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Slavery in Yorkshire

Richard Oastler and the campaign against child labour in the Industrial Revolution

This new collection of essays based upon a conference at the University of Huddersfield, generously supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, explores the links between Richard Oastler’s extraordinarily influential campaign against child labour in Yorkshire after 1830 and the remarkably successful campaign to abolish the transatlantic slave trade led by Yorkshire MP William Wilberforce before 1807. With contributions from D. Colin Dews, Dr John Halstead, Dr John A. Hargreaves, Dr Janette Martin, Professor Edward Royle and Professor James Walvin, it evaluates the distinctively Yorkshire context of both movements and offers a re-assessment of Oastler’s contribution to their success. It reveals how Oastler’s associations with both evangelical Anglicanism and Nonconformity, especially Methodism, stimulated and sustained his involvement in the ten-hour factory movement and examines the role of the regional press, local grass-roots organisation and Oastler’s powerful oratory in helping to secure a successful outcome to the campaign. In a foreword, the Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal, a leading figure in both the regional and national commemoration of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 2007, commends this wide-ranging historical study ‘with its broad perspective as an important contribution to making us all more informed on the whole theme of slavery today’.

Richard Oastler

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