

## Book Reviews

Lord Shaftesbury's Lunacy Commission. Previous government attempts to introduce rate funded district asylums in Scotland, like those of the 1808 English County Asylums Act, had also been resoundingly defeated on a localist agenda.

Andrews pauses briefly over the 1855–57 Scottish Lunacy Commission inquiry which led to legislation and the establishment of a full-time Lunacy Commission. This was initiated by the American reformer Dorothea Dix, supported by the Duke of Argyll, and the Home Secretary, Sir George Grey. The appointment of two English Lunacy Commissioners onto this Inquiry, albeit one of them a Scotsman, and indeed the Duke of Argyll's nephew, was deeply unpopular. Many thought that they had set out to do a job on the Scottish system, in much the same way as they had on Bethlem Hospital. Many Scots were proud of the charitable basis of their Poor Law and subscription hospitals, and were fundamentally opposed to the introduction of a Commission. Mr Podsnap's comment on Commissions in *Our mutual friend*, "No! Never with my consent. Not English", could just as well have applied to Scotland. There was widespread disquiet at the Commission's introduction, and after five years, there were formal representations to Government for its discontinuance.

This monograph tracks the developing composition and influence of the Scottish Board, profiles the individual commissioners and teases out their specific contributions. Andrews successfully captures the tension between Scottish national pride which was opposed to the importation of anything English, and the need to puff those elements of their mental health system which were seen as specifically Scottish.

He pays particular attention to the debate over the single care of lunatics and idiots boarded out in the community, drawing on the work of Harriet Sturdy. He discusses the Commission's promotion of boarding out, and identifies the impact of wider hereditarian concerns about the way it was

implemented. Notably this occurred in its attempts to prevent the transmission of idiocy by restricting boarding out to certain age groups. Andrews explores the contemporary debate about the relative merits of the Gheel and cottage systems, again teasing out the divergence of individual opinions from the Commission's published views.

It is hard to escape the feeling, after reading this monograph, that there were more similarities than differences between the Scottish and English Commissions. Nevertheless, Andrews has provided an excellent account, fleshing out our understanding of lunacy administration north of the border and the different emphasis which the Scottish Commissioners placed on many of the same issues.

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**Hilda Kean, *Animal rights: political and social change in Britain since 1800***, Reaktion Books, 1998, pp. 272, £19.95, \$29.95 (hardback 1-86189-014-1).

Today, animals (non-human ones, that is) have, according to Hilda Kean, "become an integral part of political, as well as cultural and social life" in Britain (p. 7). The major political parties now routinely include animal welfare issues in their election manifestos. Our television screens are full of heroic pet rescuers and rescuees, protestors at animal cruelty and endangered wildlife. Toyshops have become menageries of little plastic personalized creatures. Kean asks, implying answers in the affirmative will follow, whether we can make sense of "all this", and whether exploring the history of opposition to animal cruelty and the incorporation of animals into our cultural

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life will help us understand “the position animals hold in British life” (p. 8)? Such an exercise will, she suggests, further our understanding of political, social and cultural change more generally.

This is a large agenda. Addressing it takes her from eighteenth-century Methodism, the paintings of Joseph Wright of Derby and the French Revolution, through the nineteenth-century creation of zoos, the changing form and location of the meat trade, campaigns for cab horses’ welfare, Victorian and Edwardian antivivisection, and the trade in wild birds’ feathers, to the role of animals in the First World War and campaigns for the “right to roam” in the 1930s and right up to the most recent campaigns against intensive livestock rearing and live animal exports in the 1990s. And lots more besides.

In the course of this rather loosely steered voyage, she brings to light many largely neglected episodes in our past dealings with animals. Her book should help to foster interest in this still neglected but now growing field. For me, the best aspects were her emphasis on the continuing presence of many animals in urban settings throughout the nineteenth century (rather than assuming they were largely banished to rural areas) and her portrayal of human–animal relationships in domestic settings and in the First World War. Other sections, particularly the discussions of Victorian animal protection campaigns and their links with feminism and radical thought, were less striking. But these are fairly well-worked areas: perhaps more so than Kean gives credit for. Her references (or lack of them) to earlier literature in the field are sometimes baffling. For example, Richard Ryder’s *Animal revolution* (1989), which covers very similar ground to her own (albeit from an even more explicitly animal protectionist stance), does not appear in the bibliography. Richard French’s magisterial study of Victorian animal protectionism as a social, political and cultural phenomenon, *Antivivisection*

*and medical science in Victorian society* (1975), is described as being solely about science.

Given the breadth and scope of her ambitions and the complexity of “all this” to be explained, perhaps it is not surprising that she does not, in the end, come up with very satisfying answers. Her command of detail and of cultural nuances is often impressive but the direction of her overall argument is often unclear. The book veers between being a study of attitudes to animals and a study of animal protection activity: connected but analytically separate studies requiring different sources. The one ought to include a sustained examination of animal cruelty, which this book does not; the other would need a much stronger analysis of political process than is apparent. The weakest chapter is the short final one which appears to attempt to cover the post Second World War period (and ought but does not provide answers to the questions she posed at the beginning). Of course, given all that has happened in the last fifty years, narrating its history warrants a whole book. But a brief discussion of Compassion in World Farming and a few points from an antivivisection group’s press releases are not a very substantial substitute. I agree with her implicit premise that there is a great deal more continuity between campaigns of the past and the present than today’s so-called animal rights’ campaigners or their opponents always acknowledge. But one might have expected a book actually entitled *Animal rights* to include some discussion of the emergence of a distinctive debate couched in the language of rights and liberation, if only as a cultural phenomenon, and more than a passing reference to the emergence of terrorism as a campaigning strategy.

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