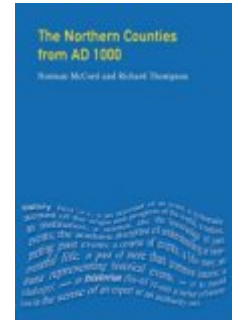


Norman McCord, Richard Thompson. *The Northern Counties From A.D. 1000.*

Harlow and New York: Longman, 1998. xix + 460 pp. £52 (cloth), ISBN 0-582-49333-1; £25, paper, ISBN 978-0-582-49334-6.



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This book is part of the multi-volumed "Regional History of England" series. Nick Higham's *The Northern Counties to 1000 AD* was published in 1986. Now the survey of the northeast and northwest of England is continued with Norman McCord and Richard Thompson's *The Northern Counties From 1000 AD*. Readers who are unacquainted with the history of the pre-1974 counties of Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland will find this a useful source of fundamental information. However, anyone wanting more than basic detail will have to look to more specialised publications. To be fair, it was a tall order to relate the history of the last millennium within a single-volume history, but McCord and Thompson give superficial coverage of events to which other historians would devote more space. The one event that many people would associate with the twentieth-century North, namely the "Jarrow Crusade", receives no mention at all. Indeed, he refers instead to mining families cheating the poor relief system in the 1920s (p. 370).

The structure of this book denotes the relative scarcity of published material available for earlier

periods as well as the modern history specialism of the authors. For example, there are only six out of twenty-one chapters for the period 1000-1603 and half the book is devoted to the period after 1750. However, the confused early medieval period is well mapped out here, if briefly. One question that could have been addressed more thoroughly was where did the North of England end and Scotland begin during the last millennium? The medieval frontier "floated" amidst Borderers who had more in common with each other than their evolving nation states. It is regrettable that Cynthia Neville's *Violence, Custom and Law* [1] came out after this book went to press as this has innovative views about the later medieval frontier. The authors, nonetheless, should have incorporated the arguments concerning the north's identity in John Appleby and Paul Dalton's 1997 volume on northern England.[2] It is also wrong to assume that because the old Anglo-Scottish aristocracy declined after 1296, that Anglo-Scottish co-operation ceased (pp. 67-68). Many people of lesser rank would continue to treat the frontier as being invisible as far as socialising and trading were concerned. Invading armies from either

England or Scotland were an inconvenience to the Borderers during the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, as they appear to have been Borderers first and Scots or English second. There was not even a geographically fixed Anglo-Scottish border until modern times, as there were still small pockets of debateable land in eighteenth-century Northumberland.

Chapter four on "The Tudor North" sadly reflects that the authors are post-1800 specialists, as it is all too brief and chronologically confused. For instance, events of the later sixteenth-century come before a discussion of the Battle of Flodden (1513). "The magnificent fortifications of Berwick" (p. 92) were begun in the reign of Henry VIII, not Mary I. Bishop Pilkington of Durham did not successfully impose his "authority upon the diocese" (of Durham) by 1568. The more rural areas of this large diocese were not even visited until 1577[^]the era of Bishop Barnes. The coverage of the Northern Rising is better and the authors correctly conclude that this "effectively completed the erosion of the power of those northern dynasties which had risen in the aftermath of Edward I's intervention in Scotland." (p. 98) Nothing remained the same for very long in northern England.

The church prior to 1603 is dealt with in chapter five. Here the authors contrast the wealth and influence of Durham with the poorer diocese of Carlisle. However, the church in the North would continue to suffer from pluralism, absenteeism and poor endowment until modern times. Chapter six on Northern Society and Economy is a rapid survey with more misleading statements. For example the new Lord Lieutenants in the sixteenth-century North (p. 115) were restricted to County Durham as Northumberland, Northamptonshire and Islandshire and Cumberland were part of the Border administration that had its own officers. Only after the Union of the Crowns in 1603, did the administration of these areas change. It was the diminution of the powers of the Palatinate of

Durham from 1535 that had a greater impact upon County Durham's criminal justice. It is good to see a mention that the problems of the Northern economy "were not solely due to border warfare" (p. 117) as crop failure, famine, plague and animal disease all played their part. It would have been useful, though, to note the work of Richard Hoyle when discussing Cumbrian tenure, for much of the citation here is dated. Overall the economy of the north-west and north-east parallels the example of contrasting church wealth. Little is said about society here and the paucity of information continues into the next chapter on the seventeenth century, as the Bishop's Wars of 1639-40 get one paragraph and the Civil Wars receive only seven pages in total.

Poor relief and charity are discussed in several chapters of this book, which rather disjoins the topic but keeps things in strict chronological order. One wonders if a political point is being pressed in the constant references to inept poor law officials and how private philanthropy was always important in conjunction with conventional poor relief. We are reminded that shipbuilding and engineering wealth built the Royal Victoria Infirmary in late-nineteenth century Newcastle (p. 323). The north east's reputation for progressive agriculture by the mid-eighteenth century helped feed the expanding population and economy of the nineteenth. The growth of industry such as coal mining in the North is well documented from chapter eleven onwards, though again some of this could have been amalgamated to avoid repeating similar topics in later chapters. The north west's industries are not forgotten as Cumberland and Westmorland were not just a lakeland area. Shipbuilding was significant as were their textile looms that switched from wool to cotton production. Not everything was booming all the time, however, as the American Civil War dealt a severe blow to the textile industry in the north west (p. 277) and imports of cheap Belgian glass hit Sunderland's glass manufacture in 1875. Neither in-

dustry really recovered the pre-eminence they had before this.

In 1851 Northumbrian agriculture "employed twice as many as mining, but by 1900 mining outstripped farming". (p. 258) Between 1850 and 1920 the northern population also doubled, putting a strain on already overcrowded urban housing (p. 350). Coal was arguably a more dangerous industry with recurrent disasters that claimed over one hundred lives. The iron and steel industries again differed from the north west to the north east. Cumbria had the best iron ore, but it was difficult to extract and only Barrow-in-Furness really took off as an industrial town. Nothing in the north west could compare with the rise of Newcastle-upon-Tyne where greater industrial diversity in the 1800s helped Tyneside survive economic downturns that Cumbria's industries could not. The development of tourism in the Lakes was of more significance in the twentieth century when previously despised "lower-class excursionists" coming by rail were finally encouraged to visit. The railways undoubtedly benefited the economy of the entire North, but they particularly helped the development of previously neglected towns like Carlisle. (p. 287) Those interested in the particular relationship between the north east and the rise of the railways will find them in the short chapter ten on communications and also in chapter sixteen.

Several major themes are given inadequate treatment, a problem exacerbated by the authors' decision to scatter them across their chapters rather than give them the sharp focus they deserve. For example there is little discussion of the North's politics until page 244, though there were parliamentary representatives in medieval and early modern times. Religion in the nineteenth century gets nearly four pages, but fails to do more than survey belief (pp. 326-29). Catholicism revived by the arrival of Irish immigrants gets a mere six lines, though the authors could not have seen Donald MacRaild's work on the Irish in Cum-

bria that was published at the same time as this book. [3] Women and children are mentioned, but they receive only four pages of specific text. This rather derisory treatment of half of the population contrasts with one of the striking statistics concerning twentieth-century Tyneside where women made up about 20 percent of the workforce in the 1920s and about 45 percent in the 1980s. Both world wars witnessed high levels of female employment, yet these global conflicts receive little general coverage here. The lack of a mention of the Jarrow crusade has already been noted, but the severe impact of the depression years on northern industry is discussed. Incidentally in 1934 Jarrow had 56.8 percent unemployment against a national average of 16.1 percent, whereas Maryport on the West coast had 57.5 percent (p. 374). Nevertheless statistical analysis such as this would have been better placed within a table, rather than in the text.

A final observation on this book is the lack of recent material. Indeed the last chapter "After the Second World War" has little within it to update the reader about the great economic shifts in the North of England that occurred during and as a result of the Thatcher years. New industries are there, but not the massacre of the mining and shipbuilding industries that made thousands redundant and transformed the landscape of the north east. Where too is a mention of the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation that gave a renaissance to these once mighty industrial riverbanks during the early 1990s? Overall this rather expensive book disappoints the historian, but could be of use to a general reader wanting to dip into its pages for information.

Notes

[1]. C. Neville, *Violence, Custom and Law. The Anglo-Scottish Border Lands in the Later Middle Ages* (Edinburgh, 1998).

[2] J. C. Appleby and P. Dalton, *Government, Religion and Society in Northern England 1100-1700* (Stroud, 1997).

[3] D. MacRaid, *Culture, Conflict and Migration: the Irish in Victorian Cumbria* (Liverpool, 1998).

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