

Derek Dodds: *Durham City in 50 Buildings* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, Stroud 2019). 96 pp. £14.99.

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To describe Durham in fifty buildings in less than ninety pages is clearly a challenge of both choice and succinctness. Moreover, space for the text is constrained by the accompanying illustrations, often two for each structure, mostly by the author's camera. (The uniformly blue sky is appropriate for the attractive facades of so many of the properties.) Description of the architecture is typically in terms of Historic England's register and Pevsner's volume, together with social and historical comment, with contemporary reporting from the *Durham Advertiser* often adding further interest. (The view of the "prestigious" City of Durham Trust is cited on four occasions.)

An accompanying map, with buildings numbered sequentially by area, rather than category, will be appreciated by readers and those exploring the city on foot. Perhaps not surprisingly, two-fifths of the properties are on the peninsula. Even so, it is surprising that more properties were not selected from Saddler Street and Old Elvet. No modern riverside properties are selected, nor, fortunately, any of the dozen privately-developed student blocks, except for one which occupies the former penitentiary of Kepier House. Altogether, it is an attractively-produced volume providing an informative introduction to our city. The subsequent comments, however, are intended for Trust members, who will already have acquaintance and knowledge of Durham. I would therefore ask you to allow for this if you think the reviewer is being over-critical or too negative.

The choice of properties, not unexpectedly, raises questions. Why fifty? The book is one of a large series in the format "x in Fifty Buildings", of popular architectural guides to major towns and cities in the UK. The title suggests that the selection is made to convey the overall essence, a representative picture, of the city. (The author hints at this in his introduction while explaining his choice is a personal one.) Personal or representative, it is difficult to understand, for example, the omission of the Royal County Hotel (but inclusion of the Victoria public house); absence of South Street (but inclusion of Leazes Place); no mention of the massive rail viaduct (but inclusion of Prebends' Bridge); even perhaps the inclusion of the university's Palatine Centre (but no reference to the Prince Bishop's Centre). In the shadow of the latter, Brown's Boathouse of course stands witness to a significant role in the history of rowing in this country.

Perhaps it was space constraint which led to the lack of mention of Peter Lee in discussion of the Miners' Hall, or indeed as political leader in (Old) Shire Hall. Description of the station appears similarly constrained. Here attention is drawn by text and illustration to the attractive canopy on the north platform, but no mention is made of a similar canopy on the opposite platform which was only lost when the platform was 'shaved' to ease the curve over the viaduct for non-stopping, high-speed 125s. Mention is made of the enlargement of the station in the 1870s, but without reference to the cause: the belated direct link between Newcastle and London.

Elsewhere, the explanation for the strangely off-centre rococo doorway to elegant Cosin's Hall is not as given here – a provincial feature – but, as Adrian Green has shown, the deliberately impressive entrance for clients to the lawyers inside; it was originally balanced by an insignificant doorway for domestic quarters. (A near identical building may be seen at No,1 South Bailey.) Finally, two errors need correcting. First, Sir Ove Arup's ashes were not scattered from Kingsgate Bridge; rather, wreaths from his many UK offices were laid on the bridge on the day of a family funeral in London. (And the bridge was not "a favourite" but his actual favourite.) Second, technically, it was not the Institute of British Architects that recognised the cathedral as "the best building in the world"; the accolade derived from a survey organised by the Institute of fifty-eight experts and celebrities.