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## INTRODUCTION

### *Douglas Farnie: a tribute*

THIS COLLECTION OF ESSAYS has been produced to honour the life and career of a man for whom so many have the deepest respect. As both a person and historian, Douglas Farnie has made an enormous contribution to a plethora of people's scholarship, from the undergraduates he taught with distinction to those with whom he worked on a wide range of projects. As one of those fortunate individuals who was both one of his undergraduates and a colleague, I can certainly testify to the kind of impact Douglas can have. I well remember the first time I sat in one of his tutorials and being confronted by questions that challenged me enormously. Apart from being called 'Mr. Wilson', a salutation with which I was not accustomed, the questions provoked me into serious thought about the nature of Britain's industrialisation. When we were later colleagues in the Economic History Department at the University of Manchester, Douglas confided in me that he was always keen to instil in his students the need to think, rather than offering definitive answers to his provocative questions. I tried to follow this advice throughout my career, even if in the business school world that I now occupy students always require 'the solution'.

As well as having been both an undergraduate student and colleague of Douglas, I have also worked with him directly on a major research project. The fruitful result of this joint research was published as *Region and Strategy in Britain and Japan-Business in Lancashire and Kansai, 1890-1990* (edited by Douglas A. Farnie, Tetsuro Nakaoka, David J. Jeremy, John F. Wilson and Takeshi Abe; Routledge 2000). As Professor Nakaoka fondly noted to me, 'it was truly an unforgettable experience to do a collaborative work with Douglas ... I was deeply indebted to him, because his method of research, which analysed Manchester as a commercial hub of regional industrial areas at Lancashire, gave a new perspective on the regional economic development of Kansai and the role of Osaka to commercially support regional industry'. How many people could make similar statements about collaborating with Douglas? How many people have received one of those file cards that Douglas always

used to provide detailed answers to the litany of questions he must have been asked over the last fifty years? How many people have relied on Douglas for leads and information that have been crucial to the success of a project?

Without trying to answer these questions directly, it has to be reported that I had no difficulty at all in securing the chapters that make up this collection. Indeed, it was more a matter of keeping the collection down to a reasonable number of contributions, given the clamour to be included. Academics all over the world wanted to pay their respects to a scholar who influenced them, directly and indirectly, throughout their careers. This must be the ultimate accolade for a man whom I am proud to call a colleague, collaborator and friend. We respectfully submit this festschrift to honour Douglas Farnie, one of the most influential economic historians of the last half-century.

John Wilson  
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