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Article:
Outram, Q. (2022) Book Review: Paul Jennings, Working-Class Lives in Edwardian Harrogate, Lancaster: Palatine Books, 2021, pp. xvi + 264, p/b £14.99, ISBN 978 19108 37375. Labour History Review, 87 (1). 91 -108. ISSN: 0961-5652

https://doi.org/10.3828/lhr.2022.4

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Paul Jennings, *Working-Class Lives in Edwardian Harrogate*, Lancaster: Palatine Books, 2021, pp. xvi + 264, p/b £14.99, ISBN 978 19108 37375

Paul Jennings confesses in the preface to this book that he had 'always been amused' by the common reaction to the discovery that he lived in Harrogate: viz., that he must be rather 'posh' (xiii). Indeed, Harrogate is at the northern end of the North Yorkshire 'Golden Triangle' stretching from north Leeds up to Harrogate and across to York. Fulwith Mill Lane in Harrogate is sometimes said to be the most expensive street in Yorkshire with the average house selling for an estimated £1.8 million in early 2022 (yes, Londoners, read this again, and weep). One does not need to be an expert architectural historian to see from the size and ornamentation of the remaining Victorian houses in parts of southern and western Harrogate that its wealth has endured for a long time.

Victorian Harrogate was not an aristocratic setting like Bath, or the West End of London, however. Jennings reports that there were only six butlers in Harrogate in 1901 and three footmen, both essential trappings to aristocratic living. Ostensibly, it was (and is) a town of the middle classes. But of course middle-class people (as well as aristocrats), need working-class people to make, build, and maintain things for them (not least those houses) and to service their daily lives. Victorians and Edwardians needed servants. They needed char ladies and laundresses. The needed tailors and dress-makers. They needed shop assistants. If only visiting (for Harrogate was a health spa), they needed hotel staff of every variety. They needed carriage drivers and railwaymen. They needed postal clerks. Their peace of mind depended on police officers and doormen. They sought entertainment. Some men sought prostitutes and found them available. It is the history of such workers that Jennings seeks to tell.

Jennings has three main sources to use: the census enumerators' books prepared for the 1901 Census, the householders' schedules filled in for the 1911 Census, and the local newspaper, the *Harrogate Advertiser*. He also uses the local archives of schools, churches, and the Borough Council, but it is very much the censuses and the newspaper which form the backbone of the study. Possibly because Jennings' publisher is looking for a popular market, he has eschewed the use of tables and any detailed account of how he has compiled his statistics from the census and other sources (an outline is presented on pp. 43-8). Nevertheless he appears to have worked long and hard to distinguish working-class from other households in the town, to find representative

samples, and useful illustrations. He has traced some of those who appear in the *Harrogate Advertiser* to their households in the census before or after their moments of fame or notoriety. He finds 3,426 working-class heads of household in 1911, making up 46 per cent of all heads of households in the town. Remembering those who were not heads of households, like the numerous working-class children, those employed as residential servants and hotel workers, and those living in lodgings, it becomes clear that, despite appearances, most of Harrogate's people were working-class.

A high proportion of the town's workers, over 40 per cent, were women reflecting the importance of domestic and other forms of service. Some of this was becoming industrialized in the 1901-11 period. Hand laundry work using only a copper and a mangle was being superseded by specialized and mechanized laundry businesses. While the division of labour remained highly gendered, some men were employed. Nevertheless, as the book's photographs show, the industry remained labour-intensive and relatively small-scale. Apart from the railways, this was the only example of industrialized production to be found in the town. The railways and other forms of transport such as cab-driving together with the building trades were the main sources of employment for men. Some worked for the gas company or the Corporation. Others worked in hotels or as street musicians and entertainers.

If the census data is dominant in Jennings' account of the Harrogate labour market and the town's demography, the local press and the Corporation archives come to the fore when he turns to schooling, housing and health. It is in these chapters that the poverty of sections of the Harrogate working class becomes most obvious. While the housing was by no means the worst that could be found in Britain at the time, public health was not good. Infant mortality, at 144 per thousand in 1900, while less than the national average, was nevertheless at an appalling level not even approached in the present day by the national rates of some of the poorest countries in the world: in 2019 this statistic stood at 66 in DR Congo; at 69 in Chad; at 74 in Somalia; at 81, the world's worst figure, in the Central African Republic and in Sierra Leone (UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2021*, Table 2). In a case that finally came to court in Harrogate in 1912 a coal porter, Herbert Smith, was charged with neglect of his two children, spending his wages on drink and other objects of no use to them. Once, when the inspector called, he could find only a crust of bread and some margarine in the house. Smith, who had now appeared in court eighteen times, was given three months in prison (171).

This book has many excellent features. The author demonstrates a deep knowledge of his field and a wide knowledge of the academic literature both in general social history and in the local history of other areas. It is well illustrated and well written. Its fundamental point, that the working class was to be found throughout the country, not only in the factories and mines of the industrial north and the fields of the countryside, but also in the small towns seemingly untouched by industrialism, is well established. It is also a point of some importance: the making of the English working class would seem not to have depended on the making of English industry, as many have assumed. However, the book is missing one vital element. Class is a relationship, not merely an attribute. There is no working class without a middle class (or an upper class) to make it so and members of the middle class are almost absent from this book. There are tantalizing glimpses of them. For example, the Anglicans, presumably middle-class, who successfully held up the establishment of a local School Board for a generation are mentioned in chapter seven. One wonders how the deprivation of education from working-class children could be seen as part of God's work. The town's building businesses, heavily represented on the two relevant Council committees, who may have prevented the Corporation from seeing to the defective drains that were the worst feature of local workers' housing are mentioned in chapter five (155-6). Most strikingly of all, we are told in chapter six (178) of the visitors who threw pennies to begging children from their charabancs and coaches. But these are glimpses, only. One yearns to see more of such people not because the sight would be pretty but because it would help the understanding of class as it was lived not only in Harrogate but elsewhere.

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