

## INTRODUCTION

KEN THOMAS

The academic discipline of business history was a child of the 1950s. As a branch of economic history it went beyond merely recounting the history of leading companies, and sought to explain a company's place in its wider industry, and that industry's importance to the even wider economy. There are many examples of this pioneering work, amongst them Charles Wilson's *History of Unilever* (1954), Theo Barker's *Pilkington Brothers and the Glass Industry* (1960), and Peter Mathias' *The Brewing Industry in England, 1700-1830* (1959). By the time this book was published, Peter Mathias was in his early thirties and a fellow of Queens' College, Cambridge. However his interest in business history had started many years before and he spent the summer of 1953 researching the extensive archives of Barclay Perkins & Co of the Anchor Brewery, Park Street, Southwark. A short essay or article, 'The Anchor Brewery', was then written. It was not specifically intended to be published and, for nearly 50 years, a single copy of it remained in the Barclay Perkins' archives. When Peter Mathias retired as the Master of Downing College, Cambridge in 1995, his original typewritten manuscript was presented back to him - but still there was no thought of it being published. Only now, nearly 60 years after it was first written, has it finally been made available to a wider readership through the Brewery History Society's journal.

Although 'The Anchor Brewery' is important as it opens a window on the early stages of the study of business history, it is also much more than that. It tells the story

of the rise of one of England's largest breweries against the backdrop of the industrial revolution. It examines the changes of ownership of the brewery, from the Thrale family through to the establishment of a partnership between David and Robert Barclay, John Perkins and Sylvanus Bevan in the 1780s. By 1826 the firm of Barclay Perkins brewed an astonishing 380,000 barrels per annum, and in 1896 when the firm became a limited liability company, Barclay Perkins & Co Ltd was valued at a little over one million pounds. In 1921 they built a new lager brewery on their Southwark site, thus anticipating a trend in the market before many of their rivals, along with an extensive export market covering both the British Empire and beyond. However, after the Second World War Barclay Perkins & Co started to lose their way and, by 1958, they had merged with their near neighbours Courage & Co, and brewing had ceased on the Park Street site.

But this is a postscript. Professor Mathias' essay deals with a more energetic period of the brewery's history when Britain was becoming enveloped in industrial innovation and free trade philosophy. Britain's economy was expanding rapidly and her influence was soon to wash out over the entire globe. British firms like Barclay Perkins were part and parcel of these historical movements.

*[The following manuscript has been reproduced unchanged apart from some minor spelling corrections. Editor]*