
LPSS Spring conference report, 2012

Regional development in industrialising Britain, c.1670–1860

Lecture

'The social geography of philanthropy in England and Wales or the cultural roots of industrialisation?' Nigel Goose (University of Hertfordshire and LPS editor).

Nigel Goose's keynote lecture offered a detailed analysis of the Digests of Endowed Charities, 1861–75, produced by the Charity Commissioners. These are far more systematic and comprehensive than the better-known Brougham Commission reports, and give breakdowns of the amount of endowed charity dedicated to different uses. Hence it is possible to determine, for every locality in England and Wales (usually the parish or township, sometimes a chapelry, hamlet or other locale), the total gross income of all endowed charities, the former income as determined by the Brougham Commission, and the amount devoted to each of the following uses: education; apprenticeship and advancement; endowments of clergy, lecturers and for sermons; church purposes; maintenance of dissenting places of worship and their ministers; education of dissenters; public uses; support of almshouses, their inmates and pensioners; distribution of articles in kind; distribution of money; and general uses of the poor. Occasionally the income of medical charities is listed too. Even though by the early Victorian period endowed charity may have been giving way to 'associational' or 'subscription' charity, the sums involved remained significant, and also reflect the historical development of charitable giving over several centuries.

Using this data Nigel provided a comprehensive county-by-county analysis of endowed charity in England and Wales, and highlighted the enormous variation between them. More importantly, he argued, taken in conjunction with recent work on regional patterns of poor relief, these data open up the possibility that there may have been important cultural differences between various parts of the country—notably between the north and north-west and the south and south-east—in terms of attitudes towards social welfare, dependency and self-reliance. From the welfare point of view it is possible to suggest that the more highly developed culture of independence and self-reliance that is evident in many of the counties that were at the heart of industrialisation was in some way implicated in that very process, while the greater investment in human capital worked towards the same end. While it may be true that the existence of an extensive and flexible welfare safety net facilitated early industrialisation (as Peter Solar has

argued), it is possible that the more striking, later advances that had a more distinctive regional incidence grew out of a welfare system that betrayed very different priorities indeed.

Panel One: Regional industrialisation

'Spinning the web: networks of production in the Lancashire textile industries during the 18th century', Jon Stobart (University of Northampton).

'A micro-historical perspective on the Cornish metal mining region of the mid 19th century', Bernard Deacon (University of Exeter).

'More than broken stones: road improvement in industrialising regions', Geoff Timmins (University of Central Lancashire).

Unfortunately the designated note-taker for this session has gone to ground, and from this distance it is not possible to recall full details of these papers. So, in brief, Jon Stobart discussed specialisation and inter-dependence in regional production and the integrative effect of putting-out systems, in the context of the Lancashire textile industries in the 18th century. Bernard Deacon emphasised the importance of a micro-historical approach, even to a region that superficially might appear homogenous. Geoff Timmins argued that while much has been made of the importance of canals and railways in analysing regional industrialisation, rather less has been said about roads, and what has been said still tends to centre on the broken-stone constructional techniques developed by McAdam and Telford. What is needed, he suggested, is more consideration of the rise—and triumph—of the alternative road-building technology based on paving, as well as the great attention contemporary road builders gave to gradient easing and route widening. His talk provided just such a perspective in relation to inter-town routes in Lancashire, and he closed with a plea for similar attention to other regions.

Panel Two: Migration

'Locality, region or nation? Exploring the links between migration and place in industrialising Britain, c. 1750–1860', Colin Pooley (University of Lancaster and LPSS Chairman).

In this paper Colin Pooley emphasised the importance and difficulty in examining the relationships between landscapes, townspeople and settlement, and how association with any of these could be created or even destroyed as a result of migration. The paper then considered important aspects which help or assist to create identity, looking at how identity could be created through choice, family ties and even through football clubs and associations. Colin raised the issue of personal identity ('who do you think you are?') emphasising how identity can be inherited, imposed, chosen and fixed, but

is also changeable, multiple and contingent. The creation of identity can be seen in many ways as a 'homogenising process' linking this to industrialisation and the creation of 'national identity' in the nineteenth-century. Did the industrial revolution make England less regionally diverse? Migration in eighteenth-century England was characterised by the 'pull' of people to London from the countryside and smaller towns and cities. In the nineteenth-century it was characterised by the Irish. The later nineteenth-century census data demonstrate the huge movement of Irish migrant populations which were spread all over the country by 1871. In the closing part of his paper Colin returned to the issue of migration and regional identity emphasising that the notion of 'home' was a very big motive why people chose to move to and from different localities and that it was 'people' rather than 'place' that influenced why individuals decided to relocate themselves. He also laid emphasis on the point that while migrants may move from one place to another they still leave 'their mark' on the place they have left. As a final theme, he raised made an important point about mobile communications (such as Facebook and Twitter) and their impact upon 21st century populations and migration issues.

*'The business of migration: selling emigration to Scottish labourers, 1800–1850',
Melodee Beals (University of Warwick).*

The next paper in this panel was given by Melodee Beals of the University of Warwick. Melodee gave a local/micro-historical account of emigration among Scottish labourers in the first half of the nineteenth-century. Although her research incorporated quantitative data her paper was refreshingly qualitative. She began by discussing the various source materials involved in the project with specific emphasis on advertisements in Scottish newspapers. During the Napoleonic wars adverts for employment in the colonies featured less frequently in the press than they had done before. By the 1820s the number of adverts was increasing as more and more Scottish labourers began to migrate to places such as America and Canada. As labour supplies began to lag in Scotland working men were required to stay within the boundaries of the British Empire, and only farmers were permitted to migrate elsewhere. One very rare find was the appearance of specific advertisements for mechanics in the Scottish press. There was also an interesting point raised that the Scottish newspapers made false claims in adverts, which emphasised that there was a 'land of opportunity' at home in order to try to cap the number of Scottish labourers leaving the country or desiring to go elsewhere. In some parts of southern Scotland workers even used the threat of migration (on mass) to get better wages and working conditions. Melodee was able to demonstrate that by carefully examining advertisements in both a qualitative as well as quantitative light one can see during the first half of the nineteenth-century the emergence of a 'selling agency' in the Scottish press, and that his 'agency' was clearly involved in the 'business of migration'.

Panel Three: Society

'Children, work and the region: rethinking child labour during the industrial revolution', Emma Griffin (University of East Anglia).

This paper is part of a broader project which is reaching completion on the experience of industrialisation for the working classes. Emma has analysed 350 male working-class autobiographies from the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries. Her findings provide some support for the recent scholarship on child labour during the industrial revolution—by historians including Jane Humphries (also using autobiographies) and Peter Kirby—but she also suggested new ways of approaching this issue. Emma argued that the average age at starting work was ten, but there was great variety around this mean. Starting work was about more than the alleviation of poverty and the relative 'wealth' of families. Rather, location and opportunities for child employment varied by region, broadly defined into 'agriculture', 'market towns' and 'manufacturing regions'. Children began work at age ten in agricultural regions, where there was little work for younger children; at 11 in market towns, where there was also a paucity of appropriate work; and, at the youngest age, at around eight, in manufacturing regions, where there were plentiful employment prospects. Parents performed a complex role in child labour, sending their children out when they could, finding them work, and monitoring their welfare. The lack of work for children in agricultural areas and the fear of losing a job could keep children in work they did not enjoy, while the abundance of employment in manufacturing areas meant that children could leave positions if they were mistreated and get another post easily. Emma agreed with other historians that child labour increased during industrialisation, but argued that parents did not exhibit new behaviour by sending their children out to work but, rather, continued with the same behaviour of sending their children out to work when opportunities became available—and opportunities increased markedly in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The consequence of this continued behaviour was more children at work, but there were few welfare benefits for the children themselves: the autobiographers complained of being tired, cold, sorrowful, experiencing long hours, and anxiety (although they might have benefitted from a better diet). Her paper was illustrated with the rich personal stories contained in the autobiographies.

'A changing county town: the Carlisle riots of 1830', Katrina Navickas (University of Hertfordshire).

Unfortunately, Steve King had to withdraw from giving his paper on 'The economics of overseeing and regional development: thoughts and speculations.' We were very grateful to Katrina Navickas who stepped in at the last minute. She gave the audience the choice of two papers and we voted for 'A changing county town: the Carlisle riots of 1830'. The Carlisle riots were a form of the Captain Swing riots of 1830–31. Katrina emphasised, and contributed towards, the recent rethinking of the unrest which argues that a local and

regional approach needs to be taken since each region had its own reasons for rioting; Captain Swing had many different personalities by place. Katrina drew a detailed community picture of the unrest in Carlisle, illustrating the social, economic, ethnic (English, Scottish, and Irish) divisions which were played out on the streets within and outside the walls. This was a fascinating tale of the Chief Constable Benjamin Batty, his spies, the 'troublesome' handloom weavers, the incendiaryism of hay stacks, and a wave of rioting. The 'crowd' prevented the putting out of fires, destroyed buckets and fire engines, and attacked the newly formed police force. The unrest was a product of complex local politics. Katrina concluded that the only way to understand the many faces of Captain Swing, and other outbreaks of unrest, was to integrate the different geographies of local areas in order to build a nuanced national picture.

Graham Butler

Nigel Goose

Samantha Williams