

Book reviews

Terry Gourvish, *British Rail, 1974–97: from Integration to Privatisation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford (2002), 706 pp., £50.00.

Railway deficits figured prominently in debates over transport policy in many parts of the developed world during the 1970s, even as oil shocks suggested greater railway investment. Terry Gourvish's history of British Rail largely is a history of such debates in England between the Treasury, the Department of Transport, and the British Railways Board from 1974 until privatisation. Views of labour also are considered. *British Rail 1974–97* not only chronicles the debates but also examines how they directed evolution of railroad investments, organisation, and services. Gourvish then evaluates the results under difference regimes.

Dr Gourvish is known for histories of business in England, France and Japan. Several years ago the British Railways Board commissioned him to write a volume on the first twenty-five years of nationalisation which became *British Railways, 1948–73: a Business History* (1986); for this volume the board commissioned him to continue the story until privatisation. The board gave him full access to its archives, which along with interviews with ninety-eight persons, mostly board members, constitutes the primary sources.

The analysis is broken into four periods. Part I covers the years from 1974 to 1979 under the Labour government. Part II examines the evolution of the railways under Margaret Thatcher from 1979 to 1989, a time when British Rail's management structure was radically transformed and its ancillary businesses were sold to the private sector, but the core railway business was still not threatened with privatisation. Part III examines the period from 1990 to 1994, when the government dithered on the question of privatising British Rail, and the British Rail

Board further reorganised itself into a structure that it felt would be suitable for privatisation. Part IV deals with the period from 1993 until 1997, when the government decided to implement a completely different vision of privatisation, compelling the British Rail Board to undo all that it had so laboriously and successfully accomplished during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Within each part Gourvish identifies the board at the beginning of the period, including its responsibilities and the backgrounds of personalities appointed to positions; describes the structure of British Rail management and its relation to the board; describes the policy debates and their outcomes, including impetus for change, formation of objections, identification of possible options, and why some were chosen over others; evaluates industrial relations; analyses the performance of British Rail as related to particular policies, using performance indicators. His evaluations compare different sectors over time and occasionally they compare British Rail with other European railways.

In 1974 the culture of British Rail's management focused on the supply of rail services. The objective was to run more and better trains rather than justify their existence. The half of BR's labour force that operated and maintained trains, tracks, signals, and electrification was organised into geographically based divisions whose supervising general managers were the major centres of power in British Rail. This aspect of British Rail management differed little from that of many railroads in the developed world. Unlike most other railroad organisations, however, British Rail management was obsessed with the *engineering* side of the railway—particularly in the design and construction of rolling stock. The other half of British Rail's workers were devoted to engineering. Gourvish documents how this structure was incapable of reducing the railway deficit and how

both the Labour and Tory governments had little confidence in it.

Much of the story that Gourvish tells is of the progressive dismantling of this organisation and its replacement by a demand-driven sector management structure. The board sold its engineering functions to the private sector in the late 1980s, while on the railway side it created new management positions to preside over market sectors. By the early 1990s sector management displaced geographically based division management. Sectors included Intercity passenger, European passenger, Network Southeast (London area suburban), provincial passenger, and freight service. Because of successful efforts to identify incremental costs of all services that BR provided, sector managers were able to determine the profitability of their initiatives and make adjustments as necessary to reduce costs or increase revenues. They also had the power to marshal resources necessary to accomplish their objectives. By the early 1990s the new BR management structure converted large deficits in Intercity and Network Southeast passenger services into significant profits which grew even through a recession, while most passenger traffic was retained. While initiatives in freight generally failed, the Tory government's confidence in British Rail management soared, prompting it to approve major new rail investments, including electrification of the east-coast main line and construction of the Channel tunnel.

The successful evolution of sector management in the early 1990s into what the board called Organisation for Quality resulted in vertically integrated sectors that could have been privatised, with the board remaining as a government-backed policy-making body that also would maintain a culture of safety. The board favoured this approach. Almost without warning, however, the Tory government in 1993 backed a privatisation plan put forward by free-market ideologues based on separating infrastructure, train operation, and maintenance functions. Gourvish is unequivocal in his assessment that the break-up of the vertically integrated sectors was a mistake. Assets were sold at

below market value, there were large costs of privatisation, the culture of safety was lost, profits disappeared, management attention was diverted from train operation to the selling of assets, resulting in service deterioration, and, most important, there was no organisation remaining that had a long-term vision for making railway investments. Far from improving the public welfare, privatisation diminished it.

British Rail 1974–97 is a fascinating work. Its length and detail constitute a rare, thorough, and largely unbiased examination of policy formulation over an extended period for a major national railway system. What is revealed is debate at a higher level of sophistication than this reader imagined was possible. It is interesting, though, that the debate rarely examined the social role of the railway. It essentially assumed continuation of the existing system while examining ways to make it profitable. To this chronicle, Dr Gourvish adds thoughtful and persuasive evaluations, well grounded in business organisation and economic theory. This is an extraordinary resource for scholars in business and transport history. Another round of editing and culling probably is called for, however, before the material can be appreciated by more general readers.

Gregory L. Thompson, Florida State University

Colin Divall and Andrew Scott, *Making Histories in Transport Museums*, Leicester University Press, London and New York (2001), 231 pp., £60.00.

This volume is one of the Making Histories series, produced under the editorship of Gaynor Kavanagh, which focuses on museums first in terms of their *product* – their collections and how they are displayed – and then in terms of *process*, exploring the nature of popular and individual engagement with museums. The authors have some problem in limiting their scope and defining what counts as a transport museum, but resolve it happily by concentrating on railways, with additional references to cars, buses

and trams, and the odd aside on canals and shipping. Indeed, naval vessels and fisheries can hardly count as 'other modes of public transport', and the decision works well, as it draws on the knowledge and experience of the authors' work with the National Railway Museum and its partner Institute of Railway Studies at York.

The result is a detailed and wide-ranging discussion of transport museums set within a framework of contemporary academic debate. The main purpose is not so much to celebrate the number and variety of transport museums as to explore how such museums might achieve a greater degree of critical reflection. The first chapter sketches the broad outlines of the emergence of railway museums in the twentieth century, and how different patterns of collecting developed in Britain, continental Europe and the United States. A clear summary of the main thrusts of current museological analysis is given. Do museums simply reflect the visitor's own personal and collective memories, or does the ordering of objects create types of narrative which perpetuate ideological bias? A clear account is given of the three principal types of display found in transport museums: the gloriously cluttered confusion of unsorted heaps of objects; the 'formalist' approach which relies on classifying objects by series or types and which tends to result in serried rows of vehicles; and finally the thematic approach, which groups objects, for example, according to the purposes for which they were used, but nevertheless still relies on the principles of traditional classification. There is an acute analysis of the way that engineering taxonomies which developed in different industries shaped early museum classification – locomotives were always classified by technical characteristics and operating capabilities, as opposed to cars, which were defined first and foremost by company brand.

The whiggism and technological utopianism of such displays is criticised as the authors move on to a discussion of how a deeper sense of historical context might be achieved. New types of display were explored from the 1980s onwards,

partly as a reaction to declining visitor numbers, but also because many modern museum curators are trained professionals and think of the museum as an agent of social change. The tendency, however, even of new displays is to rely on an atmospheric ensemble of objects which inevitably paints a more or less harmonious picture of an untroubled past. The politics of exhibiting, the perils of corporate sponsorship, and ever-present financial constraints are responsible for this, but so is the nature of the material that transport museums have to work with. There are various suggestions for creating displays which challenge accepted notions, and move beyond putting ever longer 'books on the wall'. This leads to a discussion of changing approaches to object analysis, theories of material culture and ways in which visitors might be helped to decode their meanings.

A particularly interesting discussion of heritage transport as museums follows; it is not always appreciated that many such railways have legal museum status. Why do visitors like steam railways so much? Is it simply playing at being passengers on a journey to the past? The mythic structure of heritage railways is especially conservative, where journey and environment are envisaged as picturesque rural landscapes which may be aesthetically consumed without troubling the critical faculties. Suggestions are made as to how the experience might be made more questioning and the visitors disabused of some myths, but the authors admit that there are practical constraints and that this is a particularly 'challenging' area. They end on an optimistic note: a balance can be struck between providing ranks of gleaming vehicles for the tireless enthusiast to inspect in minute detail and something for the visitor wanting a good day out, providing a genuine analysis of social context and the possibility of different interpretations.

Making Histories provides a lucid exposition of current museological thought as applied to transport museums, and has an extensive bibliography. The authors draw on semiotic theory but pursue the analysis without dependence

on jargon. They draw too on Foucauldian ideas of power and ideological bias, of the coercive nature of much museum display, but do not use it rigidly, recognising the ability of visitors to create their own interpretations. One strength of the study is its concern with visitors, and the admission that in many ways we know little about how and why visitors react to displays. This is important, as transport is an area where the 'enthusiast' plays an important role in supporting and even conserving collections. Most heritage railways are run by volunteers, who replicate forms of social organisation (in particular as far as gender is concerned – men on the footplate, women in the cafeteria) which perpetuate rather than challenge existing myths. The authors worry about visitors, as all good museum people should. They want to inform and educate the visitor, they want to provide exhibitions of their material which challenge and extend knowledge, they feel the visitor deserves the best that interpretation can provide. The danger, however, is that this may result in a desire to control the visitor experience more closely, rather than letting informal learning take its course. This has to be a response to the importance placed on visitor statistics as the crucial indicator of success, and of the contingencies of government funding, which demand measurable outputs for unmeasurable experiences. The democratic belief in interpretative diversity sits awkwardly both with the reality of government strictures on funding and with enthusiast involvement.

It is a pity that recent developments in the museum world, as a result of free entry to the national museums, came too late for discussion in this volume. The tentative suggestions of ways for designers to help visitors reach a deeper understanding of the subject could go further. While sensibly refraining from investing in quickly outdated IT equipment, there was no mention of the effective use of audio guides, which have the advantage of providing multiple layers of information while not disturbing other people. Visitors continue to create different meanings, especially by using the locations for

purposes different from those which were originally intended. Heritage railways are keen for visitors to have parties or reserve coaches for corporate entertainment. And are there weddings in the royal train in the National Railway Museum, as in the Queen's House at the National Maritime Museum? Finally, the queues outside the National Railway Museum for the immensely popular exhibition of Thomas the Tank Engine remind us of the importance of literary representations of transport, to say nothing of film. I recall how a literary colleague was dragged round the highly formalist display of cars in the Musée nationale de l'automobile in Mulhouse by her two small sons. The displays became relevant to all through an enquiry as to which car Mr Toad would have been able to drive in 1908 on his anarchic adventures in *The Wind in the Willows*. Poop, poop, oh my, what transports of delight! Harnessing these to critical reflection may be a continuing challenge but this volume provides an excellent starting point.

Sophie Forgan, University of Teesside

Chris Nash, Mark Wardman, Kenneth Button and Peter Nijkamp (eds), *Classics in Transport Analysis III, Railways*, Edward Elgar, London (2003), 556 pp., £120.00.

Edward Elgar have already produced two volumes in this series, on maritime and air transport, in which classic articles are brought together in one volume. By definition in such volumes there is no original material and editors have to entice potential readers by their careful and clever choice and arrangement of articles, and by their introduction to the volume, which will, hopefully, contextualise, synthesise and educate. The editors of this volume on railways immediately introduce some subversion into the mix by redefining the seeming remit. They decide not to focus on 'classics' *per se*, unless you feel that the 1990s, which account for a quarter of the papers reproduced in the volume, were the golden era of railway transport analysis – 'Discuss.' Instead they have sought to bring

together 'a set of papers which collectively cover the issues we consider important to a current understanding of the analysis of rail transport' (p. xiii). There are certainly many 'classics', including papers by Hotelling, Foster and Beesley, and Griliches but the editors freely admit to including some relatively obscure papers. Although the inclusion of some of these obscure papers may be questioned, in general it would seem to be a commendable approach if the target audience is practitioners or serious students of railway transport analysis (serious in the sense that they have the necessary technical skills to follow the theory and especially some of the econometrics that various papers utilise). The editors are also to be commended for their introduction: it is clear and concise, putting the papers in their historiographical and theoretical context in a manner that even the non-technical will be able to understand. It is also proactive in that it raises several interesting questions, points to areas of neglected research and tries to resurrect the reputation of some unfairly neglected papers; reading it whets the appetite of the reader.

The volume is split into six sections: costs and productivity (five papers), pricing (three), regulation and privatisation (four), econometric rail demand models (six), disaggregate choice modelling (five) and investment (five). The section on costs and productivity, which is dominated by debates about America, and that on pricing, driven by debates focused on Europe, effectively show how econometric methodology has penetrated railway analysis and how it has been utilised in an increasingly sophisticated manner over time. Indeed, this is a theme that runs through most of the sections. The section on regulation and privatisation begins with a classic paper by Baumol, which is followed by case studies on probably the three most significant countries in this field: the United States, Japan and Britain. The next section on rail demand includes influential papers by Tyler and Hassard, who developed the 'rooftop model', and by Owen and Phillips, on the effect of economic factors on inter-urban passenger demand. The following section

also focuses on demand, in particular on mode choice models, which deal not only with factors such as alternative transport modes but also with 'secondary' factors such as comfort, convenience and reliability of delivery. The final section on investment is possibly the least coherent, although this is a relative criticism which reflects more on the impressive collation of papers in previous sections. Throughout the editors ensure that freight traffic is not forgotten.

Overall, its primary audience will probably welcome this volume. However, it is less clear that it will appeal to transport historians, particularly those who lack or are not interested in econometric training, since it does not have an explicit historical remit and those papers that are most relevant for them are the older papers which most will already own.

Peter Howlett, London School of Economics

R. Angus Buchanan, *The Life and Times of Isambard Kingdom Brunel*, Hambleton Press, London (2002), 318 pp., £20.00.

Isambard Kingdom Brunel was a 'little giant' of engineering whose works, like the Great Western Railway and the SS *Great Eastern*, have assumed iconic status. Although two descendants, Isambard Brunel and Celia Brunel Noble, produced informative biographies which were respectively worthy and engaging, for the last forty years the definitive account has been L. T. C. Rolt's. Here Angus Buchanan offers Brunel the full scholarly treatment he deserves.

Buchanan charts Brunel's apprenticeship, his early projects with his father, Marc Isambard Brunel, and his activities in and around Bristol, the launchpad for his career and the site of the audacious Clifton suspension bridge. Particular attention rightly goes to Brunel's 'masterpiece', the Great Western Railway, designed as an ideal system for comfortable well-to-do passengers who wanted high speed over long distances. Brunel clearly intended the *Great Eastern*

to be an extension of a global transport system; Buchanan reminds us that it was also, like the Thames tunnel of Marc Isambard Brunel, a huge media event. He sees Brunel's overseas projects, although limited in number, as typical of a diaspora of British engineering expertise in an Age of Empire; since he was directing at a distance, Brunel's working methods were for once revealed in correspondence, as were his struggles to impose British professional standards abroad and to maintain such elusive quantities as authority, position and confidence.

The last and most interesting part of the book continues Buchanan's exploration, synthesised in *The Engineers* (1989), of what it meant for a Victorian engineer to be a professional, socially, administratively and politically. He had to be a gentleman: clubbable (like Brunel), competent, courteous and fair; but he had also to be not so gentlemanly as to be lazy or independent of his master. Brunel's office emerges as a place in which a dozen projects might be simultaneously co-ordinated whilst – or perhaps because – Brunel remained aloof even from fervent supporters like Daniel Gooch. Buchanan has claimed elsewhere that the engineers were, at least in public, a non-political bunch, but Brunel is shown here to have been an economic liberal, averse to patents and government interference as curbs on progressive private enterprise.

In constructing this biography the author has drawn effectively on Brunel's embarrassingly self-conscious early diaries, and on the extensive archival materials concentrated in Bristol and the Public Record Office. Buchanan's writing eschews the quirkiness of Noble and the infectious verve of Rolt in preference for the caution of modern scholarship. Many myths are laid to rest: we can no longer be certain that rats did eat the wax on the troublesome valves of Brunel's atmospheric railway. The book, therefore, is corrective. For its thorough treatment of Brunel's neglected projects, like the bridge at Balmoral, so austere as to leave Queen Victoria unamused, it is to be congratulated. Where Buchanan assumes the reader has absorbed more familiar narratives, the book is not

exhaustive but rather provides supplementary interpretations.

There are some surprises. Buchanan effectively presents the fruits of modern studies, like his own, on particular engineering projects, on industrial archaeology, especially around Bristol, and on the culture of the engineering profession. He discusses the social and political context ('the times') within which Brunel worked, linking it, usually successfully, with the more particular dynamics of Brunel's actions. He gives less space to theoretically driven studies. Brunel's talk about the Great Western Railway, his Italian railway projects and the *Great Eastern* was permeated by system-speak; Buchanan himself writes of Brunel's gigantic woven fabric and uses the phrase 'technological system' at least once. But there is no explicit engagement with Thomas Hughes or his social constructivist heirs. A closer engagement, also, with the rich cultural history of nineteenth-century science might have delivered more evenhanded evaluations of those who, like Dionysius Lardner, disagreed with Brunel.

In any biography much depends on the skill with which the author animates his subject from the limited sources available, and engineers leave fewer traces than men of letters. The qualities that Buchanan assigns to Brunel, namely diplomacy, panache, genius, virtuosity, energy, dedication, courage and persistence, would have satisfied Samuel Smiles and his readers. They become meaningful to us by example and by comparison, especially when the author places Brunel next to his peers, like Robert Stephenson, with whom he had a close friendship, and John Scott Russell, with whom he famously disagreed. Buchanan would be the first to admit that, according to contemporaries, this same Brunel was extravagant, addicted to novelty, autocratic and assertive to the point of aggression when his professional status was challenged. Resolving the apparent tension between those images would amount, perhaps, to an investigation of Brunel's 'self-fashioning' and the building of a reputation central to his career.

Throughout the book Buchanan insists on Brunel's 'vision'. Thus the Great Western Railway carried the 'visionary stamp of his own creative genius' (p. 81). But vision turns out to be a slippery concept: although outstanding in its continuity (for Brunel), it might never be fully realised (as with the GWR), it might be premature (the *Great Eastern*) or, having no successors (like others of Brunel's projects), it might be sterile. Some visionary projects failed because they were 'beyond the imagination of [Brunel's] contemporaries to accept' (p. 63) but others, like the GWR locomotives salvaged by Gooch, appear not to have been the victims of lack of imagination. Buchanan has, then, a difficult task. Brunel's decided lack of vision concerning workers' rights was not 'a personal failure' (p. 183), since it was typical of his age. The experimental atmospheric railway, the launch of the *Great Eastern* and the many other disasters of his career are addressed head-on, in a separate chapter, but they are framed as tributes to his capacity for survival or lapses for which posterity has forgiven him. I doubt whether Brunel would have welcomed our forgiveness. There is no doubt, however, that historians will welcome this impressive biography as the starting point for further explorations into the man Smiles called 'the very Napoleon of engineers'.

Ben Marsden, University of Aberdeen

William H. Flayhart III, *Perils of the Atlantic: Steamship Disasters, 1850s to the Present*, W. W. Norton, New York and London (2003), 380 pp., US\$28.95.

This hardback book is very engagingly written and has over two dozen illustrations. It comprises twenty-two chapters, each, bar the introduction, on one accident, so that it covers twenty-one accidents involving twenty-six ships. In each chapter there is a good background to the accident, in terms of the company owning the ship, the ship's history and any other relevant features. The accident is described, based on newspaper reports and other contemporary sources, the

attempts at rescue are delineated and the aftermath is outlined. All the accidents occurred in the Atlantic in the last 150 years, and are presented in chronological order. The balance is weighted to the second half of the nineteenth century, with fourteen accidents covered, and only seven for the whole of the twentieth century. It is a good read.

One puzzle is the purpose of the book. As stated, it is 'to describe some of the challenges mankind faced' trying to cross the Atlantic, but there is virtually no other explanation. It is not a statistical analysis of accident types or causes, nor is there a consideration of the extent to which these disasters led to changes in legislation or changes in practice. Nor is there much effort to apportion blame for the accidents. Indeed, since this selection of accidents is not comprehensive, any analysis would be partial, and possibly biased. That leads to another unanswered question, namely what is the basis of selection for inclusion? This is not addressed in the book. We do not know whether these are the worst in terms of death toll, or the most high-profile incidents, or what the basis of inclusion was. This is important, as we do not know whether these are typical accidents, the worst, or what. The author should have let us know. Another criticism is that there is no conclusion or summing up and so no attempt to determine what we have learnt from this study. Is it perhaps then not an academic work? Well, the academic apparatus is all there – index, bibliography of both books and primary sources, and end-notes specifying sources used – but I suspect from the relatively low price and the contents, or rather from what is not there, that it may be aimed at a large-scale market, not an academic one. That sounded warning bells in this reviewer's head because of the inclusion of two high-profile disasters – the *Titanic* and the *Lusitania* – and the worry of ghoulish interest. It seems an opportunity to add to the discussion of safety has been missed.

John Armstrong, Thames Valley University

Paul Rosen, *Framing Production: Technology, Culture and Change in the British Bicycle Industry*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA and London (2002), 219 pp., US\$32.95.

Paul Rosen's 1995 Ph.D. thesis is an essential reference for academics interested in socio-technical change in the cycle industry, and this book is a distillation and development of it, placed in the context of a historical overview from 1888 to the present. To use the author's own words, the book is mainly lodged in 'the multi-disciplinary field of *science, technology and society* (STS) and its sub-field *social studies of technology* (SST)'.

Any author tackling such a topic would find it difficult to avoid reference to Wiebe Bijker and Trevor Pinch's seminal 1984 article in *Social Studies of Science*, which has since been developed by Bijker in *Of Bicycles, Bakelite and Bulbs* (1995). These use the development of the bicycle in the period 1839–92 to demonstrate a model of social construction of technology that gives a radically different reading of the development of the machines from that of the 'quasi-linear' technological histories which dominate the subject. Rosen devotes his opening chapter to an analysis of this and other theoretical approaches to technological change, while the whole book aims to build upon and reassess the validity of Bijker's approach. One of Bijker's failings was his reliance on outdated and often discredited factual history; this is not something that Rosen can be accused of. He is as aware of recent work by collectors and cycling enthusiasts as of more 'academic' studies. It is pleasing to see the output of the International Conference of Cycling History cited frequently in a book of this kind, particularly after Bijker's singular failure to acknowledge it. On bibliography and references alone Rosen's work is creditable.

While Bijker's interest in the bicycle diminishes after the 'stabilisation' and eventual 'closure' of the diamond-frame safety bicycle of the 1890s, Rosen's interest commences at this point. He explores the shift from what he terms the 'factory bicycle' made by the principal

British manufacturers at the end of the nineteenth century to the 'mass bicycle' of the mid-twentieth century to the 'globally flexible bicycle' of the present day. To a great extent these changes revolve round a technologically 'closed' product: at a casual glance it would be difficult to differentiate a 'mass' from a 'factory' bicycle, and arguably there is little more than aesthetic tinkering between a 'mass' and a 'globally flexible' bicycle. This is very different from the competing and widely different bicycle types of the 1860–90 period that Bijker investigates. Furthermore Rosen restricts the bulk of his study to the output of one maker, Raleigh. This is understandable. Raleigh was a product of the 'factory' period. Founded in the late 1880s, it had become a quality manufacturer by the time of the 1890s boom and survived the crash that followed it to return to private ownership under Frank and then Harold Bowden. A voracious consumer of weaker rivals, in the late 1950s Raleigh was making over 50 per cent of British-built bicycles in a factory covering over sixty acres. After its merger with the British Cycle Corporation it became responsible for 75 per cent of production but lost its autonomy. Until the 1980s it attempted to respond to a diminishing market and the major cultural shifts that resulted in the 'globally flexible' bicycle. Today Raleigh merely assembles machines from components which are largely made abroad. The example of Raleigh, therefore, provides Rosen with an unbroken case study that encompasses his whole period and has a substantial archive to facilitate research.

Dr Rosen is not the first to use Raleigh sources, and Roger Lloyd Jones and M. J Lewis's *Raleigh and the British Bicycle Industry* gives a more straightforward business history. Rosen, while giving a satisfactory business history, seeks the socio-cultural factors that underpin management policy making. This is where the use of the social construction of technology approach comes into its own. Rosen is refreshingly unwilling to pre-judge events. In his exploration of the 'factory bicycle' he points out the cultural factors that allowed companies such as

Raleigh to invest in American manufacturing technology while rejecting American working practices. He rightly sees this as a conscious decision, based on an understanding of British conditions, rather than as a result of short-sighted ignorance – the assumption made at the time of David Hounshell's work in the 1980s and still often repeated. The same is said for Raleigh's only partial adoption of Taylorist and Fordist practices in the period of the 'mass' bicycle, and the complexities of the company's relationship with its workforce at this time is well illustrated in 'The case of Tivey'. Rosen's interest in the culture of the shop floor and his cultural-historical approach allow him to make good use of fictional sources such as Alan Sillitoe's 1958 novel *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*.

Rosen is not, however, entirely able to distance himself from his own subjective value judgements. In 'The destabilisation of mass production' he writes from the perspective of a bicycling enthusiast in his account of Raleigh's policy of marketing bicycles as toys, fashion accessories or indeed anything other than a serious means of transport between the 1970s and the 1990s. Here critical reaction by a small number of cyclists and commentators is allowed to override what seems to be justifiable market strategy on the part of Raleigh. Andrew Ritchie in *King of the Road* (1975) is cited in his assessment of the Raleigh 'Chopper' as the 'worst aspect of this collapse of confidence in the real value of bicycles', while this is reinforced by a more recent and overlong quotation by Kath Hamer (of York Cycleworks) decrying the Raleigh 'Activator'. Both these machines were successful products in manufacturing terms and both are good illustrations of the cultural position of cycling in developed economies.

Rosen's analysis of the development of the globally flexible bicycle is the most challenging part of the book. Here the content is much less dependent on Raleigh, and rightly so, given the concept of 'global flexibility' and the shift away from the 'one factory does all' approach that epitomised the production of the 'mass bicycle'. He sees the globally flexible

bicycle not merely as the outcome of business and manufacturing strategies based on the familiar equations of cost, plant and market but more significantly as a part of postmodern culture. Using his thesis it could be argued that global flexibility in technology and manufacture can happen only in a postmodernist age and the attitude of mind that it engenders. Rosen is at pains to point out that, like postmodernism, global flexibility is inclusive, allowing elements of the previous cultural context to continue within it. The Japanese firm Shimano is given attention in this respect as a manufacturer that has flourished in the current context. Shimano make components that bicycle builders would find difficult to produce themselves and were quick to appreciate the importance for mountain and all-terrain bicycles of easy-to-operate derailleur gear systems. While Shimano moved themselves into a position of power within the globally flexible frame because they do not make bicycles, established major manufacturers such as Raleigh have had difficulty responding to the cultural shift.

Rosen concludes with 'Up the Velorution', a chapter devoted to the culture and politics of cycling and their effects on the globally flexible machine. This follows the model of writers such as Bijker who tend to conclude their work with left-wing political posturing, and one suspects Rosen is tongue-in-cheek in his choice of title. The chapter asks more than it answers, but that is not a criticism. He presents various factors that might affect the ways in which bicycles are designed and built. These range from government policies on sustainability to organisation in factories, to riders' ambivalence between the greenness of the machine as a form of transport and the environmental damage caused by driving to the countryside and riding the machine over it. In all, Rosen achieves his goal of building on the social construction of technology framework to produce a more balanced assessment of technological change than Bijker or other writers using the bicycle as a case study. There is a lot more work to be done, as 'Up the velorution' demonstrates. However, within the library of cycling (and

with a far broader reach than just the bicycle) Rosen has made a significant start toward bridging the gaps between technological, business, manufacturing and cultural history.

Nicholas Oddy, Glasgow School of Art

David Pascoe, *Airspaces*, Reaktion Books, London (2001), 304 pp., £17.95 paperback.

Airports are not what they used to be. When Heathrow opened for business in 1946 it represented little more than the perfunctory effort of a government department in an age of austerity. Today Heathrow is a shopping mall run amok in an age of leisure. Like other international airports, it is a large technological system, constantly expanding in size and complexity with the growth of air traffic. And, with this thought in mind, any new work on airports is to be welcomed. Rigas Doganis's 1992 volume *The Airport Business* gave us an authoritative account of airport economics, and Nicolas Neiertz and Marc Dierikx have looked knowledgeably at specific airports in France and the Netherlands, but until now hardly anything has been written on the social and cultural dimensions of the 'airport experience'.

Now we have David Pascoe's *Airspaces*, a delightful, thought-provoking, irritating and at times incomprehensible book. It is at once a social history of the airport (including a selection of catastrophic plane crashes), a learned discourse on airport architecture and aesthetics, an analysis of airports in art, literature and film and a sociological discussion, seeing airports alternatively as uplifting symbols of modernity or as a nightmare vision of the future. Pascoe urges us to treat airports not as 'sterile transitory zones but as vessels of conception for the societies passing through them'. He moves easily among a cast of characters with views on airports ranging from W. H. Auden to Virginia Woolf, Martin Amis to Andy Warhol, Arthur Hailey to Adolf Hitler, and seems to encompass every subject from terrorism to tea trolleys.

More than any other piece of contemporary architecture airports emphasise what mobile, frenetic lives we lead. They are icons of postmodernity. In an airport we are 'dislocated', literally nowhere. In the departure lounge you cannot go back and you wait ages to go forward. And why, incidentally, are they called 'departure lounges'? At least the railways were honest when they named their creation the 'waiting room'. It is not only the linguistics of the airport which remind us we are *not* in control: among all the tubes and passageways we lose our spatial bearings. Where are we in relation to the car park where we began? Or the aircraft to which we are headed? Airports, Pascoe claims, are totalitarian in the way they destroy our sense of place and substitute a new order of rootlessness. Our movement through them is ordered yet unthinking; we are 'pacified yet vigilant'. Floating between check-in counters, passport controls, security checks and duty-free shops, we are freed from the responsibility of knowing how we are travelling. We don't need to know how to ride a horse, or read a map, or even get ourselves into a railway carriage before the train starts to move; at the airport uniformed functionaries will usher us to our seat when the plane is ready to fly. For Pascoe the modern airport, 'rather than being comfortably numbing, is a fearful place, while the aircraft itself has become a sanctuary, a blessed relief from the chaotic deluge'. A subversive thought crosses the mind of this reviewer: is it possible that they have made airports so stressful and unpleasant in order that we shall be utterly relieved to board the plane and get out of them – all 'fear of flying' forgotten?

Of course, airports were not always like this. Probably the most informative parts of Pascoe's book for transport historians are the sections which deal with airports when they were known as 'airfields' or 'aerodromes', in the age when radio was still called 'wireless' and the facilities were concerned with the needs of aircraft, not passengers. The author's discussion of Berlin Tempelhof airport is enlightening. According to the architect

and thinker Le Corbusier, this Nazi creation was the first airport to be a national icon. And an architect of a later generation, Norman Foster, has described Tempelhof as the 'mother of all modern airports'. Built on a monumental scale in the late 1930s, it was unique in Europe in that it lay at the centre of a capital city, instead of being hidden beyond its suburbs like the British equivalent at Croydon. The fact that it was also a vital part of Hitler's plans to rebuild Berlin in triumphalist style shows how much importance he attached to aviation in all its facets. Standing at the centre of Europe, Tempelhof may be seen as an early indication of his determination (through the German airline Deutsche Lufthansa) to dominate the continent. It had a 'crucial political role, through its size and appearance', notes Pascoe; as Hitler pronounced in 1934, it would 'silence every dissenting critic of Germany'.

Pascoe's high-octane volume is less satisfactory in its treatment of airports within the broader span of twentieth-century transport history. For example, this reviewer would have liked to see parallels drawn between airports and their late nineteenth-century predecessors, the great railway termini. Serving a similar purpose for two different transport systems, one is inclined to ask: has the traveller's 'experience' of them been comparable? Possibly not. The joyous throng often depicted in paintings of railway stations (for example, Stanhope Alexander Forbes's 1925 'Penzance Station') contrasts strongly with the usual anxious portrayal of people in airports. Pascoe concludes his book with the immortal airport scene from the film *Casablanca* (1943) when Humphrey Bogart explains to Ingrid Bergman why she must leave him and get on the Lockheed Electra waiting in the foggy distance. It is an enduring image. Is there not something fatalistic and threatening about our passage through an airport which is never experienced in a railway station? Maybe, maybe not; in any case Mr Pascoe does not tell us.

One other annoying shortcoming in a book of such wide-ranging themes

and fascinating detail: there is no index.

Peter Lyth, University of Nottingham

John Armstrong, John Aldridge, Grahame Boyes, Gordon Mustoe and Richard Storey, *Companion to British Road Haulage History*, Science Museum, London (2003), 544 pp., £39.95.

In 1957 the British Transport Film Unit produced *Fitted Freight*. Portraying the overnight journey of a vacuum-braked freight train from Bristol to Leeds, it showed cinema audiences the crucial role of rail in the carriage of consumer goods. Within a few years making such a film became difficult: it would be impossible today. From playing a supporting role to the railways before 1914, road haulage had replaced them for most non-bulk commodities by the 1970s and the abandonment of BR's Speedlink network in 1991 effectively signalled the end of the railway as a general freight carrier. More positive signs in the late 1990s, such as Enterprise and the use of rail for trunk haulage by some road carriers to avoid motorway congestion, were eclipsed by the Post Office's 2003 decision to transfer all its traffic to road and air: Night Mail would follow Fitted Freight into oblivion. Road-served industrial estates are everywhere: private sidings decay and goods yards have long since become car parks or been redeveloped for housing or retailing. Yet, as Professor Armstrong and his colleagues note in their introduction to this handsome volume, there has been no sustained academic treatment of the haulage industry's history. They disclaim any intention to provide one but they provide the raw materials from which one might be written.

The book is explicitly modelled on Bidle and Simmons's *Oxford Companion to British Railway History* (1997) and shares a degree of common authorship. Some 600 articles cover the industry from A to Y (the compilers evidently failed to find a Z). The largest group (some 180) cover manufacturers and models, a further eighty-six engineering and design. A hundred and fifty entries survey the history of individual haulage companies; inevitably,

the availability of source material means that coverage is biased towards larger concerns in London and major provincial cities at the expense of the 'one man and a WD chassis' operators who sprang up in areas like the Fens in the 1920s. Most of the expected firms figure, although some major operators (e.g. Knights of Old, Prosper de Mulder, Norfolk Line/Lijn) are missing. The politics of an industry that seems to have organised itself with a degree of purpose (and bloodymindedness), and that puts the nineteenth-century 'railway interest' in the shade, account for another 100 entries. Logistics, types of goods and biographies (including two women, equally redoubtable: Alice Walker and Barbara Castle) account for most of the remainder.

The bulk of the book is devoted to motorised transport in the United Kingdom. (CIE is included in the bibliography, but otherwise the Irish Republic is omitted.) Passenger transport is largely excluded, although the carriage of mail and parcels by tram and bus merits entries. There is good coverage of other forms of propulsion (including cycles, motor bikes, hand carts and horse-drawn vehicles) and transport modes (inland waterways, coastal shipping and railways). The culture and image of the industry account for several interesting contributions, ranging from 'Transport cafés' and 'White van man' to the 1970s BBC television series *The Brothers* and Granville's delivery bike in *Open all Hours*, although surprisingly David Jason's famous creation, Del Boy, does not merit a mention under either 'Popular culture' or 'Reliant'. There are excellent surveys of specialised carriage, ranging from flowers and furniture to petroleum and pigeons. Business historians will welcome these and those covering the logistics activities of such companies as the John Lewis Partnership, Harrod's and Sainsbury's.

In contrast to Biddle and Simmons the book is well illustrated with 190 photographs, sixty-four of which are in colour; however, captions tend to be minimal and too many plates are undated and/or unlocated. Not surprisingly, perhaps, there are no maps, but a relative

lack of attention to the historical geography of road haulage is reflected in there being only three articles on specific locations (Felixstowe, Shap and Slough Dump).

Inevitably, there are gaps, omissions and occasional failures of cross-referencing. The Road Board features in several entries but does not merit one of its own; 'Ro-ro' has a *q.v.* under 'Shunters' but no article; post buses appear under 'Post Office' but not in 'Bus carriage of goods and parcels'. And, as with any 'companion', it takes a degree of luck to find what the reader is searching for: internet shopping, for example, appears under 'Home delivery', distribution centres under 'Depots'. Legislation is nowhere considered in its own right: there are no articles on the Road Board (1909), the Road Act, 1930, and the Road and Rail Traffic Act, 1933, or the 1947 and 1968 Transport Acts. More seriously, the 'companion' format makes it difficult to discover why or how road transport in Britain grew so rapidly from the 1920s. With a degree of perseverance it can be done: an article on 'Structure of the industry' offers one way in, but who would think to look there first? It would be ungracious, however, to conclude on a critical note. Professor Armstrong and his fellow editors have produced a work of immense value to transport, retailing, industrial and even local historians as well as the 'enthusiast' market. It is to be hoped that – to use their own analogy – with the 'bricks' in place the 'cathedral' will be built, and that they will be the master masons.

Tony Kirby, Anglia Polytechnic University

Johanna Omelia and Michael Waldock, *Come Fly with Us: a Global History of the Airline Hostess*, Collectors' Press, Portland OR (2003), 160 pp., US\$24.95.

Essentially a pictorial account of the changing image of airline cabin crew – known variously as airline hostesses, stewardesses or flight attendants – this book sits well alongside Keith Lovegrove's study of carrier identities, *Airline*. Media representations of transport in popular

culture are an important source for historians, e.g. the changing design of London Underground maps or tourist brochures, and this collection represents decent value for aviation specialists and cultural historians alike.

The set of illustrations is interspersed by textual commentary, which guides the book through a logical chronology. This starts with the original flight attendant nurses of United Airlines in the 1930s, moves through the 'sex object' era of the 1960s and then into deregulation and post-deregulation, in which cabin crews' status has been downgraded to that of 'flying waitress'.

Much of the text is taken from official company publications and industry pamphlets. Though analysis is kept to a minimum, some of the information is absorbing. In the early days, before pressurised cabins, one of the jobs of cabin crew was to prevent passengers from opening the exit door when they were going to the toilet. 'Warn passengers against throwing lighted smoking butts or other objects out of the windows, particularly over populated areas', instructs a 1930 stewardess manual. There is also a welcome emphasis on how aviation liberated women: for all its sexist imagery, few careers have offered women as much autonomy and geographical freedom as that of flight attendant.

Changes in aircraft design serve as a backdrop to the changing role of cabin crew. On the early propeller aircraft flights they were employed primarily as a reassurance to passengers. Their image was one of maternal nurse. It is important to remember that competition on price was generally absent from the 1930s until the 1978 American deregulation Act and airlines therefore had to find other, innovative ways of differentiating themselves from their competitors. Omelia and Waldock do a good job here and provide an assortment of depictions of the increasingly risqué clothes designs which stewardesses were obliged to wear. Braniff Airlines notoriously featured the 'air strip', in which a flight attendant disrobed, piece by piece, throughout the flight. PSA conjured an image of 'pure, sober and available',

Southwest Airlines flew with 'Love Birds' and National Airlines, infamously, carried the slogan which enraged feminists: 'I'm Cheryl, fly me'. By the end of the 1970s the women's movement in the United States had ended such overt sexism, though it clearly continued in other parts of the world. In the post-deregulation era, and with the growth of low-cost carriers, the image of cabin crew – in America at least – became a mixture of fun and functional, or minimalist, as in the case of Jet Blue.

Many of the advertisements shown are well known, but even with the benefit of hindsight some still verge on the outrageous. The most surreal portrays a Sophia Loren look-alike curled up alluringly on a chair, whom American Airlines invites passengers to 'Think of as your mother'. Also featured are TWA's 'foreign accent' flights, in which flight attendants dressed up in variously themed costumes: Italian (see toga), French (see gold mini), Olde English (see wench) . . . Manhattan Penthouse (see hostess pajamas).

The illustrations, however, belie the inaccuracy of the book's title. It is not really a history of the airline hostess; it is a history of the *image* of the air hostess, which is something different. The book says more about how companies used women to sell their product than about the women's jobs or changing twentieth-century attitudes towards women in the public sphere. There are no pictures of exhausted flight attendants in faceless hotel rooms in nameless cities. There are no illustrations of them sitting for days by a telephone in the hope of being needed to fly. Moreover the importance of the illustrations is undermined by footnotes with bizarre highlighting: 'This Ansett hostess uniform featured hot pants worn under a *split skirt*' or 'Before the friendly skies got so *crowded* . . .'. There is no logic in this highlighting. Worse, none of the illustrations is dated specifically, which limits the book's historical usefulness (as does the apparent touching up of photographs and occasional use of models). There is also evidence of poor proof reading.

As recently suggested by an article in the *Chicago Tribune*, there appears to be a growth of nostalgia for the 'glamour years' of flying, especially in the present climate of cutbacks and fear. The republication of *Coffee, Tea or Me?* (1967) – the ghost-written 'memoirs' of 'two uninhibited stewardesses' – confirms this trend. *Come Fly with Us* can also be seen in this light, as it remains, at best, a coffee-table history with very little critique of the development of the profession. Indeed, except for Georgia Nielson's *From Sky Girl to Flight Attendant* (1982) we have yet to see a comprehensive history of the flight attendant career. For all the glossy pictures that will appeal to enthusiasts, *Come Fly with Us* does not fill that gap.

Drew Whitelegg, Emory University,
Atlanta

Matthew J. Payne, *Stalin's Railroad: Turksib and the Building of Socialism*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh PA (2001), 400 pp., US\$37.00.

On 26 April 1930 Moscow received news that the northern and southern sections of the Turkestan-Siberian Railway had met. The 1,440 km railway from Frunze in Turkmenistan to Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan, built through some of the most inhospitable and desolate landscapes in the world, had come in ahead of schedule and under budget. This was the cue for an orgy of self-congratulation and the distribution of awards and prizes, with the railway itself being hailed as the 'firstborn of the Five Year Plan'. The rationale behind the plan had been to link the grain-surplus areas of Siberia with the grain-deficit but cotton-rich territory of Turkmenistan. But for the regime the project was as much about building socialism as about building railways. The railway would be the means by which socialism would be brought to the peoples of Central Asia, catapulting them from the era of Chingis Khan to that of Karl Marx virtually overnight. Matthew Payne's book is an enthralling account of that epic construction project.

His study forms part of a new wave of scholarship on the Stalin period. Situating himself between those who argue that the Soviet Union under Stalin was dominated by an omniscient and omnipotent State and those who argue for a State foundering in the chaos that it had unleashed, Payne stresses cultural revolution as the appropriate paradigm for understanding the time of the first Five Year Plan. This recognises the power of the State and its ability to get things done, but critically also recognised that Soviet society was able to negotiate with the State even if from an unequal and subordinate position. The opening of local archives in the post-Soviet era has radically changed the Moscow-dominated perspective of earlier years. Payne has gathered an impressive array of local sources from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan which graphically demonstrate the difficulties, the chaos and the sheer scale of the task confronting the men who built the railway. At the same time, he never loses sight of Moscow's ability to assert its wishes once it had determined to do so. These shifting poles defined the space of politics in the Soviet Union under Stalin.

The building of the Turksib railway was a microcosm of the Soviet Union during the first Five Year Plan. Payne skilfully shows how the enthusiasms, trauma and excesses of the plan echoed throughout the construction process. The persecution of bourgeois specialists, the crash promotion of Red Engineers, collectivisation, the creation of a new 'soviet' person, all had their counterparts in the Turksib. Payne displays a panorama of the Soviet Union during some of its most dramatic years. Yet his book never loses sight of his central task: the building of the Turksib. His account is a moving testimony to the men of all nationalities, ethnicities and classes who built the railways. Working in the harshest conditions, and frequently lacking the most basic necessities, these men drove the railways forward. Management and labour struggling with the engineering project had to cope constantly with the watchful and capricious eye of Moscow, always suspicious and convinced the line was plagued with

wreckers of all sorts. The dramatic detail of the human struggles gives colour and depth to the book.

I have only one real criticism and that is the lack of maps. There is only one sectional map which shows only the railway line from Frunze to Semipalatinsk. An all-Union map at the very least would have been helpful. Women figure very little in the book, which probably reflects the masculine nature of the construction site, but given that women were so prominent in other areas of the industrialisation drive one wonders why they were so marginal here. Overall, however, this is an impressive book. Scholarly yet gripping, it enhances our understanding of the Soviet Union and brings to life the people who toiled in one of the most ambitious and exacting construction projects of the century

Shane O'Rourke, University of York

Gordon Biddle (ed.), *Britain's Historic Railway Buildings: an Oxford Gazetteer of Structures and Sites*, Oxford University Press, Oxford (2003), 800 pp., £60.00.

Gordon Biddle, whose *Victorian Stations* became a bible for historic station enthusiasts, has deployed his encyclopaedic knowledge in the production of several major reference works. With O. S. Nock and other contributors he produced *The Railway Heritage of Britain* (1983) and with Jack Simmons he co-edited *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History* (1997). His latest project is by way of being a sister volume to *The Oxford Companion* and it is fittingly dedicated to his erstwhile collaborator, the late Jack Simmons, whose contribution to railway history deserved a knighthood rather than the OBE awarded at the end of his life.

The subject of this volume is railway buildings, including bridges and viaducts, stations, signal boxes, and hotel and railway workers' houses. Over 2,000 of these structures are now listed buildings, a significant increase on the 400 of twenty years ago. For the purposes of the gazetteer Britain is divided into eleven

regions; each region is introduced by a map showing the present passenger rail network, together with freight-only or closed lines containing listed buildings. There is a standard format for entries: name of site, name of railway, engineer or architect, opening date, closure date (where appropriate), listing grade (where applicable) and Ordnance Survey grid reference. Each entry also has reference titles for further reading.

It is hard to do justice to the richness and breadth of this volume, with its 2,300 entries, in one short review. The entries are clearly and lucidly written, and informed both by careful architectural and historical analysis and by first-hand knowledge based on visits and inspections. Every variety of stone, brick, tile, glass, roof, gable, column, canopy, arch and doorway is faithfully noted, and past and present roles and functions are detailed. The pleasure offered by both random and systematic consultation of the text is enhanced by the presence of 900 evocative black-and-white photographs, drawn from the collection of the National Railway Museum at York. The book confirms once again, if confirmation were needed, how superb is the architectural heritage left by the railways. This beautifully produced, compulsively readable book should have an honoured place on the shelves of all who are interested in railways, railway history and railway buildings. It is a remarkable tribute to the industry, dedication and meticulous scholarship of Gordon Biddle and his team of assistants and advisers.

The book ends with an appendix of recent listings of railway buildings in England and Wales up to December 2002, brief background details of key architects, a useful glossary of architectural terms and a melancholy selection of the more important historic railway structures that have disappeared in the past 150 years, among them the Euston arch, Birmingham Snow Hill Station, Bradford Exchange, London Blackfriars, Kenilworth, Maryport, Newmarket, Tamworth, Dundee West, Glasgow St Enoch and Oban, a litany of lost destinations in a cherishable variety of styles: classical, Tudor, Jacobean, Moorish, Scottish

baronial and French Renaissance, gone but, thanks to this book, not forgotten.

Jeffrey Richards, Lancaster University

Michael T. Saler, *The Avant-garde in Interwar England: Medieval Modernism and the London Underground*, Oxford University Press, New York (1999), 256 pp., US\$14.95.

The precepts that English twentieth-century modernism was visual rather than literary, popular rather than elite, moralistic rather than aesthetic, run counter to many widely held conceptions about modern English artistic culture. This valuable study demands attention from scholars in a range of fields precisely because it urges these ideas so cogently. The battle for English modernism, argues Saler, was won not in the salons of Bloomsbury but in – and beneath – the streets of London.

Not least among the merits of this study is that it provides as convincing an answer as we are ever likely to get to one of the enduring mysteries of twentieth-century English transport history: why did the inter-war London Underground become the focus and expression of such modernistic endeavour? The answers previously provided have tended to be of two kinds: (1) because it just did, or (2) Frank Pick. Neither really constitutes an answer at all. Saler tells a much more revealing and convincing story.

For Saler, Pick is a central figure, but not one that can be considered a self-contained phenomenon, a messianic solitary genius of public service and good design. Pick is seen here as the expression of a deep-rooted (but, by modern scholars, largely disregarded) tendency in English aesthetic-social thought and practice that Saler dubs ‘medieval modernism’. With roots in the nineteenth-century ideas of Ruskin and Morris, ‘medieval modernism’ sought to apply a moralistic social agenda to the visual arts, integrating art with craftsmanship and art with society, creating an integrated environment that would make the world more beautiful, more honest and more just. The London Underground under Pick’s

leadership, maintains Saler, became the largest and most effective single expression of these ideas.

This interpretation has the virtue of reconciling the modernism of the inter-war Underground with the conservatism of inter-war English culture, by placing the ideals of truth to function and materials underlying the modernistic visual culture of the Underground in the context of a neo-medievalist social creed that stressed harmony and social unity and sought to place art at the service of the people through the civilising presence of the Underground.

Saler’s study casts new light on the significance of the Underground, relating its modernism and its social agenda to the culture and society of which it was part and seeing its visual modernism not as some self-referential expression of internalist corporate ideology but as a phenomenon related to wider and deeper currents in social and cultural thought. Pick himself is effectively contextualised as a man whose ideas were formed by his Nonconformist upbringing in the north of England, his concern with the role of art and design in civilising society and his almost puritanical belief in the moralising influence of environment upon individuals and society. There are connections to be made here between the modernism of the Underground and the reactionary modernism of contemporary fascist Europe, and it is to Saler’s credit that he does not shy away from these difficult issues.

What does Saler’s book, which is essentially an exercise in intellectual history, have to offer the transport historian? The answer depends on one’s view of what constitutes the proper field of study of ‘transport history’. If it is essentially a matter of the artefactual and the operational, or the economic narrowly considered, the answer is, perhaps, not very much (although historians of such aspects of transport history could only have their perspectives widened and deepened by an acquaintance with this book). If, however, transport history is a matter of placing transport systems, the phenomenon of mobility itself, at the heart of social and cultural networks of meaning and significance this incisive

and elegant study, well written and with carefully chosen illustrations, has much to contribute.

Ralph Harrington, University of York

John Marshall, *Biographical Dictionary of Railway Engineers*, Railway & Canal Historical Society, Oxford (2003), 206 pp., £20.00.

This is a revised and much expanded version of John Marshall's 1978 book of the same name. Those of us who have used the volume for the last quarter-century will know only too well its enormous value as a first point of reference whenever a biographical summary of a railway engineer is sought. It is therefore most helpful that the volume has been republished by the Railway & Canal Historical Society, which is to be congratulated for its endeavour.

There are 725 entries of British and foreign engineers, each of which is provided with birth and death details, where known, a summary of their career and a bibliography of more detailed obituaries, papers and biographies. The volume contains seventy-six additional entries compared with the earlier edition, whilst four have been omitted and one name has been corrected. The subjects were engaged in mechanical, civil and electrical engineering, from the earliest waggonways through to the twentieth century.

Whilst the book provides a remarkable series of compendia of so many individuals, of considerable value to the historian, it is nevertheless unfortunate that a number of more recent biographical sources have not been referenced for several of the engineers. The *Transactions of the Newcomen Society*, for example, are a rich source of biographical information, but recent editions appear not to have been consulted, or at least listed in the individual bibliographies. An opportunity has therefore been lost to increase the comprehensiveness of the volume.

Whilst many of the individuals listed will be familiar to those of us with an interest in railway and engineering history, a surprising number are not 'household'

names. One of the book's values is therefore to make the reader more aware of the extent of railway engineering both in Britain and overseas, and the extraordinary contribution made by the profession over the past two centuries.

There are some fascinating insights into engineering families, emphasising how frequently brothers, sons and nephews followed their elders into the profession. Just one example is the Szlumper family, better known for the attainments of Gilbert Savil Szlumper, who became the General Manager of the Southern Railway and Director General of Supply Services during World War II. He followed his father and uncle into the engineering profession, where his organisational flair on the London & South Western Railway saw him promoted to higher office.

Although the volume is intended as a reference book for railway and engineering historians, it would nevertheless be rewarding to a wider readership to browse through it and reflect on the achievements and contributions of such a large number of railway engineers. The number of honours bestowed upon the subjects, and the high office that many attained, reflect the esteem in which the profession has been held over the years. At the same time it causes one to reflect on the less popular image that it currently enjoys among some members of society, and it is hoped that this book will serve to emphasise the importance and contribution of the railway engineer.

Michael R. Bailey, Institute of Railway Studies, University of York

Graham Zeitlin, *Staying on Track: the Reflections of a Railwayman*, Scotforth Books, Lancaster (2002), 148 pp., £14.95.

Graham Zeitlin enjoyed a forty-five-year working career as a freight railwayman from 1947, when he joined the Great Western Railway: this is his story of a career shunted between the private and public sectors. He does not intend to provide a comprehensive history of the railway during this period, nor does he relate his narrative to the extensive

scholarly literature. Readers who want a more academic approach should look elsewhere. Rather, Zeitlin's book is an autobiography which despite its subtitle is as least as much reminiscence as reflection. The book is likely to prove of interest to railwaymen and women who lived through these times and perhaps to historians who want source material for their work. This reviewer falls into both camps.

Zeitlin does not allocate his fifteen chapters evenly, and one would not expect an autobiographer to do so, but rather to focus on key events. He does, but in a manner which the academic in me found rather disconcerting. He appears to spend comparatively little space on his first twenty years on the railway, or on three years in Tiger, Lep and consultancy. Rather the overwhelming emphasis is on his periods with Freightliner, when he worked for them directly and when he was bidding for Freightliner during privatisation. However, dates feature rather infrequently in his narrative, so it is not always clear which year he is referring to. This would be acceptable perhaps if the narrative were in chronological order, but Zeitlin has a tendency to chronological jumps, the most obvious being where we leap from his recruitment to the railways in 1947 to the Transport Act of 1962.

The emphasis on the Freightliner years appears to be because this is the period when the author felt that his contribution to the railways was the most significant. Indeed, the book is dedicated to his Freightliner colleagues. Even allowing for the tendency of autobiography to hagiography, his understanding of the rail freight industry is evident and he clearly made an impact on the growth of Freightliner, especially in developing a market for cross-Channel rail freight before the Channel tunnel was opened. In these chapters his descriptions of the problems and opportunities for rail freight profitability, by increasing the length of hauls, increasing staff and asset utilisation, reducing handling and marshalling, and negotiating satisfactory haulage rates, are all clear. His insights are peppered with anecdotes, ranging

from those which made me laugh to some which should have been omitted.

There is clearly another aspect to Zeitlin's story and one he introduces in the first sentence of his preface, namely his antipathy to political interference in nationalised industry and his belief that railway management in the private sector is more exciting and rewarding. Freightliner was moved from British Rail (a nationalised industry) to the National Freight Corporation (a State-owned corporation) in 1968 and back in 1978. The distinction between nationalised industry and State-owned corporation may appear to be a fine one, but as Zeitlin rightly notes, British Rail as a nationalised industry was constantly faced with the dilemma of public service versus profit. The National Freight Corporation as a State-owned corporation aimed for profit, hence clarifying objectives and reducing political interference. This environment seems to have been more congenial to Zeitlin: there was more fun in those years – more pay, more perks and more parties. There was also more progress in investment and expansion for Freightliner as a company. These advantages did not cease when Freightliner was returned to the still nationalised British Rail. Indeed, the business continued to generate profits within BR until 1985–86.

In October 1988 Freightliner was merged with other BR freight operations to form Railfreight Distribution. Freightliner's and Zeitlin's freedom of manoeuvre disappeared. His distaste for management by RfD is undisguised and he left BR for the private sector. Nevertheless, his chapter entitled 'Life after the railways: private enterprise' signals his regret at leaving and his dissatisfaction with the two private rail and transport companies, Tiger Rail and Lep Group, which he joined in quick succession. To his chagrin he found that they were no better managed than the nationalised industry he had left. At this point Zeitlin could have given us more reflection on the dilemma of public-sector versus private-sector ownership and management of the railways. BR faced a number of problems when it subsumed Freightliner into RfD which are not clear from Zeitlin's narrative. The integration

into RfD was imposed when recession turned Freightliner's profits to losses at the same time as new investment was needed to replace its ageing rolling stock and to develop its potential for Channel tunnel operations. BR had a number of investment concerns which posed different priorities from those facing Zeitlin at Freightliner. It is interesting to note that his subsequent private-sector employers were similarly chary of his new investment proposals. Perhaps the public versus private dichotomy was not so critical after all. For twenty years Zeitlin seems to have had a greater outlet for his entrepreneurial abilities in State-owned and nationalised industries than in the private sector.

The bid for Freightliner through FL2000 was his attempt to buy back the business he loved and believed could be profitable. The bid failed and Freightliner Ltd was sold in 1996 to a management

buy-out team. Presumably Zeitlin could have been a member of that team if he had remained at RfD, and returned with them to the private sector by that route. Freightliner's subsequent road has been a rocky one, with pre-tax losses up to the year 2000–01. It turned to profit in 2001–02 and paid its first dividend in 2002–03, but Zeitlin had turned to charity management and the writing of this book. He obviously feels he had an interesting career but one which could have worked out much better had it not been for the politicians. The book provides an interesting read, especially to someone who was also a railwayman. But it is tinged with regret that he did not replace some of his reminiscences with more reflection on Freightliner's place in the wider railway world where politicians still roam.

David E. Tyrrell, City University