

RURAL HISTORY TODAY

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A late-seventeenth century run of farm accounts for a Cambridgeshire Farm – the piecing together of a jigsaw

Above – Restored Clayton and Shuttleworth engine at MERL. See page 2.

Why do historical documents end up in one archive rather than another? This short note asks that question and announces a discovery of interest to rural historians. It ends with another question: are there any more out there?

In the Cambridgeshire Record Office are two small books of harvest accounts for 1682–92, the work of John Crakanthorp, Rector of Fowlmere in Cambridgeshire. Like Ralph Josselin of Earls Colne, Crakanthorp was a vicar who farmed. The best estimate, based on these accounts, is that he had between 90 and 120 acres. Crakanthorp maintained meticulous notebooks of the grain released at every threshing and how it was used – whether sold (and usually who to and at what price), spent in his household, used for sowing and so on. Also in the record office – having arrived there by a different route – were Crakanthorp's accounts for 1705–10. In 1988 a transcript of all three, edited by Paul Brassley, Anthony Lambert, and Philip Saunders, was published by the Cambridgeshire Records Society. The introduction to the volume identified the author of all three books and traced their history back to the nineteenth century, but no further.

Earlier this year, Richard Hoyle, whilst gathering material for a paper on agrarian capitalism, retrieved from his files copies of the accounts of an unknown south Cambridgeshire or north Essex farmer held by the Museum of English Rural Life at Reading. These covered the years 1680–81 and 1693–1702. Turning to the published Crakanthorp accounts, it was immediately clear that the MERL accounts were the work of the same man. This means that we have 22 continuous years of threshing accounts from a single farmer.

The accounts, it is true, are not without their oddities. Paul Brassley showed that it is not possible to calculate sowing rates with confidence from them, for they include at least some tithe corn. But what they also offer is a uniquely long body of material on marketing and price and one which covers the difficult years of the 1690s. This in itself means that Crakanthorp will join

the small number of well-documented farmers on whom so much of our knowledge is based. Further research is planned. We will hear more of him.

The newly identified accounts at MERL were received by them as long ago as 1959 from a Miss Ellis. She believed that the accounts belonged to her ancestor, Joseph Ellis of Thriplow and indeed his name appears on the flysheet of one of the accounts. It is understandable that they have not, until now, been attributed to Crakanthorp. He never signed his accounts. They have to be placed in space from the markets into which he sold (notably Royston) and then the evidence of minor place names. Their attribution to Crakanthorp came as the result of some detective work undertaken in the 1970s.

What we now have is obviously part of a much larger archive – the sole extant household book describes itself as the sixth of a series – which was perhaps dispersed because of its antiquarian interest. For that reason we reproduce a page of the accounts with the simple question: does anyone recognise any more of these accounts lying unidentified in public or private collections? The harvest accounts are highly distinctive: each year opens with an account of the harvest, then they run through the grains listing the outcome of each threshing (or 'dressing' as he calls it). The hand is small, the approach meticulous. We hope to hear that there is yet still more out there.

In the meantime, anyone wishing to read the published accounts should take advantage of a special half-price offer from the Cambridgeshire Records Society, available until December 2007. Write to Philip Saunders, Principal Archivist, County Record Office, Box RES 1009, Shire Hall, Castle Hill, Cambridge, CB3 0AP enclosing £10 (or only £7.50 for those applying in person to the Record Office).

Richard Hoyle and Paul Brassley

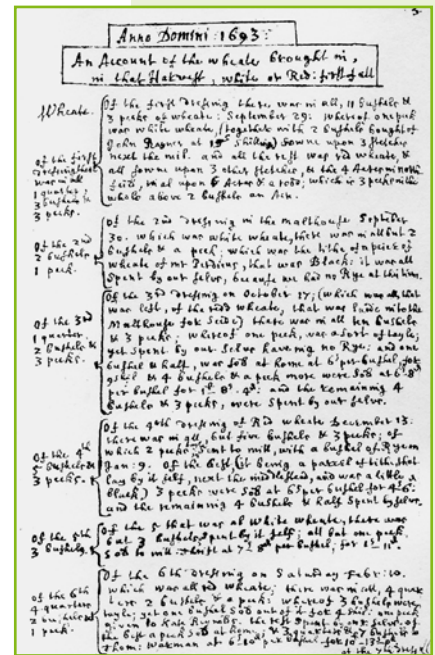


Image: Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading

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Rare steam engine unveiled at MERL

A 19th century portable steam engine, lovingly conserved after being left for scrap in the 1950s has been unveiled this month at the University of Reading's Museum of English Rural Life.



The Museum of English Rural Life, Reading, unveils new-for-old Clayton and Shuttleworth engine.

The single cylinder portable steam engine was built by renowned agricultural machinery manufacturers, Clayton and Shuttleworth of Lincoln in 1877. It was

one of the first objects to be collected when MERL was founded in 1951 and was last owned by an Oxfordshire farmer. It was bought from a farm in Adderbury near Banbury for the scrap metal price of £3 per ton, carriage paid! Most of the engines of this type were exported so MERL is both extremely fortunate and delighted to add this rare engine to its fascinating collection.

Now it has been brought back to its former glory and will go on display from May 23 at MERL in Redlands Road, Reading.

Roy Brigden, Keeper at MERL, said: "This horse-driven steam engine represents a Victorian technology that was fast disappearing in the 1950s. Farmers were investing in new combine harvesters, leaving threshing machines, and the engines that powered them, redundant and left for scrap. 'Its age and the fact that it is close to its original condition makes it even more rare today.'

Fred van de Geer, MERL's conservator, spent several months working on the conservation of the engine – official number 15635 – which on one occasion meant getting inside the firebox to clean out the silted-up boiler and coat it with wax.

He said: "As a museum object, we try to conserve items so they are in the same condition as when they were last used. Treatment often consists of stabilizing and preventing further deterioration and sometimes the replication of missing parts to aid interpretation, as was the case with the steam engine. The project was difficult and slow due to the size of the engine and the work that needed to be done.

Fred said: "The biggest challenge was knowing where to stop when tackling the

deteriorated areas of the engine. You know that there will always be hidden problems, such as corrosion under the cylinder's cladding. If we tried to fix all of those problems, it would involve taking more of the engine apart and we'd lose the original 'used' appearance as it would be difficult to re-assemble without having to replace fittings."

Some of the original parts had to be replicated because they had corroded so badly or were lost. This included the chimney base, part of the ashpan box under the firebox and several smaller boiler fittings.

He added: "It's been an interesting process getting the new parts made. The original chimney base replica was made using remnants of the original base as a pattern. This job was subcontracted to a specialist pattern maker and funded with a £1000 grant from the Preservation of Industrial and Scientific Material (PRISM) fund.

I also got a lot of very useful advice from members of the Road Locomotive Society, many of whom are veterans in the world of steam engine preservation and carry a wealth of relevant knowledge. Another very valuable source of expertise was the workshop of the University of Reading's Engineering Department."

Once unveiled, visitors will see the new exhibit belted up to a threshing machine drum to demonstrate how it would have been used on a farm.

The engine is also part of a new art installation created by artist-in-residence Julie Roberts, which features 25 hand-made textural paper 'steam clouds' rising out of the engine's chimney. The clouds are each illuminated with tiny fibre-optics and were specially commissioned by the Museum to represent the engine 'in steam'.

The installation, which took six months to complete, involved learning how to use fibre optics safely and tackling the logistics of mounting such a large display in a restricted space.

Julie said: "It's been an interesting project to be involved in and I'm pleased to leave a lasting mark for people to enjoy for a long time."

Early combine on display in Norfolk Museum

The Museum holds a unique collection of four early International tractor-pulled Combine Harvesters, the Model 8 on show and a Model 20, 21 and 22 in store. They provide a glimpse into the early mechanisation of harvest on Norfolk farms and were used by a Mr Roland Sherar, farming at Burnham Market in the north of the county.



Other early pioneers of Combine harvesters in Norfolk were the Alley Brothers, John and Eric, at Bluestone Farm, South Creake, North Norfolk in 1930 using Massey Harris 9-C combines and William Newcombe Baker farming at Manor Farm, Burnham Thorpe, who like Roland Sherar used a International No 8. At Burgh Hall, Melton Constable a firm calling itself the British Mechanised Farming Company used Massey Harris No11 combines and a Class binder.

The Museum is currently researching the early use of combine harvesters in Norfolk and would welcome any further information.

Contact Frances Collinson, Collections Officer 01362 869266 or Stephen Pope, Library Assistant 01362 869284.

Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, Gressenhall, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 4DR

Email – Gressenhall.museum@norfolk.gov.uk

....and continuing the machine theme – a new exhibition on Farming and Food at the Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse museum in Norfolk has as its centre piece an International Model 8 Combine Harvester one of the earliest to be used in the county.

Moving forward with the past in Hampshire Museum Service

It's interesting to think that in the year 2007 and with the range of technologies, innovations and services many of us have at our fingertips, rural exclusion is still a very real issue. It would seem that technology is no substitute for a physical interaction.

In Hampshire, England's third largest shire county, 22.9% of the population is classed as rural. And while the UK average of households in Mosaic's *rural isolation* category is 5.4%, in Hampshire this number is slightly higher at 5.6% [1]. The demographic make-up of rural communities is also shifting; in Hampshire over 75% of the increase in the County's population 2001-03 was due to migration and there are a number of sites with outstanding commitments to build housing ranging from 240 to 1000+ dwellings. Challenging times all round, and with these pressures in the present and the future, is the past important? Why tell the story of the past, and for whom?

Hampshire Museums & Archives Service runs 19 sites across the County, ranging from Milestones – Hampshire's living history museum to Rockbourne's Roman Villa to a range of community museums in our towns. Our extensive collections on the archaeology, history, art and environment of the County are displayed in our museums' permanent displays and temporary touring exhibitions, and are held in reserve at our headquarter stores in Winchester.

In 2006 Hampshire Museums & Archives Service piloted *BackTrack – the museum that brings the past to your door*. This is Hampshire's first mobile museum and is intended to help us reach our rural communities and give them opportunities for access to the collections we hold in trust for them.

BackTrack was trialled last summer with the support of the People's Provincial Bus Group, who kindly loaned us one of their buses which has been converted to a mobile classroom. We in turn created a small museum inside the bus and travelled to Copythorne. A parish on the



Hampshire Museums and Archive Service takes its collections out and about – thanks to a grant from Renaissance in the Regions

north-eastern side of the New Forest, Copythorne has some of the oldest watering holes in the Forest, as well as the remains of a Roman road. The population is over 3,000 and occupations range from IT to thatching.

The display for the pilot of BackTrack focussed on rural life in Hampshire 1836–1914, with a wide range of collections including costume and social history items. As with all our displays, in order to accommodate the range of learning styles people have, there were opportunities for visitors to read, listen, discuss and engage physically with activities and objects. Colleagues from Hampshire Record Office provided a very popular opportunity to search archive material specifically related to the local area.

Using Copythorne Infant School as a base gave us the opportunity to provide pupils with guided tours of BackTrack and classroom-based learning activities. Pupils and staff were hugely supportive of our visit to their Friday evening bar-be-que and the following day a small, orderly queue awaited us as we opened the doors at 10 o'clock in the morning! In total we welcomed 192 visitors to BackTrack in 12 hours.

60% of visitors told us they had used social

skills during their visit and comments about how the museum made them feel included “at home and interested”, “that it is so important to hold onto our past, our roots are our foundations” and “interested in my community”. More than one visitor returned the same day, bringing a relative or friend to see the museum.

Anecdotal evaluation is equally valid. On Friday evening a little girl of 3 or 4 years asked for explanations of around 15 objects on display; she was very young and very engaged! On Saturday, after trying rag-rugging, a family left for Southampton to buy the materials to make their own rag-rug wall-hanging. The perfect example of the past engaging, informing and inspiring the present.

The success of the pilot confirmed, we will be taking BackTrack forward in 2007. Future displays will vary to depict other periods of time represented in our collections – perhaps Roman Hampshire or Hampshire in the Iron Age. This is the perfect vehicle for giving rural communities in Hampshire access to their collections and perhaps inspiring visits further afield to one of our static museums. In our contemporary age of change and challenge, an understanding of our shared past and journey to the present is vital and it's what we in museums do best.

Ruth Kerr, Senior Education Officer with Hampshire Museums & Archives Service
www.hants.gov.uk/museums

All figures regarding Hampshire are from *A Profile of Hampshire 2005*, produced by the Strategy & Information Group of the Environment Department.

[1] Mosaic is one of the leading consumer classification systems in the UK, compiled by Experian Ltd.



Historic clothing project at the Weald and Downland



A project to create costumes appropriate to the various buildings in the museum collections had been set up by Hannah Miller with the aim of producing historically accurate clothing to be worn by stewards and interpreters in the 45 buildings spanning seven centuries on the site.

The project is expected to run for four years to produce clothing in durable replica fabrics coloured with authentic natural dyes and hand-sewn. The distinctive period styles will be as specific as possible to the Weald and Downland region in colour, cloth and design and of a status appropriate to the exhibits.

Barbara Painter did these drawings for the historic clothing project now taking place at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum
www.wealddown.co.uk

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Rural Landscapes

The current concern over changes in the countryside is emphasised by the fact that *Conservation Bulletin*, published by English Heritage, has devoted an entire issue (54, Spring 2007) to the subject.

Articles have been provided by the Country Landowners' Association, the National Trust and the CPRE as well as members of the English Heritage team. The problems of affordable housing, mineral extraction, historic farm buildings and declining rural church congregations are considered in a section entitled 'Challenges for the countryside'. This is followed by sections describing the research being carried out- 'If we want to care for England's rural landscapes we must first understand their historic origins and changing condition'- and the various means of 'managing change'. The role of agrarian historians in both research and promoting an understanding of the countryside is obviously crucial to any assessment of what is of value and is valued



by society. A review by Trevor Rowley of the recently published English Heritage Regional Landscape series emphasises the importance of education and communication in the process.

Copies of the Conservation Bulletin are available from English Heritage, Waterhouse Square, 138-142 Holborn, London EC1N 2ST. The eight volumes that comprise England's Landscape are published by Collins in association with English Heritage.

Our Hunting Fathers: field sport in England after 1850

Edited by R.W.Hoyle

Although the issue of field sports has been in the headlines over the last few years very little has been written about its history.

This book sets out to fill this gap. Richard Hoyle is both the editor and a contributor, writing the introduction, a history of the Oakley Hunt and a chapter on royalty and their attitudes to field sports. Nicholas Mansfield looks at Foxhunting and the yeomanry. Edward Bujack contributes a chapter on field sports and landed society in late-Victorian Suffolk and Mark Rothery considers the shooting party and all that it meant in social terms. Wildfowling, otter hunting and salmon angling are also considered as well as the various movements to ban some of these activities. This book distances itself from the political and moral debates to consider how field sports evolved, what effect did they had on the countryside, and social attitudes.

'Iron Harvests of the Field': The making of farm machinery in Britain since 1800

By Peter Dewey

The interest in the history of farm machinery is demonstrated in two of the museum items in this issue.

This book looks at the modern factory-based industry which emerged in Britain after 1800 in which iron replaced wood and steam replaced horse power. The second half of the 20th century saw foreign competition causing the collapse of many well-known British firms and this book looks not only at the individual machines and implements, but the development of the industry into the multinational concern it is today.

Further details on both books on www.carnegiepublishing.com

NEW PUBLICATIONS

The editor always welcomes details of relevant publications to be included in this section.

Details to:
scwmartins@hotmail.com

The Society for Folk Life Studies

Let me tell you something about this Society, with which I have been connected in various ways for many years.

It was founded in 1961 with the purpose of studying traditional ways of life in Great Britain and Ireland and to provide a common meeting point for the many different people and organisations engaged in similar activity. Its first President was Iorwerth Peate, the creative force behind the Welsh Folk Museum, and the Council included such names as Geraint Jenkins, Anne Buck, George Ewart Evans and Frank Atkinson.

Today, the Society remains a unique organisation in its capacity to draw together members from such a wide range of professional, academic and 'amateur' backgrounds with an interdisciplinary focus that extends beyond the traditional to include regional and national identities, present as well as past. They come together once a year for a

friendly four day conference based in a different part of these islands. Last year, it was the Yorkshire Dales with a theme of Upland Landscapes, this year Swansea, looking at Industry and Identity, and next year Killarney, on Lakes and Legends. The same flavour comes across in the Society's annual refereed journal, now into its 45th volume, with recent articles on Fenland Horse Keepers, on Scottish Agricultural Writers, on Welsh Costume, Irish Potato Workers and Lark Mirrors (what are these? They are lures for attracting larks towards nets or guns and used in different forms across Europe for centuries). Membership of the Society is open to all and costs £20 per year. A membership form, together with lots more news and information, can be accessed from the Society's website www.folklifestudies.org.uk. Or if you would like to contact me directly by email, please do so.

*Roy Brigden
President, Society for Folk Life Studies
r.d.brigden@reading.ac.uk*



A Northamptonshire group remembers one of the last peasant risings in England – 400 years on.

The Newton Rebels: A new Local History Community Group

The Group has been formed to ensure that the site of one of the last risings in Britain of peasants against landlords which took place in the tiny Hamlet of Newton in Northamptonshire is not forgotten.

They hope to raise awareness of the events and ultimately to mark the site with a memorial and interpretation panel. The events in Newton were the culmination of a Midlands revolt against enclosure and sparked by the Tresham family's attempt to enclose the Brand Common. The extent of Midlands unrest had frightened James 1st into issuing a proclamation on 30th May 1607 ordering the suppression of all such gatherings. On 8th June over a thousand protesters gathered at Newton from the Rockingham Forest area led by Captain Pouch a strangely anonymous and mystical character, who claimed to have authority

from Heaven and a pouch which contained 'that which shall keep you from all harm'. The Deputy Lieutenants came to the assistance of Tresham with armed retainers. The rebels refused to obey orders to disperse or respond to the reading of the royal proclamation and continued to pull down hedges and fill in ditches. Finally the gentry and their troops charged, over forty of the protesters were killed, prisoners were taken, the ringleaders tried, hung and quartered and their quarters hung in towns around Northamptonshire as a warning.

On the 400th-anniversary of the rising, on the 8th June, 2007 there is to be an early-morning walk with drums and bells from Geddington to Newton. The following day there will be a re-enactment by the Sealed Knot and perambulations to the site of the enclosure. Celebrations including the imbibing of locally brewed beer will continue throughout the weekend.

CONFERENCE NOTICEBOARD

BAHS Winter conference

Approaches to the History of the Rural Landscape

Saturday 15th December, 2007
Institute of Historical Research
Malet Street, London WC1

Speakers will include Sam Turner (Medieval Devon: Past and Future Landscapes), Tom Williamson ('Meadows, Water Meadows and the Agrarian Landscape: a Long View'), Matthew Cragoe and Ian Waites ('Depictions of Enclosure and Post-Enclosure Landscape') and David Jeremiah ('Cars and the pleasure of the Countryside: the weekend tour, rediscovery of the by-ways, popularising the beauty spots and the 'See Britain First' campaigns').

The cost will be £24 (with lunch) or £12 (without lunch). Application form on the BAHS web-site. (www.bahs.org.uk)

*European Association
for Environmental History (UK)*

'Delineation. Drawing Environmental Boundaries'

Friday 29th June 2007
Open University, Milton Keynes

Topics to be covered will include climatic, cultural and physical zones as well as landscape character assessments.

Further details of this and future conferences from RJSmith@envirohistory.waitrose.com.

*Oxford University Continuing Education
in association with the Vernacular
Architecture Group*

'Estate Building: the impact of Estates on the Built Landscape'

Friday 28th to Sunday 30th September, 2007
Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford



*Sheep house at Woburn,
designed for the Duke of
Bedford by Robert Salmon
as the venue for the sheep
shearings, 1797*

Papers over the weekend include Jonathan Finch ('To build, to plant: the estate and the creation of the modern landscape'), Kate Tiller ('Estate, village and community: patterns in the countryside'), John Broad ('The great estate, estate villages, and labourer's house 1650-1930'), Susanna Wade Martins ('Estates and their farm buildings') Stephen Moorhouse ('The infra-structure of monastic estates') and David Neave ('Estate Buildings on the Yorkshire Wolds: Sledmere and South Dalton'). The cost varies from £79 (non-residential) to £204.50 (full residential-Single room).

For full details and to apply e-mail ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk

CALL FOR PAPERS

A major conference on Land, Landscape and Environment, 1500-1750 is planned for 14th-18th July 2008 at the Early Modern Research Centre, University of Reading.

Current debates over the environment can be traced back to the Enlightenment discourses of mastery and stewardship of the land. Conflict between those who were the subjects of agrarian capitalism and those who lived off its profits was a constant theme of the period under consideration, both in the old and new world. Papers are invited on these subjects as well as literary and visual depictions of the landscape, such as maps, literature, paintings and travel writing. Proposals (max. 300 words) for 30 minute papers and a brief CV should be sent by e-mail to Dr Adam Smyth (a.smyth@reading.ac.uk) who can also advise on the suitability of a topic for inclusion in the programme.

A note from the editor

Rural History Today is published by the British Agricultural History Society. The editor will be pleased to receive short articles, press releases, notes and queries for publication. She would particularly like articles on European projects, kindred societies and news from museums, all of which she hopes will become regular features. Articles for the next issue should be sent by 30 November 2007 to Susanna Wade Martins, The Longhouse, Eastgate Street, North Elmham, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 5HD or preferably by email scwmartins@hotmail.com

Membership of the BAHS is open to all who support its aim of promoting the study of agricultural history and the history of rural economy and society. Membership enquiries should be directed to the Treasurer, BAHS, c/o Dept. of History, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter EX4 4RJ. Enquiries about other aspects of the Society's work should be directed to the Secretary, Dr John Broad, Dept. Humanities, Arts and Languages, London Metropolitan University, 166-220 Holloway Road, London, N7 8DB Tel: 020 7753 5020 Fax: 020 7753 3159 j.broad@londonmet.ac.uk

NOTES AND QUERIES

Horse mills and 'mill houses' – Information please!

The 17th and 18th century probate inventories for the villages in my home patch of Suffolk (the Otley/Helmingham area, north of Ipswich) make several references to horse mills and to the buildings in which they were housed – 'mill houses' in contemporary parlance.

I have also found references to these buildings in court rolls and glebe terriers. There appears to be no definitive literature on the subject, so I would like to make a start on gathering information.

At the time in question, that particular area of Suffolk was dominated by dairying, with some farms completely down to grass – but that apparently did not prevent them owning a horse mill. Were dairy farms importing cereals (especially wheat – there are specific references in inventories to 'wheat mills', otherwise no hint as to the purpose of the mills is given) and grinding them to feed the cows, or were the mills purely for domestic purposes, for making flour for bread and perhaps for grinding malt for beer? Such large apparatus for a comparatively small-scale domestic use would appear to be a touch of overkill!

The horse mills seem to have vanished around the 1760s and 1770s, precisely when windmills were making a comeback in the area, the cereal acreage was rising and dairying was on the decline.

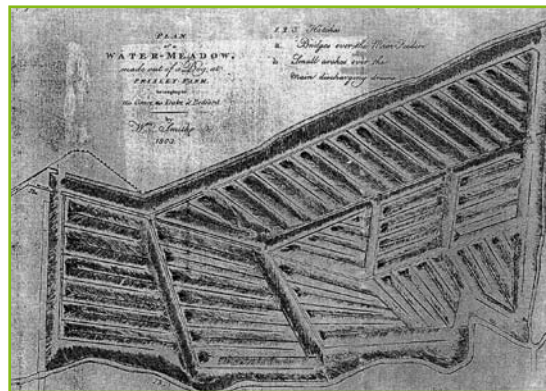
I need to establish the purpose of these machines, the period during which they were in use and the areas where they were found. Were they a feature of dairying regions, or were they also found on arable farms? What size farm were they to be found on? Were they confined to Suffolk? Who manufactured them? Were they imported from the Low Countries? What did the 'mill houses' look like? Do any still survive? Are there any contemporary sketches or descriptions?

If anyone can provide more information, please make contact with me at 129 Hoblands, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3SB, or email stephen.podd@fwag.org.uk.

Stephen Podd

Thurnestone Water Meadows

Those who attended the BAHS spring conference in Hereford and went on the outing to the Lugg Lammas Meadows will have had the opportunity to view a highly unusual survival of a farming system dating back to medieval times.



Water Meadows continued to be created into the 19th century. This example from the Duke of Bedford's estates was planned in 1806.

Herefordshire is also the county which can boast the earliest surviving example of 'floated' water meadows, at Thurnestone Court Farm in the Golden Valley. Laid out by Rowland Vaughan they are described in his book *The Most Approved and Long Experienced Water Workes*, published in 1610. A three-mile long Trench Royal, ten feet wide and four feet deep crossed the flood plain with irrigation ditches fed from it.

Although the remaining earthworks are difficult to interpret, they represent an important historic monument as well as a species-rich meadow undisturbed for 400 years. However all this was under threat. A natural gas pipe line 186 km long and the biggest of its kind in Europe was scheduled to cross the site.

A Compulsory Purchase bid was put in by the National Grid who claimed that no other route was possible. The owners of the site, The Countryside Restoration Trust, and the Green Party have opposed the plan and as a result of protracted negotiations, the pipe line now avoids the water meadow area, but still goes through a neighbouring ancient meadow. Here a 44 metre wide (the width of a six-lane highway) trench is being excavated for the pipe, thus altering for ever the ecology along the line.

However a good management agreement for the site has been negotiated and the Countryside Restoration Trust is confident that the best deal that could have been achieved has been agreed and the water meadow earthworks avoided. More details of the work of the Trust can be found on its website, www.livingcountryside.org.uk