

provide concrete recommendations to improve public education in ways that serve the public good. Nonetheless, Frost's book provides a view from the ground on issues often discussed in abstract terms.

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Richard Hornsey

Imperial Engineers: The Royal Indian Engineering College, Coopers Hill

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022. 432 pp.

Educational institutions, like most institutions, are so big and complex that normally their chroniclers are forced to make a series of focusing decisions. What time period to write about? Should the focus be on students, faculty, culture, or something else? The Royal Indian Engineering College, located at Coopers Hill, just west of London (and hereafter Coopers Hill) had a short enough life (35 years) and was a small enough school (1623 total graduates), that Richard Hornsey didn't have to make those choices: in *Imperial Engineers*, he is able to attempt a total history of the school.

Coopers Hill was established in 1871 at the behest of the Secretary of State for India, as a college to train engineers in England for service in India. As the colonial government increased its public works programs (railroads and irrigation systems), several schemes to increase the number of engineers for the colonial service had not proven satisfactory. More broadly, the British system of producing engineers, based on apprenticeship, was proving inadequate. While Coopers Hill was designed to train engineers for India, Hornsey sees the school as the leading edge of formal classroom engineering education for Britain. But Coopers Hill was a transitional institution. By 1906, British engineering institutions had grown sufficiently in their numbers and specializations so that a 1903 Committee of Inquiry argued that Coopers Hill was no longer necessary, and it closed its doors in 1906.

Hornsey, who is himself a professor of electrical engineering, does not provide a strong theoretical framing. (For example, one could imagine using the work of Pierre Bourdieu on the creation of elites.) He acknowledges his "generally sympathetic" (6) account is an internalist one centred on the experiences of Coopers Hill students and graduates. Hornsey does, though, briefly mention historiographic controversies over whether British engineering works in India really benefitted the Indian people. To the extent that the book has aspirations beyond a names and dates history of Coopers Hill, it attempts to provide an engineer-centric examination of the British in India, their production, their technical works, and their social lives. He frequently makes comparisons to modern day engineering education practices

A major theme of the book is that the Coopers Hill was as much a place for inculcating culture and esprit de corps as it was for providing formal technical education, and advocates of Coopers Hill believed these processes could be best carried out in

Britain, rather than in India. A chapter entitled “Student Life” uses the student magazine and a diary of a student from the 1880s to elaborate on these processes. One rich theme Hornsey touches but never fully develops is the social position of British engineers and the social role that the Coopers Hill played, asserting that the school, which had higher tuition fees than British universities, “was designed to attract relatively wealthy families by offering their sons a career in India comparable, but never quite equal in prestige to the army or civil service” (8). His passive voice construction that Coopers Hill “was considered comparable with Oxbridge and Trinity College Dublin” (8) weakens the claim.

Because Coopers Hill had so few graduates and their career arcs were so focused, Hornsey is able to follow the lives of roughly a thousand of them after they left. He does this in three chapters, using diaries and reminiscences, as well as providing details on major projects Coopers Hill graduates worked on. Hornsey tries to relate the Coopers Hill curriculum with the actual work done in India. He also provides some details of the careers of the fifty-five non-Europeans who attended Coopers Hill.

Hornsey has gathered a remarkable collection of official publication and personal diaries, which allow him to tell the story of Coopers Hill in great deal. At times Hornsey seems so taken by the richness of his sources that he includes trivial details of little interest to the reader. For example, he goes into great detail about a medical procedure that a student diarist underwent, including the cost of the operation, the time the operation started, and even when the chloroform wore off! Similarly, Hornsey devotes thirty pages to the history of the Coopers Hill alumni society after the institution’s closing.

Few readers will likely be interested in the history of Coopers Hill as Coopers Hill. Hornsey’s tight focus on the students and faculty, with minimal consideration of the Indian people, give the book a celebratory tone, making it seem like a throwback to a much older and less critical literature on Britain and its empire in India. He has unearthed a great deal of material providing rich details on the culture of English engineering education, which could be useful for scholars who can provide their own framing

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Thomas O’Donoghue and Judith Harford

Piety and Privilege: Catholic Secondary Schooling and the Theocratic State, 1922–1967

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. 265 pp.

Piety and Privilege is a fascinating and well-argued book that focuses on the secondary school in Ireland from national independence in 1922 to 1967, within the context of the Catholic church’s close relationship with the state and the Church’s control over