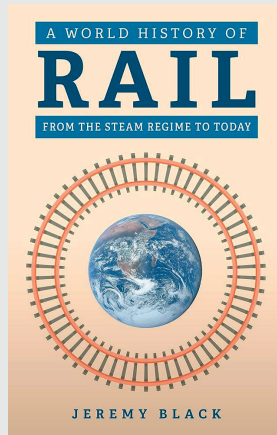


WHERE WILL YOUR READING TAKE YOU?



A world history of rail: from the steam regime to today

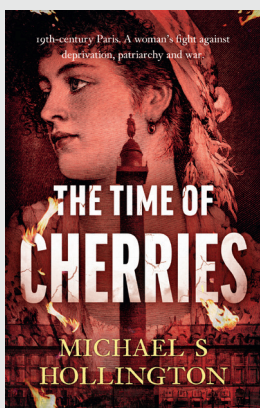
by **Jeremy Black**

From the early decades of steam, through to the ongoing HS2 rail network saga, railways and their networks have often dominated the headlines. As author Jeremy Black shows us, railways (or lack of

them) have often contributed to the success – and failure – of military endeavours, construction projects, communications, even emigration and immigration.

The book takes a global view of the development of the railways, starting with the early days of steam. From a family history project, it is fascinating reading for an insight into how communities were affected by the coming and going of the railways, the types of locomotives on which our ancestors might have travelled and of course the many employment opportunities that the railway industry has offered over the decades.

• **Published by Amberley Publishing at £22.99 (hardback), ISBN 9781398121010. RB**



The Time of Cherries

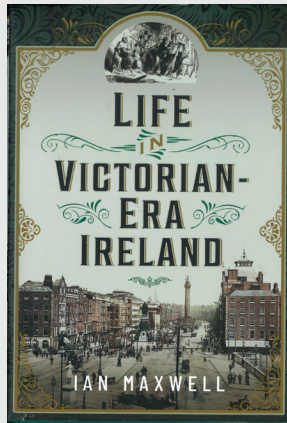
by **Michael S. Hollington**

A work of historical fiction set in 19th-century Paris, *The Time of Cherries* follows the fortunes of Christine Vellay, a who flees to the French capital after being wrongly accused of murder. Here, she gives birth to a child who is stolen from her and

is forced to make desperate attempts to find him, whilst the city is under siege.

This is a tale well told, with plenty of details on life in rural France in the second half of the 19th century, as well as lively dialogue and characters it is easy to sympathise with.

• **Published by Book Guild Publishing at £10.99 (paperback), ISBN 9781915603999. RB**



Life in Victorian Ireland

By **Ian Maxwell**

A social history that spans the tumultuous 1800s in Ireland cannot fail to have a strong political angle too, something acknowledged by the author from the outset. Even the chapter headings give a clear insight to the nature of the content: 'A City of Lamentable Contrasts' (Dublin), 'Magnificent Castles and Wretched Cabins', 'Poverty, Poor Law and Famine'...

With the passing of the Act of Union in 1800, and the subsequent loss of the Irish Parliament, when the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was established the following year, Ireland nevertheless remained in many ways a very much distinct country – overwhelmingly rural, without the numerous burgeoning industrial towns and cities seen in England. Overwhelming too was widespread poverty. Add to this the dominance of three major religious denominations in Ireland (Roman Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian) and the way in which such society was segregated along these lines – from schools and hospitals to sporting organisations – and these divisions were increasingly to become fault lines. Such were the vulnerabilities in Ireland that when the famine struck in the 1840s, the impact was beyond devastating, and long-lasting. At the close of Queen Victoria's reign, over half a century later, Ian Maxwell writes: 'Ireland's population had plummeted by more than 3 ½ million since the Famine and was still in decline'. 'A new brand of nationalism, pioneered by the Gaelic League, was beginning to challenge the old political order as the twentieth century dawned.'

Poverty, religion and politics are key themes that reverberate through Maxwell's social history of Ireland and help to make sense of the backdrop to people's lives, whether looking at aspects of work, health, housing, crime, etc.

Despite the harsh reality of life for many in Ireland through the 1800s, the book is a very absorbing read and packed with nuggets of information that remind us of the value of studying the past closely, lest we forget how very different it is to our own times. For instance, Ian Maxwell writes about 'the impact of the steam age on time keeping', as the Church clocks, Bank clocks and railway clocks may tell between six to ten minutes difference, resulting in many missed trains – until the passing of the Time Act in 1800 leading to synchronisation.

If you have ancestors from Ireland in the 1800s, it'll be well worth reading. Bleak but absorbing.

• **Published by Pen & Sword (hardback) priced £25. ISBN 1399042556. HT**