Oldham Area Health Authority and the North Western Museum of Science and Industry, to the publications of the Chetham Society – and on a wider level to the Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, the Economic History Society, and the Agricultural History Society, on whose Councils he served for many years. Here in Oldham, which almost stole the place of Crewe in his affections, he long served as a governor of the Hulme Grammar Schools: the music master of the boys' school, Stanley Baty linked to Bill by marriage, is here on the organ today.

Nor may one omit his overseas travels, from 1949 to the end. Bill became a regular envoy to the International Economic History congresses; he lectured at the Sorbonne, and addressed a world congress at Salt Lake City on 'Three Centuries of Emigration from the British Isles'; he was external examiner to the University of

Khartoum, visiting Kenya and the Sudan several times. How he contrived to write a single book during this ocean of activity is a deep mystery: but the list of his publications is so formidable that I can only mention one or two of them – and here, as in so much else, I am wholly indebted to his colleague and our great friend Dr Douglas Farnie, who is also with us today.

In 1957 he demolished the legend of the ‘hungry forties’ and contributed to the Festschrift for Dr. Henderson in 1975 a pioneer survey of ‘the currency problems of the British Empire 1814–1914’, which reflected an interest in numismatology for which he became locally an oracle. In 1958 he and Henderson submitted Engels’ *The Condition of the Working Class in England* to a severe scrutiny, undermining its claims to canonicity as a sacred text of Socialism, and being later flattered by a hostile Russian review of one of his essays on British miners. Dr. Farnie rates as his most notable unpublished article the famous lecture on ‘Working-Class History and Middle-Class Historians: the Webbs, the Hammonds and the Coles’. His essay on ‘The Skilled Artisans during the Industrial Revolution 1750–1850’ anticipated much of the later interest in artisan culture. In *People and Industries* (1963) he created a revisionist portrait of what has often been thought to have been the ‘unacceptable face of capitalism’ during the industrial revolution. Undergraduates revered his ‘Trends in Fish Consumption’ (1966) which linked the Lancashire cotton industry and the town of Oldham to the history of fish and chips. His *People and Industries* (1963) was translated into Japanese.

What shall I say more? His knowledge and love of books placed him on the same celestial level as that of the legendary Arthur S. Peake,⁴ the virtual founder of the Faculty of Theology at Manchester, of which Bill was always a great friend. In 1976 he published with R.C. Richardson a bibliography of British economic and social history, which reached 5,800 entries by its second edition in 1984. He was Chairman of the Portico Library and the Manchester Bibliographical Society. ‘His interests’, says Dr. Farnie, ‘ranged from agriculture to iron, from skilled artisans to the Cheshire gentry, from biography to genealogy, from food and drink to education’:⁵ as a son of Crewe he was an expert on transport. More than any other man, he put economic history on the map for his contemporaries, bringing it before a wider public through the Workers’ Educational Association and his Extra-Mural Lectures, himself building up a Himalayan range of knowledge that was the awe of his colleagues and students alike. Perhaps the unsolved problem of Professor Chaloner’s intellectual development was what I might call a political

mystery. He was brought up as a stout liberal Nonconformist in an area where William Gladstone was not merely a statesman but a demigod, whose brooding presence would regularly crystallise in nearby Hawarden. In later life Bill loved to pose as the ‘hammer of the left’, to a degree which would have brought the great Liberal patriarch bounding from his chair. Whence, why and how? Here is a wonderful theme for the Ph.D. thesis of a future W.H.C. at Manchester!

But when all this is said and done, one has left out the most vital element in the personality of our honoured friend – his unfathomable generosity and friendliness, his salacious wit, his humanity, his eternal ‘sense of fun’. I have been told that when his three sons were boys he would read them at night stories of Noddy and Rupert, with textual emendations supplied by his own imagination and innocently mistaken by his audience for the original text. By the express permission of his family, I am authorised to give you two anecdotes of him, which reveal the real Bill as truly as the forbidding tally of his publications.

A year ago there was a most unfortunate burglary at Bill’s house. While the family was sitting at Sunday lunch, the burglars stole some silver plate from another room. Of course the police arrived and valuable data such as fingerprints were taken. But then came the moment when the Inspector opened Bill’s study door, took one look inside, and said – ‘By Jove, they’ve made a mess here!’ – and the point was that they’d never been in it!

In January 1975, two carloads of us went from Manchester University to Cambridge for a dinner in Honour of Prof. Gordon Rupp’s 65th birthday *Festschrift* presentation. (I must add that, by a sombre coincidence, I am speaking on Saturday at Wesley’s Chapel, City Road, London, in a memorial service to the same Gordon Rupp who died in December.) He had earlier been for ten years Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Manchester, and a dear and honoured colleague of Bill himself. I myself went with the convoy but could not return with them, so I gave them directions for coming home via Melton Mowbray, where they could buy pork pies for their wives. I said – ‘Park at the station, walk through the town centre, and the shop is next door to the Ladbroke’s betting shop corner.’ So we picture some seven or eight eminent Manchester men advancing in single file up the narrow pavement, led by the saintly Rev. Dr. Gordon Wakefield⁶, editor of the standard *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* and an old school friend of Bill’s from Crewe days. Suddenly a voice rang out from half-way down the file to a passer-by: ‘Can you tell us the way to Ladbroke’s betting shop?’ It was, of

course, Bill, and they say the face of the Rev. Dr. Wakefield was a beautiful study!

Even Bill could not go on for ever. A serious operation on March 2nd led to three months' illness of growing severity which was never truly diagnosed until two days before the end. We do not dwell on those weeks of increasing helplessness, or on the crippling suspense of his family as they tried to minister to him. He died on May 25th, and for many of us a light has gone out which none can ever rekindle.

We think above all of his wife Joan, married in 1949, in many ways the unseen power-house behind the multifarious range of her husband's achievements. She has been reminded of the words used by Winston Churchill when A.J. Balfour was dying: 'the tragedy which robs the world of all the wisdom and treasure gathered in a great man's life and experience, and hands the lamp to some impetuous and untutored stripling, or lets it fall into fragments upon the ground.' Her three sons – John, Timothy and David – and the four grandchildren, deserve our proud and sorrowful affection. Myriads of students and friends will hardly believe that Bill has gone: nor will his old colleagues at the University. For what we shall miss most of all will be his presence at the coffee-table after lunch, when among half-a-dozen close friends he would truly be the life and soul of the party – so full of humour and understanding, so unfailingly generous and kind. For as the Registrar said to me yesterday – we did not merely look on him with the respect and admiration that his gifts as a scholar and administrator evoked, but with something more: with very deep affection. The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God: no torment can touch him now.

NOTES

1. The text reprinted here by kind permission of the author is that of the memorial address delivered by the Rev. B. Drewery at Professor Chaloner's funeral service held in the Church of St. Thomas, Werneth, Oldham on 4 June 1987. The lesson was taken from Proverbs 8.vv.1–21.
2. Mr K.E. Kitchen, University Registrar since 1980.
3. Dr F.W. Ratcliffe, University Librarian (1965–80) and Librarian to the University of Cambridge since 1980.
4. A.S. Peake (1865–1929), the first Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis in the University of Manchester and editor of a standard *Commentary on the Bible* (1919).
5. The *Daily Telegraph*, 2 June 1987.
6. G.S. Wakefield, author of *Puritan Devotion: its Place in the Development of Christian Piety* (1957), *The Life of the Spirit in the World of Today* (1970) and *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (1983).

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON W.H. CHALONER'S CAREER

Who's Who in Greater Manchester, 1985-86, Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, 1985, 63.

The Daily Telegraph, 2 June 1987

The Times, 2 June 1987

The Guardian, 3 and 6 June 1987

The Independent, 9 June 1987.

I.m. W.H. Chaloner ob. 25.v.1987

Professor Chaloner linked the history
Of fish and chips to the cotton industry,
My native town of Oldham especially.

– This in the legendary final section
Of the work entitled *Trends in Fish Consumption*,
Reached by students with sudden stupefaction.

– Moreover, lived and died in that damp place,
Among green moors and roseate factories;
By then the deafening spindles more or less

Mere things historical, and even (perhaps
According to his thesis) fish and chips,
Among vile dens of hamburgers and kebabs.

Roy Fuller

The Spectator, Vol. 260, no. 8346, 25 June 1988, p.41.

Memoir of a Partnership

W.O. Henderson

In 1949 Redford asked Chaloner and myself to translate Werner Schlote's *British Overseas Trade*. At that time neither of us could have foreseen that this was to be the beginning of a partnership that was to last for over a quarter of a century. Altogether we translated five German books and an article by Drescher on agricultural production in England. We also wrote two introductions and 7 joint articles. Our last article, written in 1975, was on Marx and racialism. But during our long partnership we were also pursuing our own independent researches.

Academic collaboration may run into difficulties if each partner thinks that the other is not pulling his weight. We never experienced any such difficulty as we soon worked out a satisfactory division of labour. When we translated a book I would dictate the first draft and Chaloner would suggest amendments paragraph by paragraph. The final version was, I am sure, always a distinct improvement on the first draft. When it came to the footnotes and the bibliography Chaloner was in his element. He had a quite exceptional knowledge of the printed and manuscript sources of British economic and social history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. (His only rival in that respect was my former supervisor H.L. Beales.) Chaloner supplied a bibliography to all our translations. The 'Note on recent Published Work' added to Schlote's book set a precedent that was maintained in later translations.

One of Chaloner's most important contributions to the collaboration was his uncanny ability to track down documents relevant to our enquiries. For example, when we were engaged in the 1950s on research on Friedrich Engels' life in Manchester it was Chaloner who found – in a solicitor's office – four contracts between Engels and Godfrey Ermen. Those of 25 September 1862 and 30 June 1864 throw light on Engels' financial position as a junior partner in the cotton firm of Ermen & Engels while an examination of two agreements of 1869 shows that Engels secured a handsome competence on which to retire to London. Again it was Chaloner who discovered the existence in private hands of a complete set of the *Volunteer*

Journal for Lancashire – a find which enabled us to reprint a selection of Engels' writings on military affairs (*Engels as Military Critic*, 1959).

When we had translated Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1958) and reprinted his articles on the volunteers (1959) I hoped that we might go on to write a new biography of Engels. Chaloner however said that he had had enough of Engels and that he had other research projects in view. But when I carried on with my life of Engels Chaloner was always ready with helpful advice and suggestions concerning possible new lines of research.

Chaloner had six other collaborators besides myself. He collaborated with Musson to produce the well-illustrated book on *Industry and Technology* (1963) – with Barrie Ratcliffe to translate and edit Gustave d'Eichthal's journal of his visit to England in 1828 – and with R.C. Richardson in compiling a bibliographical guide to British economic and social history.

W.H. Chaloner's Bibliographical Introductions

Harry Horton

The range of W.H. Chaloner's published work – books, articles, bibliographies, reviews – produced over almost a half-century of study and teaching – compels our admiration. In respect of one particular group of writings, Negley Harte – in his obituary notice of Chaloner in *The Independent*, 9 June 1987 – remarked with perspicacity that 'much of his work, unassumingly hidden, lies in his bibliographical introductions to many seminal works reprinted by Frank Cass and the Manchester University Press'. It is with these 'introductions', growing naturally, as it were, out of Chaloner's life-long love of books, that this short contribution is largely concerned.

I was never a formal pupil of Chaloner, beyond membership of his essay class in 1945 when he returned to the Manchester University History Department after the war. But his coming to live in Oldham after marriage, and my joining the staff at Manchester Central Library in 1952, afforded contact with him occasionally on journeys, by rail and bus, to and from the city, quite apart from serving him in the course of duty at the Reference Library counter. I write, 'never a formal pupil' – but I must be only one of many who over the years learned from even casual conversation with him.

A feature of these conversations, if they turned to historical themes, would be the range of literature referred to in passing. He had perhaps just received a new book for review; or had read of a new study in progress (often producing the appropriate cutting from that capacious brief-case); or he advised you that the latest issue of a particular journal contained a valuable correction or expansion of some subject. Casual discussion, as much as the essay class, the lecture, or the published work was so well-informed; and it is little to be wondered at that the 'bibliographical introductions' should be singled out by Negley Harte as especially noteworthy.

An examination of the subjects of the 'seminal works' to which, when reprinted, Chaloner supplied an introduction provides an indication and a confirmation of the range of topics which remained