



Mackenzie, N. G. (2018) Family and business during the industrial revolution. *Business History*, pp. 1-2.

(doi:[10.1080/00076791.2018.1484592](https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2018.1484592)) [Book Review]

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Deposited on: 11 July 2019

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Family and business during the industrial revolution by Hannah Barker, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017, i-xv + 262 pp, 28 black and white figures/illustrations, £60 (hardback), £57 (ebook), ISBN 13: 978-0198786023

Hannah Barker's *Family and business during the industrial revolution* is a piece of scholarly research that is as impressive in its depth of analysis as it is in its scope of enquiry. This may seem like a slightly odd assertion when you discover that the book focuses principally on families and business in the North West of England, but the quality of research undertaken in the work shines light on experiences of these families in such a way that it offers a number of universally applicable insights to even modern day family businesses. In this sense then it is a work of no small achievement that skilfully navigates the challenges of making what at first may seem a narrow geographical focus become of a more general interest, and beyond historians too. Universal family themes of taxes, death, and trouble come to life through tight storytelling and critical analysis that leads the reader through individual life stories, family histories, and business histories that are firmly rooted in the spatial and institutional contexts of their experiences. Alternately focusing in on the micro level then zooming out to the macro level, Barker provides an impressive level of detail that, sitting beside her considered and persuasive analysis, provides clear overarching themes throughout the book of what was (and is) to be families in business.

The structure of the book is easy to follow and sensibly composed after the introduction chapters on Wealth-Holding and Investment; Family and Inheritance; Family and Business; Cooperation, Duty and Love; Home, Business, and the Household; and Family and Household are followed by a conclusion that nicely brings together the principal themes present in the book. Barker is aided on two chapters by her former research assistants, Mina

Ishuzu and Jane Hamlett (who has herself written on , which are based on articles published in this journal ('Inheritance and Continuity in Small Family Businesses During the Early Industrial Revolution', *Business History*, 54 (2012), 227-44) and the *Journal of Family History* ('Living above the Shop: Home, Business, and Family in the English "Industrial Revolution"', *Journal of Family History*, 35, (2010), 311-28). The research for the book is comprised of archival and legal materials sourced from a number of archives located around the north west of England, London, and various other published sources. It is from these sources that a rich and engaging picture is drawn of family business during the industrial revolution, bringing together the disparate but common stories of families in business, doing business with each other, and facing the different issues that families and businesses face on a day to day basis. Barker does a wonderful job of showing both the failings and successes of family business during this period.

Considerations of success and failure are neatly captured in the story of the social climbing Liverpoolian baker, later merchant then back to baker, John Coleman. This is told through the use of his personal diaries, trade directories, newspaper reports, archival materials and court entries, weaving together the different sources to tell the reader how he grew his business, only for it to fall apart as a result of too many risky investments and a personal ambition that led him to ruin. Barker quotes Coleman as saying "my wish for more took more than all away", illustrating the pitfalls of success, as well as showing an early insight into entrepreneurial failure, stigma, and the reflections of those at the sharp end of capitalism's development. Coleman's story doesn't end there however, he finds some redemption in going back to his original calling of baking and finding solace in his Christian convictions helping him back to a reasonable standard of living. The insights into both the personal and business affairs of entrepreneurs like Coleman are a hallmark of Baker's

approach to the book, showing a deftness in writing that is both sympathetic and always respectful of the subjects. In this sense Baker's book sits very nicely next to Andrew Popp's *Entrepreneurial Families: Business, Marriage and Life in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Routledge, 2015) in exploring nineteenth century entrepreneurship, family business, and the personal connections and stories that came with the territory. Both have in common engaging writing that draws the reader in and takes them on a tour of space and time that is both enthralling and rewarding.

Baker's book is meticulously footnoted throughout, with densely packed references which go no small way to illustrating the scholarship and research that has gone into this work. This is of course commendable, but also gives rise to an opportunity that the book misses – a chapter explicating the approach, methodology, and frame of analysis would have perhaps helped the reader better appreciate the volume of work that went into the research, and helped Baker show her clear mastery of her craft. The bibliography shows 33 different archival collections, a large number of directories covering the years 1766-1824, various maps, newspapers and other primary sources consulted and analysed in the construction of the individual stories and overarching theme of the book. This was no small task and the references go some way to showing the reader how the different narratives contained in the book were constructed.

Ultimately, what Barker does is shed light on a number of what are otherwise largely forgotten businesses of the industrial revolution and in doing so gives a voice to people who were the engine of capitalism, but who were much more than that. As mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and so forth they were people who were trying to build lives for themselves and their kin. Barker illustrates this beautifully and her work is of such quality that it will be of value for years to come for historians and family business scholars alike, as well as human

geographers, and family scholars. The book is firmly rooted in its geographical focus and time period, but has a wider appeal and value that is a culmination of high quality, rigorous and in depth research and excellent writing.

Niall G MacKenzie

University of Strathclyde

niall.mackenzie@strath.ac.uk