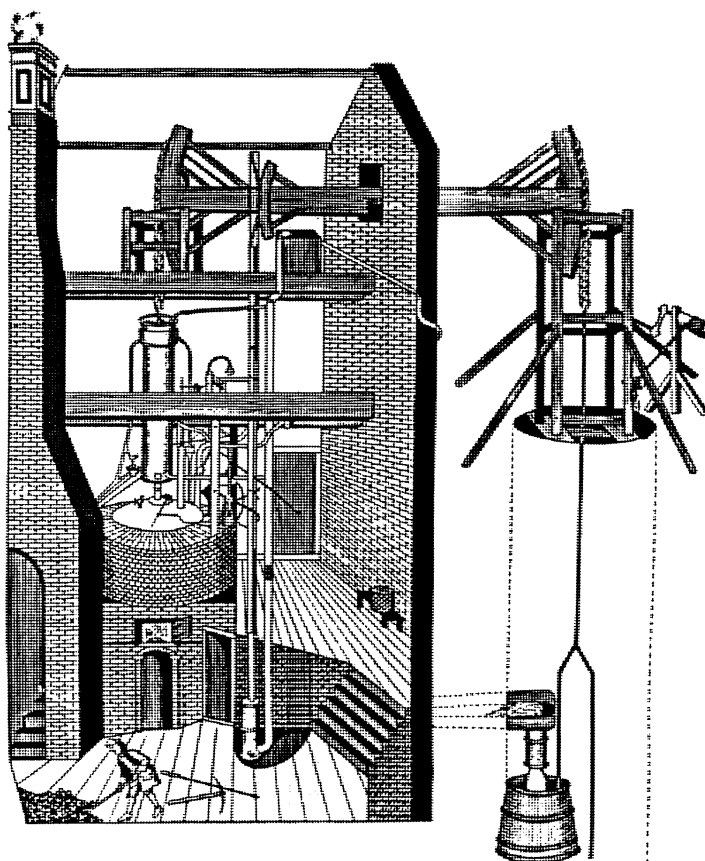


CAPITALISM AND THE GOOD HISTORIANS:

A BRIEF INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION READING LIST

TOM BURROUGHES



I graduated from Brighton Polytechnic, taking a history degree, which covered such areas as the English Civil War and the Industrial Revolution. Time and time again, my lecturers gave me a reading list weighted in favour of such Marxist luminaries as Eric Hobsbawm and Christopher Hill. Admittedly, I was made aware of other points of view, but in the "Of course, you need to check the conservative (i.e. reactionary, stupid) perspective of Hugh Trevor Roper" manner.

So I have compiled a reading list of my own. This list here contains some of the books I found useful on the Industrial Revolution, either at the time of my undergraduate studies, or since. I either read these books as a student, or wish that I had.

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FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND PROPERTY

T. S. Ashton

An Economic History of England: The Eighteenth Century

Barnes and Noble, New York, 1955.

The Industrial Revolution, 1760-1830

Oxford University Press, London, 1948, and other subsequent editions.

This is a short, concise book which, while not ignoring the problems, explains why the huge changes immeasurably improved the living standards of working people.

J. D. Chambers and G. E. Mingay

The Agricultural Revolution

Batsford, London, 1966, and other editions.

Well written and informative guide to the period. Rich in detail and data.

F. Crouzet

Capital Formation in the Industrial Revolution

Methuen, London, 1972.

Explains how many firms were set up, often with small initial sums. A good study.

J. D. Chambers

The Workshop of the World: British Economic History from 1820 to 1880

Oxford University Press, 1961, and other editions.

A wealth of data and colourful detail. A balanced account.

S. G. Checkland

The Rise of Industrial Society in England 1815-1885

St Martins, New York, 1964, and other editions.

Plenty of useful information by a historian broadly friendly to the business classes. Does not push the reader to accept any particular conclusions, however.

Norman Gash

Peel

Longman, London, 1976.

I thought this biography would offer a good insight into the politics of the era spanning Waterloo, Catholic Emancipation and the abolition of the Corn Laws. Gash's biography is a masterpiece. Gash is pro-capitalist, although he certainly favours some of the intervention in the economy which started with the Factory Acts. Peel, while certainly not a libertarian, heroically stood up for laissez faire principles and gave Britain decades of prosperity as a result.

David Green

Working Class Patients and the Medical Establishment

Gower/Temple Smith, London, 1985.

Shows the extent of medical care cover for working class people and vindicates the self help argument. It debunks the myth that pressure for the NHS initially came from working people.

M. Dorothy George

England in Transition: Life and Work in the Eighteenth Century

Penguin, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1953, and other editions.

George is a first-rate historian who paints a good picture of the century. There is no rosy-eyed picture of an arcadian 18th century which was ravaged by the dark, satanic mills of Dickensian mythology.

Friedrich Hayek (ed.)

Capitalism and the Historians

Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1954.

Essential. The book analyses hostility to capitalism and the Industrial Revolution among historians and novelists, such as Dickens and the Hammonds. It also contains several powerful arguments in favour of the capitalist changes themselves.

Gertrude Himmelfarb

The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age

Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1984.

An excellent study of poverty with a wealth of data, explaining how people were affected by industrial change.

Gertrude Himmelfarb

Victorian Values and Twentieth Century Condescension

Centre For Policy Studies, London, 1987.

A brief but enlightening study of the theme. Written in the context of Mrs Thatcher's comments about Victorian values.

Paul Johnson

Birth of The Modern World Society, 1815-1830

Weidenfeld, London, 1991.

I recently read this titanic and enjoyable effort by the historian and distinguished journalist. He is pro-capitalist and analyses the often turbulent period in British politics. Full of information.

The Long Debate on Poverty

Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1974.

Includes essays by Max Hartwell and Norman Gash. Debunks statist myths about the industrial revolution.

Douglas North and Robert Thomas

The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1973.

Charts the broad course of economic history with a generally pro-capitalist viewpoint.

Alan McFarlane

The Culture of Capitalism

Basil Blackwell, London, 1987.

Fine study by the Cambridge historian and anthropologist. Friendly approach to the subject.

Alvin Rabushka

From Adam Smith to the Wealth of America

Transaction Books, Oxford, 1985.

I found this useful for its vast array of detail on the beneficial effects of particular liberalisation moves in the 19th century. It is particularly good on tax rates.

E. G. West

Education and the Industrial Revolution

Batsford, London, 1975.

Shows that basic educational provision among working people was widespread before the state made its first major intervention with the Forster Act of 1870.

Martin J. Wiener

English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit

Penguin, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1985.

Highly entertaining and sharp-eyed account of how capitalism in Britain was badly enervated by 'gentry values'.