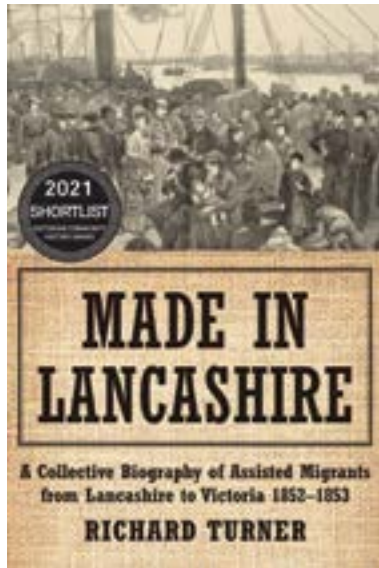


Kritikos

agora reviews

Available online at agora.htav.asn.au/reviews

Books available for review are listed online at agora.htav.asn.au/books



Made In Lancashire

By Richard Turner

June 2021

Monash University Publishing

256 pages, paperback

ISBN: 9781922464361

RRP: \$34.95

Reviewed by Stephanie Tarn,
Heathdale Christian College

More than half a million migrants flooded to the colony in the decade beginning 1851. In *Made in Lancashire*, Richard Turner uses the plethora of digitised records to shed light on the origins of 225 assisted migrants hailing from Lancashire. He then examines their settlement patterns in what becomes their new homeland.

Turner asserts that, unlike conclusions drawn by early historians, these assisted migrants shared similar socioeconomic origins to their unassisted compatriots. It was formerly thought that those who were 'assisted' were 'third-rate', 'unskilled' and/or 'the poorest of the poor'. By deep-diving into the records of several families, Turner reveals how many of

these assisted migrants established themselves as small property owners in their own right and contributed significantly to 'shaping the political, social and cultural development of Victoria and Australia'.

While being quite a technical document that offers a broader picture of migration trends and the hypothesise of push-pull factors, Turner candidly acknowledges the limitations of available records for his research (many of the original records were 'lost') while successfully drawing conclusions from the 'rich' records available for assisted migrants. (Thanks to the gold rush, property ownership was prevalent at this time, and recoded through title deeds.)

It is worth noting that 'families with at least one child' are the key focus of the book as records could be substantiated from sources including the 1851 English Census, Victorian birth, death and marriage certificates, wills and probate files, electoral rolls, land files, rate books and mining records, and Trove's digitised collections. Turner concludes that this cohort of migrants became 'moderately prosperous' and lived 'successful' lives (where 'success' amounts to self-sufficiency on twelve acres in the growing regions).

What compelled these migrants to embark on the less than luxurious four-month 'crowded steerage' shipping voyage to the Great Southern Land? Turner's research draws conclusions beyond the lure of the goldfields. In fact, records attest to the epic 'advertising campaign' commissioned by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission (CLEC). In addition to a 'thruppence circular', 6000 parish priests received letters and spruikers conducted lecture tours heralding the attractive prospect of working for wages up to 50 per cent

higher than those in England as well as the opportunity to acquire land. Applications flooded in and, with the help of a 'rating system', the CLEC could approve migrants they deemed a perfect fit for the needs of the colony.

The highest priority for the CLEC was to source agricultural labour. By strategically drawing from Lancastrian families with young children, it was thought that these migrants would be less inclined to head to the goldfields and would 'best service' the agricultural industry when the gold rush ended. Single women who had been trained in domestic service were also worthy of 'importing' to hopefully 'make good wives for working-class men'. In reading Turner's book, it is fascinating to ponder our not-so-distant history in this regard, including the fact that 'wives' were never recorded as having an occupation, being the ever-so-virtuous home-makers that they presumably were.

Made in Lancashire is highly engaging if you wish to follow in the steps of a sample of British immigrants to Victoria. Rather than using unreliable 'mainly fragmentary' letters, journals and diaries, Turner has explored connections in migratory patterns to understand the logical motivations of the government of the time and the plausible 'pull' for the Lancastrians.

A short review is not enough space to outline the detailed investigations made by Turner into the lives and legacies of these colonists, whom he calls 'pragmatic realists'. Fact-driven, with accompanying tables and a smattering of black and white illustrations, the book would be classed as a reference text that would certainly broaden the understanding of any teacher of Australian history in terms of colonisation.