

A biography must also look at the people – never more than a few thousand – who came from all parts of the world, so that today’s islanders are descended from British sailors and adventurers, slaves from Madagascar, indentured Chinese labourers and Boer prisoners of war billeted on the island for almost three years at the turn of the last century.

Arthur MacGregor has succeeded masterfully in pulling together all these disparate facts and elements of St Helena’s history. His account of the people, environment, ecology, governance, scientific investigations, communications with the outside world and, of course, the six-year stay on St Helena of Napoleon and his large entourage, together with some 2,000 British troops stationed to guard him, explains why St Helena has played such a prominent role in world affairs, despite its small size and isolation, and why it evokes such fascination for those who visit.

MacGregor’s book is scholarly. He references most of his statements and anecdotes with footnotes. These are often helpful and contain nuggets of information that are piquant and relevant: it is amazing to learn, for instance, that during the Atlantic patrols between 1840 and 1867 the Royal Navy’s West Africa Squadron apprehended and brought to the island four hundred and twenty-five slave ships that had transported between 21,500 and 25,000 enslaved men, women and children. The slave traders, mostly Portuguese, were tried at the vice-admiralty court. The slaves, many of them dead by the time the ships were brought in to St Helena, were either buried in mass graves or consigned to quarantine on a remote part of the island until they were well enough to be sent on to the West Indies as indentured – but free – labour. St Helena, which contains the largest slave grave in the world, is honouring with a new memorial the bones of the three hundred or so skeletons of enslaved people excavated during the building of the access road to the new airport.

The book is informed by extensive reading, and numerous old sources are quoted at length. The island’s natural history is presented in meticulous detail; so also is its historic role as a prison fortress, and the many attempts by various governors to get this or that farming project or local industry going to offset the island’s chronic budget deficit. Few ever paid off; most fell by the wayside from sudden changes of policy or governance, from apathy or because some crackpot initiatives were never going to work.

A huge amount of detail is compressed into only 205 pages of text. For those who know the island, MacGregor’s well-illustrated handbook provides a succinct account of one of the world’s loneliest and most mysterious places.

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County Durham. By MARTIN ROBERTS, NIKOLAUS PEVSNER and ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON. 220mm. Pp xx + 880, 125 col ills, 64 figs, 11 maps. The Buildings of England series. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2021. ISBN 9780300225044. £45 (hbk).

Originally published in 1953 by Penguin and revised in 1983 with new material by Elizabeth Williamson, this 2021 edition of Pevsner’s *County Durham* in the Buildings of England series features new contributions by Martin Roberts.

When Nikolaus Pevsner left Göttingen and came to England as a refugee in 1933, his career soon took him into the milieu of art and architectural history. He was most surprised to discover that in England there was no equivalent to the monumental series of German architectural guides founded by Georg Dehio (1850–1932), *100 Jahre Handbuch der Deutschen Kunstdenkmäler*. This eventually inspired Pevsner to found his ever-popular series. The concept was always that the books should be easy for the traveller to carry and be literally packed with all the information needed to enjoy a building. How pleased he would be to know that *County Durham* has not only gone into a third edition, fully and excellently revised by Martin Roberts, FSA, but also that, although expanded and larger, it has kept to the original concept of being comfortably portable.

County Durham is a treasure-house of historic buildings of every category. The range of type, date and style is wide, the star monument being Durham Cathedral, indisputably the finest Norman church in England. Early medieval monuments include Jarrow, Monkwearmouth (Outer Sunderland North), Escomb, Seaham, Auckland Saint Andrew (South Church) and a fine cross-head in Durham Cathedral. Notable castles include Durham, Brancepeth, Auckland,

Lumley, Lambton and Raby. The comprehensive gazetteer describes a multiplicity of churches and chapels, historic county houses, stone-built market towns, railway buildings, newly-discovered work by local Victorian and Edwardian architects and Modernist architecture. Importantly, it includes a chapter on the industrial heritage of the county, 'Industrial Archaeology' by Stafford Linsley.

In 1974, the boundaries of County Durham were altered by government reorganisation. In her postscript to the introduction of the 1983 edition, Elizabeth Williamson explains the reasons. In his foreword, Martin Roberts writes that his 2021 volume retains the pre-1974 county boundaries. The 1983 edition is well-expanded from the 1953 volume, with Elizabeth Williamson's foreword and her 'Extensively Revised Introduction'. This third edition of 2021 has been skilfully enlarged and extended by Martin Roberts.

The introduction now embraces fourteen specialist and inspiring chapters. Topics are wide-ranging and include landscape, geology and building stones, early settlement in County Durham (with material on the Mesolithic period), parks and gardens *c* 1550 to 1800, vernacular buildings from *c* 1550 and industrial archaeology. The chapters are substantial and follow Roberts' foreword, where he records his 'first thanks' to Nikolaus Pevsner and Elizabeth Williamson 'for the fine text that I inherited'.

Another star feature of the volume is the section of 125 brand-new, fine colour photographs in the middle of the book, most of them taken by Roberts' son, Will. The glossary, good as ever, is rearranged with its line drawings together in the centre. This is a superb Pevsner, and clearly the result of driving work and research. In his foreword, the author records that the project took him six years to complete. One may hazard a guess that even more time and study went into the task.

County Durham will be indispensable for the architectural student and the exploring visitor alike, and equally valuable for the armchair traveller. The masterpiece in the gazetteer is the essay on Durham Cathedral. The spirit of this spectacular building shines through the book, a fitting tribute to Nikolaus Pevsner, who loved Durham Cathedral above all other monuments.

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The Household Accounts of Lady Margaret Beaufort (1443–1509): from the archives of St John's College, Cambridge. Edited by SUSAN POWELL. 240mm. Pp xviii + 776, 18 b&w pls. British Academy Records of Social and Economic History New series 63. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2022. ISBN 9780197267042. £145 (hbk).

Lady Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII, was one of the most extraordinary and formidable women in late medieval England. She was also notable for her piety, and it is this aspect of Lady Margeret's life, and in particular her patronage of the Brigittine house at Syon, that led that Professor Susan Powell to produce this weighty (in every sense) edition of a selection of her household accounts.

Powell's Introduction is divided into five sections, three of these focused on the production, form and content of the accounts presented in the edition. Her overview of Lady Margaret's life is 'an extremely potted history', understandable in one sense because there are other detailed accounts of this, although slightly more information might have been useful further to set the edited records in a broader historical context. As a prelude to the edited text, the Introduction does, however, include a most useful overview of all of Lady Margaret's surviving accounts, both those in the volume and unpublished material in the archive of St John's College, Cambridge. Implicit in the latter is perhaps the hope that this will spur others to continue Professor Powell's sterling efforts and make these available in edited form. We are also introduced to members of Lady Margaret's household, from the highest officers to lowest servants, a cast of characters who inhabit the accounts. The discussion of the relationship between her staff and companions, who included relatives and some clerics and scholars who later were to have high-flying careers, is something that should prove very useful to a range of scholars. There is also a detailed discussion of how the accounts were drawn-up and checked, an understandably complex and thorough process considering the amounts of money and range of goods and people involved. A final section in the Introduction is a meticulous investigation of the various hands found throughout the accounts, two of which Powell names the "Sprawling" Hand' and the "curly" hand';