

The Age of Improvement, 1783-1867 (2nd Edition)

Asa Briggs

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The Age of Improvement has long established itself as a classic of modern historical writing. Widely read and quoted it has had a unique influence on teaching and research. This second edition draws on the great volume of new research - produced by Lord Briggs amongst others, since its original publication. The book stresses both the underlying unity and the rich variety of the age, and raises fundamental issues about a period of crucial change in British history - industrialisation, war, constitutional change and the attitudes of politicians towards it, political development, and, not least, society and culture. In the background are the new economic powers based on the development of a coal and iron technology; in the foreground, new social and political problems and new ways of tackling them. The author also discusses perceptions of, and reactions to, changing circumstances, the influence of religion and science on national life, and changing styles in art and literature. The story ends, not with a full stop but with a question mark. Could improvement be maintained? Could balance and progress continue to be reconciled?

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