

BOOK REVIEW

J.J. Rivlin

Liverpool by numbers: *the Pool of Life; a public health walk in Liverpool*. By MAGGI MORRIS AND JOHN ASHTON. Liverpool: Maggi Morris. 1997. ISBN: 0 9529826 0 9. 82 pp. Illus. £4.99.

Liverpool has always been a proud city and in its time a wealthy one, with many splendid buildings. It has also pioneered many advances in public health and welfare. This book is a guide to the City and its far-sightedness.

It would be hard to better the description of the book given by the authors:

This unique publication is an illustrated history of public health in Liverpool, arranged as four guided walks around the city ... about the people, places and institutions that have put Liverpool at the forefront of public health for over 150 years.

The areas of the city covered are the maritime quarter, the merchant quarter, the institutional quarter and the academic quarter. The buildings described on the walks are numbered in the text and on the map of the section being studied, so that identification is very easy. It is recommended that the walks are combined since they follow a historical and consecutive plan, but it seems to me that this would make a very long walk and that there is sufficient of interest in each section to make any one of them worthwhile in its own right.

The notes are extensive and include a wealth of architectural and historical fact as well as much of specific medical interest. Interspersed in the text are boxes containing more detailed information on a variety of topics such as the life of Dr Duncan, the Cholera outbreak of 1849, washhouses, community nursing and much more. The authors have provided short glossaries of medical and architectural terms.

There are, sadly, a few lapses in proof reading (or spell checking) which allow 'triptych' (on p. 16) to appear as 'triptyc' and, more unhappily, the 'Sanatory Act' of 1846 on p. 41 to become the 'Sanitary Act' on the very next page. I noticed only one error in dates: the medical school was incorporated into the new University College, Liverpool, in 1883, the year after it was founded and not in 1873 as stated on p. 71. These are trivial matters but unfortunate in view of the authority and standing of the authors.

I enjoyed the book immensely. I found it well presented and very easy to handle in its pocket format. It is full of fascinating information and as one who was born in the city and has an interest in medical history, I found in it much that I had forgotten and a considerable amount that was new to me.

I have no reservations in recommending this little guide book wholeheartedly.