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A Solid and Practical Education Within the Reach of the Humblest Means

Original Citation

Walker, Martyn (2009) A Solid and Practical Education Within the Reach of the Humblest Means. In: University of Huddersfield Research Festival, 23rd March - 2nd April 2009, University of Huddersfield. (Unpublished)

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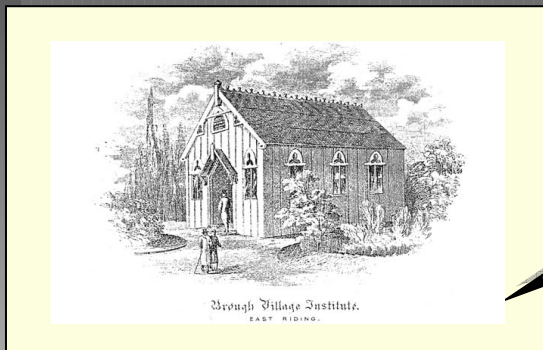
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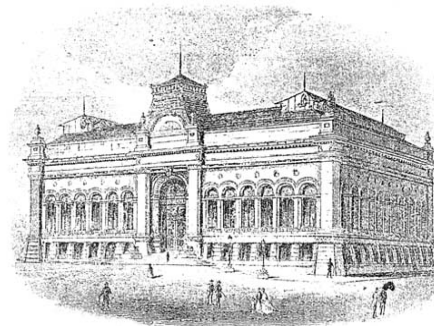
The research questions the generally accepted view of historians that mechanics' institutes made little contribution to adult working-class education from their foundation in the 1820s to the last decade of the nineteenth century when finally, the government recognised the importance of adult and further education with the passing of the Technical Instructions Acts of 1889 and 1891. The thesis addresses the question of what impact the mechanics' institutes exerted upon the adult working classes in a regional context. It also questions research previously carried out by a number of historians who hold the view that by 1850 the mechanics' institutes' movement was all but over. This thesis argues that in Yorkshire the movement, through no small contribution made by the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes, went from strength to strength and responded to the need for a relevant curriculum to support industrialisation, providing both elementary and advanced technical education. The thesis has established that mechanics' institutes of the Yorkshire Union were not only to be found in the urban and industrialising towns, but many were also located in the rural and semi-rural areas of the Yorkshire Dales and Pennines. In all there were 630 mechanics' institutes in the Yorkshire Union.

'A SOLID AND PRACTICAL EDUCATION WITHIN THE REACH OF THE HUMBLEST MEANS', THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE YORKSHIRE UNION OF MECHANICS' INSTITUTES 1838-1891

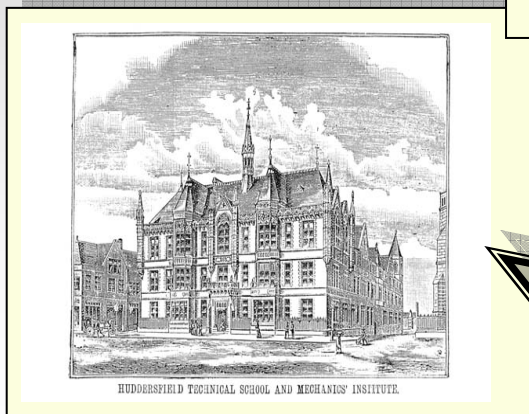


Brough Mechanics' Institute near Hull. This was probably the smallest and most basic Mechanics' Institute in the Yorkshire Union, if not in the whole country.

In 1852 the Leeds Mechanics' Institution and Literary Society was the second largest in Britain. It was designed by Cuthbert Broderick (1821 - 1905), who also won a £200 competition to build Leeds Town Hall.



The rural institutes in the Yorkshire Union included Dent, Settle, Grassington and Oxenhope. The Society of Arts and the City and Guilds of London Institute offered chemistry and textile qualifications to the working classes who attended the institutes. The success of the mechanics' institute movement, supported by The Technical Instructions Acts, provided a firm foundation on which twentieth century further education was established.



Huddersfield's first purpose-built Mechanics' Institute was located in Northumberland Street and built in 1861. It was over subscribed and in 1884 a new Mechanics' Institute and Technical School replaced it with accommodation for both male and female students. Later the building was used by Huddersfield Technical College and is now part of the University of Huddersfield, School of Human and Health Sciences. It has recently been refurbished.

