

NEW PUBLICATION

Michael Powell and Terry Wyke, eds., *A Bread and Cheese Bookseller: The Recollections of James Weatherley*. Chetham Society, 2021, vol 55. £39.95.

Selling books on the streets of Manchester in the Industrial Revolution

There is no reason why we should ever have heard of **James Weatherley**. Like the vast majority of the poor who lived during the industrial revolution, he should have left only the smallest of footprints in the historical record. He was born in Salford workhouse in 1794 and, 66 years later, would have suffered the public shame of a pauper's funeral had it not been for the kindness of friends. Weatherley lived in Manchester all of his life, spending many of those years selling second-hand books on the streets, close to the Exchange, on the appropriately named Pennyless Hill.

Shortly before his death he was persuaded to write an account of his life. The manuscript was acquired by Chetham's Library in the 1880s where it has remained unopened and forgotten. It provides one of the very few first-hand accounts of an ordinary working man's experiences of living through the industrial revolution.

Weatherley, who began working in the cotton factories when a child, was to witness Manchester transformed from a small market town into the 'the city of tall chimneys' – a place of extremes that appalled and fascinated observers. When trade was slack in the mills, Weatherley made money by selling Eccles cakes on the streets. Aged 17, he left the mill, having decided to make his living selling books on the street. It was to prove a hard and precarious life, but one which was to bring him into contact with the lower reaches of the book trade and its customers - the honest and dishonest.

Fortunately, Jem Weatherley was possessed of an exceptional memory, able to recall the details of not only those who had cheated him out of pennies but also those wider events such as the Peterloo Massacre and other protests that came to define Manchester's history.

Weatherley is a unique voice. His recollections provide a view of history from the gutter rather than simply history from below.

This new volume edited by the late Michael Powell and Terry Wyke provides the full text of Weatherley's manuscript.

Michael Powell, Librarian of Chetham's Library, published on local history, the book trade and bibliography of the Manchester region. He was an active member and supporter of many local societies, including the Chetham Society and the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society. He died in 2019.

Terry Wyke taught social and economic history at Manchester Metropolitan University, retiring in 2016. His publications focus on the Manchester region including its bibliography, the cotton industry and public monuments. He was a founder editor of the *Manchester Region History Review*.

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