# Book Reviews

Carol Beardmore, Cara Dobbing and Steven King (eds), *Family Life in Britain, 1650–1910* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019). xi + 292pp. ISBN 978–3–030–04855-6. £79.99 (h/b); £63.99 (e-book).

Shifting focus from the traditional nuclear family, this edited collection reveals the fluid and porous, ever re-forming, arrangements of families in Britain, 1650–1910. Predominantly moving away from the census, the collection's authors instead look to a range of other sources in order to redefine our understanding of family life. Moreover, while English family life is most prominent in the book, the nuances of Scottish family life and the British family beyond its borders are brought to the fore in various chapters.

A recurring theme throughout is how death continually reshaped and reconfigured families, with the first three chapters focusing upon its economic impact. Poertner's chapter, the first to examine the Scottish experience, moves beyond the clan structure and instead focuses on noble families *c.* 1660–1800, and is one of three chapters in the book to address the significant gap in understanding family life in Scotland. In this case, Poertner's study of legislation and legal documents reveals how Scottish noble families found their family fortunes constricted by state, law, and religion. Moving down the social scale slightly, Price's chapter reveals how career and a family death among the professional class defined family choices. Seeking success could result in emigration of an entire family, while a death could spur the professional to seek fortunes in another country. Price also discusses how the death of the (successful) professional could see daughters, left in a position of financial security, not seeking marriage but instead forming alternative families. McIlvenna's chapter, meanwhile, examines the complexities of the nineteenth-century Post Office family, as well as the challenges it faced after the death of the employee. McIlvenna demonstrates that, in the case of the Post Office, family and work clearly overlapped. In order to provide a seamless service, the Post Office worker frequently drafted unpaid and unrecognised labour from his family. Yet, despite the familial nature of the work, the head of the family—in this case Parliament—shunned its familial responsibilities.

Continuing McIlvenna's discussion of the intertwined nature of family and work, Beardmore's chapter—through the diaries of Edward Wrench—explores the familial experience of Victorian general practice. Beardmore demonstrates that in such cases, work life was a continual intrusion on family life and, for a general practitioner's (GP's) wife, the running of domestic life had also to be balanced with her responsibilities in running the General Practice. Despite the middle-class ideal of separate spheres, Beardmore shows that obtaining such a standard was simply not achievable in such circumstances. Beardmore's chapter also examines how the profession impacted upon the GP's role as a father. Recent research on fatherhood, namely the work of Julie-Marie Strange, has begun to see the father

beyond his given role of breadwinner and Beardmore's discussion of the response of Wrench to the sickness and subsequent death of adult children, for which he could only provide relief rather than a cure, adds greatly to this area of research.

Parenthood—or rather step-parenthood—is the focus of both Monks's and Cannon's chapters. Step-parents were often portrayed as wicked, but Monks and Cannon reveal that fact frequently differed from fiction. Through a close reading of diaries and correspondence relating to everyday family life among wealthier families, it is revealed that step-parents provided both practical and emotional support in childhood and that such support continued into adulthood. Indeed, as Monks's case study reveals, the stepmother comes to anchor a geographically dispersed family. Moreover, tapping into the history of emotions, Cannon reveals the deep affectionate bonds that could and did develop between step-parent and step-child, suggesting that these bonds could even surpass those of blood relations. An interesting comparison could be drawn with the place of godparents in family life.

This collection also explores family life among the poorer classes, though unlike the rest of the book this examination is limited to the nineteenth century. Reflecting on the inadequacies of the census in providing details on the fluidity of household structure, King's chapter uses memoirs and memorials to reveal the process of family life in some of England's overlooked small towns and rural areas. King's chapter asserts that co-residence with kin and fictive kin was commonplace in such locations, with a range of family and non-family members circulating around various households. Along with Price's and Riddell's chapter, King's chapter also makes us rethink the finality often associated with migration. Family members returned for a range of reasons, often entailing some co-residence arrangement which temporarily changed both the structure and sleeping arrangements of a household.

Continuing the examination of the poorer strata of society, Dobbing's chapter examines family and kinship dynamics surrounding the asylum patient. Our understanding of nineteenth-century institutional life, largely through the work of Jane Hamlett, has been greatly challenged and Dobbing's chapter adds to this reassessment. Through reading the surviving letters of the Garland asylum, Dobbing reveals that, as well as the family playing a vital role in admission and discharge, it was crucial to maintain the familial connection during a patient's stay. Dobbing also demonstrates that families of asylum patients were required to reconfigure their household much in the same way as those who had lost a family member through death. The final part of Dobbing's chapter then turns its attention to the negative role which family could play in exacerbating, if not causing, the patient's condition. Taylor's chapter continues the discussion of family and institution through an examination of the records of the Waifs and Strays Society. As with many philanthropic institutions that emerged in the nineteenth century, the Waifs and Strays Society was responding to the belief that the poorest of working-class children were being failed by their families. In other words, these families did not conform to the middle-class ideal of the family. Yet, rather than assisting these families, they sought to remove and re-educate their children. However, Taylor demonstrates that, for parents and other family members,

relinquishing ties was not always easy and in some instances removal and re-education was underhandedly enforced.

The importance of sibling relationships arises throughout the book. Building on Leonore Davidoff's work on sibling relationships, this edited collection highlights their importance across time, geography, and class. For instance, Monks's chapter explores how sibling relationships endured over great distances, while Cannon's chapter reveals the affectionate ties that developed between stepsiblings as revealed in correspondence. Moving down the social scale, King's chapter remarks on sibling assistance among the 'dependent and marginal poor' while, as Dobbing finds, for the lunatic patient it was siblings who provided the prominent family link.

The proximity of kin beyond the household is noted throughout the book and is the focus of Riddell's chapter. Exploring two Scottish families from the skilled working class, tracing them over decades and across generations, and demonstrating that bureaucratic sources still have their place in the study of family life through a process of genealogical reconstruction (kinship collation), Riddell reveals what he terms 'flexible connectivity' among kin. In addition to uncovering enduring kinship relations through times of migration/emigration and economic turbulence, Riddell reveals the tensions of illegitimacy among the family and its impact. Other chapters also highlight the important role of extended family members in family life. As well as exploring the more understood role of grandparents in poorer communities, King reveals the important place of other extended family members, in addition to fictive kin, both in and beyond the household. Meanwhile, both Taylor's and Beardmore's chapters reveal the caring responsibilities taken on by aunts and uncles. Including such family members in the discussion of family life is vital in demonstrating that families in Britain extended far beyond the nuclear unit.

In summary, this edited collection is a significant contribution to the study of family life. It reveals the innovative use of a range of sources which can be used to gain an in-depth insight into family life across Britain, across various centuries, and across various classes. Most importantly, this book clearly shows that in order to understand family life in Britain across the centuries, it is vital that we reassess, as well as look beyond, the nuclear family and co-residential unit.

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Trevor Dean, Glyn Parry and Edward Vallance (eds), *Faith, Place and People in Early Modern England: Essays in Honour of Margaret Spufford* (Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2018). 252pp. ISBN 978–1–783–27290–7. £60 (h/b); £19.99 (e-book).

These essays in honour of Margaret Spufford will appeal to those interested in the range of source material that she used so expertly and are written by former students, collaborators and peers, around the themes of faith, place and people. Following the introduction

there is a tribute by her late husband, then the book is organised into the three sections, containing nine essays.

The first section, faith, starts with an essay from William Sheils and focuses on Catholics and their community relationships using case studies to illustrate some of the local complexities. The second contribution, from Henry French, is a study using the long clerical career of the incumbent of Earls Colne, William Adams, and illustrates the role of the individual as well as the religious context of the parish over time. The final essay in this section is from Steve Hindle. Using the parish of Chilvers Coton and its extensive archives, he produces an illustration of the expanding gap between the clergyman and parishioners, through seating arrangements to end of life interactions with his congregation.

The second section of essays, on place, starts with a contribution by Adrian Ailes. This chapter considers the use of Hearth Tax returns and heraldry visitations and, in particular, the work of Elias Ashmole in Berkshire. Catherine Ferguson again uses the Hearth Tax returns in her chapter, and she also employs strong local records on poor relief to better understand the implementation of both these sources, but also to consider the lived lives of the poorest in the community of Woking. Here she notes a warning about using Hearth Tax returns at simple face value. The final essay by Patricia Wyllie uses probate records and explores the use of transferable credit as far back as the early seventeenth century.

The third and final section of the collection, on people, starts with Danae Tankard highlighting the struggle for resources to study the clothing of the non-elite and 'middling sort'. Possible sources are explored using six case studies from seventeenth-century Sussex, and the essay considers the influence of London on individuals' attire. Christopher Marsh's excellent micro-study of a case of cuckoldry in London illustrated in a broadside ballad from the 1660s is the second contribution in this section. Finally, David Cressy provides a focus on one group, gypsies, who can be found in some of the archive material, but much less than in previous academic contributions on the poor in the early modern period.

This is an enjoyable collection of academic essays reflecting the range of Margaret Spufford's interests and methodologies, and it contains something for everyone interested in the study of populations.

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A.J. Kettle (ed.), *Early Modern Stafford and Lichfield*, Stafford Record Society Collections for a History of Staffordshire, 4th series, XXVI (Stafford, Stafford Record Society, 2018). vii + 243pp. ISBN 978–0–90171–915–7. £25 (plus postage) (h/b) available from matthew.blake@btinternet.com.

Many years ago, I thought that it would be a good idea to link entries from Lichfield's parish register to the 1695 population listing of the town compiled by Gregory King. Following a visit to the archives I was informed that the parish register was not available for inspection 'even to the Lord Mayor'. Such were the joys of working in some, but thankfully far from

all, local archive offices. If I were to attempt a similar study today part of my task would be made easier by this publication from the Staffordshire Record Society which includes a complete transcription of the listing together with a short introduction by Ann Kettle which discusses its wider relevance and how it came to be compiled. In addition, this volume also includes a transcript of the 1696 Oath of Association for Lichfield, which was taken by 'all males of some age and standing' following a conspiracy against William III, and a list of 'The Free and Voluntary Present, 1661' which represented those residents who volunteered to raise money for the newly restored Charles II.

The Lichfield material comprises about half the book with the first half being devoted to similar material on Stafford. There are two population listings for the town: that for 1615 only appears to give heads of household, although it does indicate those in receipt of alms; while the 1622 list gives household heads together with numbers of other residents in the household. These sources could easily form the basis for a local study of the town. The poll tax assessment of 1699 is also included, as are 'The Black Book of Stafford, 1566', which comprised ordinances made in the towns, 'The Memoranda Book of Thomas Worswick' which contains lists of major office holders in Stafford between 1473 and 1713, and a list of those who contributed towards Thomas Worswick's mayoral feast in 1622. Thus, we learn that Mrs Johane Cradocke contributed 'a fat doe, 2 rabbits, 2 woodcocks, a mallard, and a pig' to the feast—it does not appear that there was a vegetarian option on the menu.

Overall this volume is well produced with short, succinct introductions provided for all the sources. It reproduces the complete Lichfield listing which is otherwise available at the British Library and it is therefore self-recommending for anyone who is interested in seventeenth-century urban demography.

Chris Galley

Steven King, *Writing the Lives of the English Poor, 1750s–1830s* (London, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019). xviii + 463pp. ISBN 978–0–7735–5649–2. £27.99 (p/b).

Steven King's book examines a large corpus of letters written by the English poor in the later years of the Old Poor Law. This epistolary collection wields some fascinating insights into the process of negotiation undertaken by those generally considered illiterate when requesting relief. The book uses emblematic cases to demonstrate and analyse the rhetoric techniques employed, and dissects the acts of agency evident in the letters.

The rationale for *Writing the Lives of the English Poor* is to build upon previous research that has tended to centre on the *outcome* of requests for relief, which has relied on the examination of overseers' accounts. King emphasises that this binary consideration of negotiations—that is, whether they resulted in success or failure—is misleading and does not provide a rounded view of the techniques used in the *process* of requesting relief. Throughout the book he reinforces the importance of studying the correspondence received by unions in order to document and understand the welfare process under the Old Poor Law.

The book is the culmination of decades of research, as the database of correspondence studied is vast and comprises some 25,652 letters pertaining to English and Welsh unions. This large-scale study has resulted in a fascinating and sustained analysis of pauper writers. As King sets out, the book centres on the way in which individuals requested assistance from poor law unions, focusing on 'the language and rhetoric they used, the yardsticks of deservingness they employed, the tropes they inscribed in their negotiations, and the way their appeals were received and acted or not acted upon' (p. 16). By way of reinforcing the importance he places on these letters, King includes several images of surviving pauper letters, which adds a human element to the cases presented.

*Writing the Lives of the English Poor* is laid out in four parts. The first two outline the context in which the study has been carried out, and provide illuminating examples to demonstrate how welfare was distributed under the Old Poor Law. For instance, Chapter Four ('Mundane Articles' pp. 90–115) examines how letters and relief requests could be received. King presents the fascinating example of Ann Slater, whose letters to the overseer of Horncastle had gone unanswered, and who not knowing the outcome wrote another letter stating that her family 'have sold all our goods' (p. 100). This example, among many, demonstrates that the action or in this case the inaction of the authorities, forced the poor to take radical steps in order to survive, rather than being able to depend on a reliable system of relief.

The third and fourth sections of the book are where the mainstay of the analysis of rhetorical techniques is disseminated, and where demonstrations of pauper agency are analysed. Chapter Eleven, which falls in the third section, explores the rhetorical devices used in pauper letters that consider life-cycle and gender. As King asserts, 'life-cycle conditions dominate the underlying corpus' (p. 283). Old age, sickness, birth and death could culminate in events beyond an individual's control that worsened his or her economic circumstances. Such conditions gave rise to the most visible emotion in pauper letters, and 'provided more power for the exercise of agency' (p. 308). King goes further than what is already understood, as he analyses the process of relief, rather than assessing the outcome. In addition, he relates these letters to the importance they had for the ability 'to obscure, shape, claim, and reshape the offered and perceived self' (p. 308).

The strength of the book, then, lies in the fact that the focus is on the *process* of requesting relief, and not the *outcome*, as has been the trend of other authors. As King reinforces, 'end-of-process spending is an inadequate guide…Two pension payments of 5 shillings recorded side by side…do *not* mean the same thing, either in terms of the process by which those payments were generated or in terms of the understanding of them by the two individuals involved' (p. 344). As a result, this book provides a greater comprehension of the negotiations involved in the process of obtaining relief, and places value on individual circumstances, as there was great disparity among parishes and overseers.

In summary, King's *Writing the Lives of the English Poor* is important for historians of poverty, as it is an illuminating analysis of the poor and the way in which they wrote. At points in their lives when they were most desperate, King demonstrates that the poor,

rather than possessing little choice (as is the perceived notion), used strategic devices to get their desired outcome, and that they did in fact have agency and a voice. Going forward, the methodology employed in this book can be applied to the New Poor Law, and to other areas which King states require evaluation through a similar history from below (p. 352).

This book will be valuable reading for a broad scope of researchers and will not simply be confined to historians studying the Old Poor Law, the poor, and their writing. If the book's most recent award—the Peter Townsend Prize—is anything to go by, then *Writing the Lives of the English Poor* will have an interdisciplinary reach, as it raises important questions about policy and inequality in today's landscape, not only as an illumination of the past.

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Steven King, *Sickness, Medical Welfare and the English Poor, 1750–1834* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2018). xiv + 408pp. ISBN 978–1–5261–2900–0. £80.00 (h/b).

Steven King's book examines the medical relief offered to the poor in the period leading up to the advent of the New Poor Law. This analysis is the culmination of three decades of work carried out throughout various projects. Whilst providing a valuable overview of the welfare offered to the sick poor, King also demonstrates how the system was navigated by those in receipt of relief, particularly at points within their life cycle when they required medical assistance.

The rationale for *Sickness, Medical Welfare and the English Poor* is that the sick poor, as a distinct group within the pauper class, have not previously been the subject of such close analysis. King redresses this by providing an overview of the medical welfare system 1750–1834, and depicting the local dimension through emblematic cases that demonstrate the difference in responses that ranged from parish to parish. Describing this as an 'overview' may act as a disservice, as King's empirical data spans 117 parishes across seven English counties, and examines a plethora of material including overseers' accounts, vestry minutes, correspondence, and bills. In addition, a final element of this book explores the accumulating evidence of pauper agency, which has increasingly become a popular topic within the historiography.

King deals with agency among the sick poor most prominently in Chapter Three, 'Negotiating medical welfare' (pp. 69–103). The key focus is on the letters written by paupers requesting relief from the poor law guardians to deal with their medical need. King identifies some common strategies, 'the respectability of the applicant; their desire to help themselves and not to be a long-term burden; the economic logic of "relief now" to avoid larger bills in the future' (p. 83). However, he evidences that those who expressed a catastrophic or sudden need for assistance, as opposed to those who regaled stories of a chronic condition, were more likely to receive help. For instance, applicants that stated they

were dying or in the final stage of their illness, or those close to giving birth were favoured. King notes that sickness in this context was utilised strategically by the poor to secure the required payment.

Worthy of particular mention is Chapter Eight, 'Institutions and the sick poor' (pp. 251–84), which focuses on the increasing role of institutions in delivering medical welfare for the sick towards the later decades of the Old Poor Law. King asserts that much has been done by medical historians to further knowledge of the responses, but this has focussed on the specialist institutions constructed solely to treat the sick, both physically and mentally. As a result, our understanding of the medical functions of the workhouse, and other responses, remains thin. Similarly thin, King reminds us, is the research examining 'the triggers for seeking institutional sojourns, pauper and parochial attitudes towards such care and its place in a life-cycle of responses to illness' (p. 252).

To address this, through Chapter Eight, the book demonstrates that the workhouse, among a constellation of institutional responses, was extremely important in providing medical relief. As King points out, the term 'workhouse' was not used uniformly by all parishes. He demonstrates that references to the 'poorhouse' or 'almshouse', among other descriptions, denoted the same set of buildings with the same function. Although spending on institutional responses varied over the period, and across England, due to fluctuating demand brought on by regional outbreaks of illness, the workhouse remained an important financial commitment. Through surviving surgeon's daybooks, King provides evidence that conditions treated in the workhouse were not wholly dissimilar to those found in hospitals. For instance, the records of Drs Thomas Martin and Thomas Steele from Reigate (Surrey) poorhouse, show that the ailments seen by them between 1805 and 1815 include 'infectious diseases (measles, chicken pox, fevers—themselves divided into five different categories—and smallpox), venereal disease, a full range of chest complaints, rheumatism, accidents, cancers, ringworm and a considerable number of intestinal problems' (p. 258).

Despite the broad range of relief offered in the workhouse, it was only one in a network of institutional responses utilised under the Old Poor Law. Among these were asylums, voluntary hospitals, eye hospitals, and fever cottages, which were referred to in the requests of paupers for medical relief, particularly into the nineteenth century, and were important in their negotiations for welfare. For example, Mrs Timms from Oundle wrote in 1828 requesting that her daughter be admitted to the infirmary after the sudden onset of illness (p. 271). This further demonstrates that the sick poor knew the options available to the overseers, and were confident in asserting their rights when requesting relief: this is further evidence that they possessed agency and were fully aware of it.

The strength of the book lies in the fact that, as well as providing an overview of medical welfare, the motivations of individuals and parishes have been explored. Doing this side by side aids our understanding particularly of the sick poor as a distinct group. This book will be valuable reading for both newcomers to the topic and experienced scholars of poverty, medical welfare and the Old Poor Law. It also opens up the discussion of pauper

agency, which is increasingly becoming an area of interest. King presents illuminating evidence that suggests the sick poor, who have been understood to have had little choice, did in fact possess a significant amount of bargaining power, which is an important point for further study.

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John Shaw (ed.), *The Loes and Wilford Poor Law Incorporation, 1765–1826: "A Prison with a Milder Name"* (Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2019). liv + 501 pp. ISBN 978–1–783–27382–9. £40 (h/b).

This substantial volume contains transcriptions of records created in the administration of the Loes and Wilford Poor Law Incorporation (actually a workhouse) in Suffolk which was in operation from 1765 to 1826. The editor of the volume, John Shaw, is an expert on the old poor laws in East Anglia, completing a PhD on the topic in the late 1980s. Shaw chose this workhouse as a focus for this volume for several reasons, as outlined in the preface to the volume: (1) the Incorporation was one of the earliest established in Suffolk and also the only one to have disbanded before the New Poor Law; (2) the records that were kept—and have survived—are remarkably intact; (3) it has the 'richest seam of informal miscellaneous supporting documents' of all of the workhouse incorporations in the area, giving the historian a chance to understand the context from which the Incorporation sprang (p. ix). But why research incorporations? As Shaw points out, Beatrice Webb and Sidney Webb, the founders of poor law studies, did place some importance on the early unions of parishes—they were in many ways the forerunners to the New Poor Law system implemented after 1834. Nevertheless, the Webbs had dismissed some local schemes, such as that at Loes and Wilford, by naming them 'pathetic' and a 'uniform failure'. Wanting to correct this viewpoint, Shaw hopes the publication of 'the breadth of documents of Loes and Wilford's operation' will mark an attempt to revise these early assumptions in poor law history (p. iv).

The Loes and Wilford Incorporation was established under a Local Act in 1765, and contained 16 parishes in the Wilford hundred, and 17 in the Loes hundred. The combined populations of these parishes (in 1801) was almost 10,000 individuals, covering almost 57,000 acres. The volume starts with a helpful overview of the Loes and Wilford Incorporation by detailing when and why it was established, and contextualising the Union within east Suffolk, where the majority of parishes were formed into some form of incorporation for poor relief provision of some kind. Most of these incorporations were created under Local Acts, but two avoided the expense of developing and passing their own legislation by adopting Gilbert's Act (1782). The Loes and Wilford Incorporation entered two phases of policy amendments in 1791 and 1810, which addressed various management issues, poor rate collections, and made amendments to, amongst other things, the policies relating to apprenticeships, punishments and the settlement of illegitimate children. After the Local Act was passed, a workhouse was built at Melton housing 350 inmates, and—after

a series of building issues—186 individuals were admitted in July 1768. The introduction to the book also provides a detailed overview of the transcribed contents which make up the volume: quarterly minute books, seven of which run though, complete, for the years of the operation of the incorporation. The volume also contains transcriptions of ten weekly minute books, which provide more detail about the everyday management of the workhouse. Miscellaneous documents, including those relating to the sale of the incorporation premises, are transcribed also.

This book is a valuable source of information for poor law, social, economic and demographic historians. There are details of policies, and policy consequences, and how they impacted upon the lives of the poor, including the tensions between outdoor and indoor relief provision. There are figures of workhouse populations, and the overall costs in running and maintaining the incorporation. Indeed, the initial purpose of creating a union of parishes was often to reduce poor relief costs. There are glimpses into the judgements of the workhouse administrators about the treatment of both the indoor and outdoor poor, and much about life in the institution: routines, work, food, clothing, heating, ill health, and punishments too. The volume also provides information about the business of the institution: the contractors, the tradespeople supplying clothing and food, and the salaries of medical men and midwives who attended the inmates. The volume gives us a sense of the wider community involved in working within or visiting the workhouse, such as the Chaplain and the schoolteachers. Local and family historians will find this book a useful resource. Places are scattered throughout the transcriptions, and the names of directors (guardians), the workhouse staff, contractors and medical staff, and occasionally inmates are given. As well as a subject index, a comprehensive 20-page index of people and places is provided at the end of the volume.

Overall, this is a valuable contribution which will aid our understanding of welfare systems under the old poor laws. Shaw has carefully transcribed, edited, and made sense of a multitude of documents. While these groupings of parishes were perceived in older literatures as unusual or 'pathetic', a new wave of interest has placed them into a more central position in our understandings of the pre-1834 poor relief landscape. Ten thousand people were subject to the social policies devised by the Loes and Wilford Incorporation alone, impacting on people's lives for over half a century. For this reason, we continue to study the development and impacts of these systems. This volume will significantly contribute to this work.

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A. Ritch, *Sickness in the Workhouse: Poor Law Medical Care in Provincial England, 1834–1914* (Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2019). xi + 298pp. ISBN: 978–1–58046–975–3. £95.00.

Alistair Ritch's book explores the specific medical role of workhouses from the inception of the New Poor Law until the outbreak of the First World War. By focussing solely on the

experience of the sick poor, Ritch provides an important perspective to a popular area of history, and an insight into the lives of a neglected group within the pauper class. Using a close regional study, this book adds value to a number of areas within the historiography of medicine under the New Poor Law.

The rationale for *Sickness in the Workhouse* is that previous poor law historians have tended to downplay, or dismiss, the medical role workhouses played in the lives of those unable to afford relief in the nineteenth century. Of course, researchers such as Steven King have begun to redress this imbalance, but the literature, as Ritch argues, 'denigrates medical care after the [Poor Law Amendment A]ct as of such poor quality as to bring little benefit to sick paupers' (p. 1). As a result, the book focuses solely on the medical care delivered in workhouses to offer a new perspective to the much written about institution. Ritch uses the Birmingham and Wolverhampton workhouses as rich examples of the 'character, scope, and scale of medical care' given to sick paupers (p. 2).

Through eight chapters, Ritch assesses the different strategies, treatments, conditions, staff and challenges to workhouse medicine. At the heart of the research presented are the people that experienced medical treatment under the New Poor Law first hand. Ritch recounts real cases: for instance, that of an imbecile patient who had been subject to 'padded rooms, blisters, and shower baths', therapies that were common in asylums, and not traditionally considered part of the workhouse's medical remit (p. 124). Not forgotten are the medical officers and nurses that delivered treatment in poor law infirmary wards, and Ritch successfully draws out some of the characters along the way.

A particularly interesting assessment takes place in Chapter Two, which focuses on infectious diseases and the role played by workhouse medicine in stopping the wider spread of contagion. In light of the recent coronavirus pandemic, this makes for fascinating, topical reading, as Ritch explains how the workhouse dealt with epidemics such as scarlet fever, smallpox, measles, typhus, tuberculosis and cholera. This exploration goes further than previous investigations of institutional responses to infections, which have tended to focus on London's isolation hospitals, rather than provincial workhouses. Ritch demonstrates the important role workhouses played in dealing with epidemics, and how they opened their doors to non-paupers in a community-led effort to combat smallpox outbreaks in the 1870s (p. 92). This angle provides value to researchers of the topic as, quite often, the workhouse has been viewed as a vessel operating on its own. However, Ritch, in Chapter Two and elsewhere in the book, puts forward evidence of institutional cooperation for the welfare of the sick poor.

Of course, other researchers have examined the medical function of the New Poor Law, but the focus has tended to fall on the sufferers of insanity, the intellectually or physically disabled, and those in receipt of outdoor relief. The strength of the book therefore lies in Ritch's close examination of Birmingham and Wolverhampton in terms of the Poor Law records that have survived, and the way he uses these to bring out the experiences of sick paupers. An important insight into the treatment received in workhouses is gained through

the preservation of letters, and through cross-referencing material with parliamentary papers, newspaper reports, and the like.

In summary, Ritch uses the theme of workhouse medicine to delve into several neglected areas of the literature, looking at epidemics in Chapter Two, providing evidence of pauper agency in Chapter Three, and giving insights into the realities of working as a workhouse infirmary nurse in Chapter Six. Thus, a comprehensive view of the broad medical role of the workhouses under the New Poor Law is provided. This book will be important reading for those across historical disciplines. Both researchers of poverty, and those interested in the history of medicine, will find value in Ritch's work.

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Peter Malpass, *The Making of Victorian Bristol* (Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2019). 269 pp. ISBN 978–1–78327–391–1. £65 (h/b).

This book is by the same publisher, but a different author, to Poole and Rogers's *Bristol from Below*, which I reviewed in *Local Population Studies* 102 (2019), pp. 110–2. This volume in one sense continues where the other left off, with the Bristol riot of 1831, and takes the story through to 1901. However, it succeeds, where the earlier volume failed, to capture the lived experience of the lower-class residents of Bristol. Malpass approaches the Victorian city from the perspective of its built environment and infrastructure. Like Poole and Rogers the author treats his subject thematically. He asks the questions, 'how was all this physical infrastructure built, when and by whom?' His response is a detailed account of how, after a slow start, the city was transformed by population growth.

The first chapter sets Bristol in its nineteenth-century context as a regional city which was both a port city and a manufacturing city but which, at around 1831, was neither dynamic nor progressive, the economy having been in decline since 1780. He describes it as a 'troubled and divided city, bursting with people but at a low point economically'. He seeks to describe the responses of local people to these challenges and opportunities. His intention is to show how Bristol grew and changed while retaining its status as a major regional centre. At a broader level his aim is to make a distinctive and original contribution to the historiography of Bristol and provide a case study of urbanisation in the nineteenth century, which in turn adds to the wider urban history literature on the problems generated by population growth.

In subsequent chapters he considers in turn sanitation (rather literally Bristol from below), water supply, housing, transport, changes in industry and commerce, and the modernisation of the port. Throughout, his emphasis is on what these developments meant for the people of the city as they went about their daily lives, and whether the city was becoming a better or worse place to live. He notes the increasing socio-spatial segregation. Some of the problems have a very modern resonance—shortage of affordable housing, the lack of a hospital in south Bristol until 2012, and the location of the main railway

station away from the centre of commerce (though he points out that had the proposed extension to the city centre gone ahead it would have destroyed Queen Square and many other historic buildings).

In 1841 the population was more than double what it had been in 1801, and by 1901 it stood at 328,945, more than twice what it had been in 1841. The building of the city in response to population pressure was itself a major industry involving not only construction workers but also lawyers, surveyors, architects and estate agents. Unlike previous historians of Bristol, Malpass focuses on the housing of the working class. By the end of the century there were densely built working-class neighbourhoods around the southern and eastern edges of the city, in contrast to the middle-class suburbs to the north and west. Many of the improvements benefitted the middle classes in the suburbs rather than the working classes with their proximity to industry and manufacturing. Both the railway and the road schemes are examples of this. It was only the eventual arrival of trams that improved the transport infrastructure for working people and enhanced their opportunities to move around the city. Tram services tended to follow rather than lead expansion but boosted housing demand in the suburbs.

In 1835 the ancient unelected Bristol Corporation was abolished and replaced by an elected 48-member town council, but in practice the old oligarchy remained in power. The governing elite preferred to remove themselves to the suburbs rather than confront the environmental problems created by the businesses that produced their affluent lifestyle. They proved to be no match for the railway companies based in London, or for the spread of limited liability resulting in the merger of manufacturing companies which ceased to be Bristol based. The town council's approach was limited in scope, ambition and vision, shown by the absence of municipal buildings.

In the final chapter Malpass draws the themes together and presents them chronologically showing where there were continuities and when the major changes and developments occurred. He concludes that there was little change between 1841 and 1861, but that most changes occurred between 1861 and 1901. Again, he relates these changes to the lived experiences of the population. Development was uneven, there was an absence of large-scale redevelopment, and not all change was for the better. During the Victorian period Bristol was catching up rather than leading change. The making of Victorian Bristol was not, he claims, a process leading to a finished product.

The book is thoroughly footnoted and illustrated with well-chosen period photographs from Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol Archives, Bristol Reference Library and the University of Bath. However, some of the land ownership figures would have benefitted from being larger, and others could have done with better differentiated shading. For those unfamiliar with the city, a plan showing the development of the railway lines and the location of the major stations would have been a welcome addition. The cover design is particularly attractive being a sepia reproduction of a projection of Bristol from 1887 showing the sprawl of housing and the concentration of industry along the Floating Harbour. The bibliography occupies 11 pages divided between primary sources, both manuscript and

printed, published secondary sources and unpublished theses. The index occupies a further nine pages including references to Acts of Parliament, the various areas of Bristol and individual streets, the committees of the town council, named house builders and railway companies.

Malpass appears to have achieved the aims he set himself of showing how the city of Bristol grew and changed, but also remained a regional centre. His work can in turn be used to compare and contrast the experience of the population of Bristol with that of people living in the midland and northern urban areas in the Victorian period.

Christine Jones

Lucy Bland, *Britain's 'Brown Babies'* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2019). 288pp. ISBN 978–1–5261–3326–7. £20 (h/b, e-book).

Lucy Bland's book, *Britain's 'Brown Babies'*, tells the history of a sample of the 'children born during the [Second World] war to black GIs and white British women' (p. 2). To achieve this, she has sought out the written memoirs of, or recorded new oral history interviews with, 45 of the estimated '2,000 mixed-race GI babies' who were born in Britain during the 1940s (p. 3). Although 2,000 births might not be considered numerically significant in absolute terms, these children resulted in a 20-28 per cent increase in the numbers of people of colour living in Britain in the decade (p. 3). Bland argues that the demographic change in the ethnic makeup of twentieth-century Britain has been largely hidden so far, masked by more popular memories such as the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* bringing people of colour from the Caribbean to Britain in 1948.

Bland's book is designed to fill the historiographical gap relating to these children and their place in British history. As well as the individual memories she has collected and over 50 photographs she has been able to reproduce, Bland draws upon a wide range of other primary sources such as the, 'official records of central and local government … reports from children's homes, newspapers (British and American), letters and memoirs' (p. 5). This blend of qualitative sources results in a multifaceted picture of personal experience, contemporary local attitudes and the seemingly far-removed politics and social policy of post-war Britain. Chapter One, for instance, outlines how 'British women met black GIs even though the British government tried unsuccessfully to 'control relationships between black Americans and British women' (p. 16). The 'particular appeal of the black GI' is juxtaposed with evidence that shows members of the public openly demonstrated their ambivalence towards inter-cultural dating (p. 21).

The book follows a chronological structure with each chapter reflecting themes that are pertinent to the life-cycle of the children—how their parents met, domestic and public responses to their conception, where and how they were brought up, and their subsequent, prolonged searches for family, heritage and identity. Chapter Two tells the stories of 24 children whose mothers either decided to keep them, or who were brought up by their maternal grandmother (p. 45). As American servicemen required permission to marry during the

war, the unfortunate combination of white United States (US) commanding officers and a ban on 'interracial' marriage in, 'thirty of the (then) forty-eight US states', invariably resulted in 'illegitimate' births (p. 34). Bland discusses the contemporary stigma attached to the label, something that was compounded when the child had dual heritage. She illustrates the different forms of familial and public hostility shown to the children and their mothers, alongside the memories of interviewees who experienced the shame and isolation of being 'different' to variable degrees. This approach, a strength of the book, enables the reader to consider both the history and its impact on the lives of those who lived through it. Life inside children's homes for 21 of the children is explored in Chapter Three. The evidence suggests that an inconsistent range of physical and emotional care was provided in these institutions and Bland concludes that 'the care system very largely failed the wartime "brown babies" ' (p. 133). A unique aspect of Chapter Four, which covers adoption and fostering, is Bland's investigation into 'attempts to send the babies to the US' (p. 163). She concludes that they were thwarted by the British government's 'indecisive' policymaking that oscillated 'between attempts to simply remove the "problem" … on the one hand and voicing a lukewarm commitment to some kind of inclusion on the other' (p. 173). The inherent racism of post-war British society surfaces throughout the publication, for example, in the recycling of imperial racial and gendered stereotypes (pp. 25–7). The last section of the book concentrates on later life as the wartime babies searched, and in some cases continue to search, for unknown parents and family members. Personal recollections, which dominate Chapter Five, capture the often long and difficult struggles that many of the children have faced trying to reconnect with their biological families. Sandi H's analogy of having 'rebalanced the scales' when she located her 'roots' resonates across many of the other individual stories told (pp. 213–4). Chapter Six brings the book to a close by celebrating the lives, agency and resilience of the British born children of black American GIs.

*Britain's 'Brown Babies'* is deftly written and easy to read. Each interviewee has been given the opportunity to tell his or her own unique story, demonstrating the respect that the author has for her interviewees and their testimony. Bland refreshingly identifies the limitations of her historical sources and her own positionality. She clarifies what the reader might see as potential methodological anomalies and draws attention to other research on 'brown babies' carried out elsewhere. These features illustrate an honesty and integrity in Bland's approach to her research which should be applauded. When asked in an interview with her publisher how she would like the reader to summarise the book she replied, '[t]his is a fascinating read about an important and neglected subject—the children born to black GIs and British women in the 2nd world war.'[1] This is an apt reflection indeed. Bland's monograph adds to an increasing literature that aims to uncover the hidden voices of

1 Rebecca Mortimer, *Britain's 'brown babies' – Q&A with Lucy Bland*, [25 February 2019], https://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/articles/britains-brown-babies-qa-with-lucy-bland/ [Accessed 9 October 2019].

minority groups in Britain, challenging and correcting established twentieth-century British histories. The book is recommended to historians of Britain and academics who work at the intersection of cultural, ethnic and population studies.

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Chiz Harward, Nick Holder, Christopher Phillpotts and Christopher Thomas, *The Medieval Priory and Hospital of St Mary Spital and the Bishopsgate Suburb: Excavations at Spitalfields Market, London E1, 1991–2007*, Museum of London Archaeology Monograph 59 (London, Museum of London Archaeology, 2019). xx+319 pp. ISBN 978–1907586–48–4. £32 (h/b).

This is one of a major series of reports into excavations at archaeological sites in London. The site at Spitalfields Market has been excavated several times over the last 100 years (and was the subject of the very first monograph in this series). This book describes the work that took place there between 1991 and 2007.

The book begins with an introduction to the Spitalfields Market project and a description of the history of Spitalfields before the Augustinian priory and hospital of St Mary without Bishopsgate was founded there in 1197. The core of the book consists of two lengthy sections, one dealing with the history of the building of the priory and hospital itself; the second considering the life of the institution. It is the latter which is likely to be of most interest to readers of *Local Population Studies*, as it includes chapters on the water supply, the diet of the medieval population, medical treatment and the kinds of diseases from which the inhabitants suffered, and the relationship between the population whose bones have been recovered from the excavations and the population of medieval London as a whole.

For population historians, archaeological evidence can be both tantalising and frustrating. At times, it can provide evidence on matters about which written sources are absent. For example, the graves at Spitalfields Market reveal the existence of years of dearth and probably famine in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, a period which demographic historians tend to assume was rather benign, at least in comparison with the 250 years that followed. Archaeological evidence is probably superior to other evidence in describing what people actually ate on a day-to-day basis. In other circumstances it can confirm, and help to triangulate, conclusions drawn from fragmentary documentary evidence.

Sometimes, however, it can be at odds with demographic knowledge gained from other sources. The data reported here on ages at death are hard to square with any known demographic distribution of ages of death. Infants and children are under-represented (something that will not be surprising to anyone who has looked at the headstones in ancient churchyards). But the age distribution of adult deaths reported from the cemetery at St Mary Spital is quite different even from that derived from the Bills of Mortality and presented in C. Roberts and M. Cox, *Health and Disease in Britain: from Prehistory to the Present*

*Day* (Stroud, 2003), and different from that of any human life table computed under 'normal' conditions, and no explanation for this is forthcoming.

Despite this, demographers of medieval England will find much of interest in this book, which provides a perspective different from that gained from documentary evidence. The volume is beautifully produced, includes many excellently drawn figures and plans, and it is reasonably priced.

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