

RURAL HISTORY

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TODAY



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A new museum arises

Anyone passing the site of the new Museum of English Life cannot but be impressed by the scale of the new building arising there. The building works on the Redlands Road site have been progressing well over the summer and autumn period.



Progress on the construction of the new museum wing with the rear of St Andrew's behind

sorting and boxing the vast quantity of material to be re-located. The small army of volunteers working on the glass negative collections is making serious progress with the task of making these particularly vulnerable and precious items fit to travel the

short distance to their new home. Brennan & Whalley of London, a firm of experienced exhibition designers, have been hired as consultants to assist with the planning of layouts within the new building.

The countdown to the opening of the new site has already begun and is as follows. May 8th 2004 is the date of our Spring Spectacular and will be the last major public event in the existing building at Whiteknights. Shortly after that, the old Museum will close as the galleries become a holding area for material in readiness for the move. It is expected that public access to the Reading Room and to the library and archive, albeit on a reduced scale, will continue on the current site through to as near the end of 2004 as practically feasible. We will take possession of the new Redlands Road site in August 2004 and the transfer of collections will begin immediately. That process will have been completed and the old site vacated by the end of the year. A reading room service will be operating from the new MERL as early in 2005 as possible, and we expect the whole site, including the new collections building, to be fully open in April 2005.

The existing buildings, part Victorian and part early twentieth century extension, have been undergoing major renovation in preparation for their new role to house the library and archive and associated facilities. The listed status of the building has necessitated that particular attention be paid to some parts of the structure, notably the elaborate brick chimneys which are a trademark feature of Waterhouse the architect, and which proved to be in worse condition than originally foreseen. Overall, however, the scheme is running smoothly and to schedule. At the same time, the very impressive steel framework of the new building to house the object collections has been under construction. This is almost complete and efforts are now concentrated on roofing over the structure. Some delays in delivery have resulted in this part of the project falling three or four weeks behind the clock but the expected completion date for the whole site currently remains at July 2004.

Meanwhile, preparations for the move are continuing at a steadily increasing rate. In September, two new Collections Assistants joined the team to assist with the process of cleaning,

Image above: Harry Ferguson

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Online Access to the MERL Collections

Usage of the MERL website

www.ruralhistory.org has more than doubled in the past year as more features are added and additional material, much of it with images attached, is loaded onto the collections database.

Two new online exhibitions, for example, have been added, one of them depicting our wonderful collections of livestock prints and portraits. These are a product of the latest round of Designation Challenge Funding and will soon be joined by a series of new online educational elements. Spring 2004 will see the online launch of the New Landscapes New Technologies project on which we have been working on for the past two years with the Berkshire Record Office. Grant aided by the New Opportunities Fund, this project has enabled MERL to digitise and database more than 50,000 pages of catalogues from Victorian agricultural machinery manufacturers and the Record Office to do likewise for Berkshire enclosure maps and awards. These extraordinary resources will be available to view and study at leisure via a joint portal linked to the websites of the two host organisations.

The Rural Museums Network

Over the past year, and with financial assistance from the Designation Challenge Fund, MERL has been instrumental in the emergence of a more formalised national network of rural life museums.

This family of museums faces similar challenges and has much to gain from drawing more closely together in a spirit of co-operation and self-help. Primarily an English initiative in the first instance, the Network's thirty-two founder members comprise the major regional rural museums around England together with the relevant national collections of the UK countries. The circle of membership is now widening and will ultimately be available to all rural and agricultural museums across the UK and Eire. An inaugural meeting of the Network was hosted by Resource in London in November and a two-day conference is planned for Reading in March 2004. A joint Network project currently under way is looking at the concept of a Distributed National Collection of rural and agricultural material. More information about the Network and its activities can be found on the website www.ruralmuseumsnetwork.org.uk or by contacting Brenda Jones, Network Co-ordinator, at b.m.jones@reading.ac.uk.

Library projects at the Museum of English Rural Life

Following the retirement of John Creasey, MERL Librarian for many years, it was decided to establish a new two-year MERL Library Project to manage the move of the library materials to the new St Andrew's site.

The project is being overseen by a Board comprising representatives of the University Library, academic staff and the MERL staff. The Library Project manager, Bridget Andrews, took up her post in July. A major part of her task is to oversee the AHRB-funded project to catalogue and assimilate the substantial deposit of books, periodicals and pamphlets recently acquired from the Library of the former Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. This includes the small collection of antiquarian works established

by the late George Fussell, but also long runs of farming periodicals from the early nineteenth century onwards. In addition, the project board will make recommendations about the future management of the library and will establish a collections development policy.

The Library Project Board has also been given responsibility for making recommendations on the future of the Rural History bibliography following the resignation of its long-serving Bibliographer, Janet Collett, in the summer of last year. Its initial conclusions are due to be presented to the University's Committee on Archives and Collections in the new year, including consideration of the need for an in-depth review of the Bibliography and interim staffing arrangements.

THE END OF THE FERGUSON HERITAGE?

By Peter Dewey

In 2003, an important episode in British industrial and farming history came to an end. The Massey-Ferguson factory in Coventry ceased to manufacture tractors. This concluded almost half a century of tractor making at the Banner Lane factory, and signalled another stage in the internationalisation of tractor manufacture.



The Banner Lane factory. Photo: P. Dewey

At the end of the Second World War, the British tractor market was dominated by Ford of Dagenham. Its main product, the Fordson, still trailed its plough and other implements behind it, as horses had done previously. But Harry Ferguson had a new concept: he called it the 'unit principle'. By this method, the implements were attached to the back of the tractor with a three-point hitch, and could be raised or lowered by an hydraulic ram. If the implements hit an obstruction in the soil, the tractor would not rear up and topple back upon its driver, as had always been a possibility with trailed implements. The system also gave constant-depth working, and the ability to work right up to the edges and corners of fields. The controls of the Ferguson tractor were light and simple, and so many young boys, as young as seven or eight, were to learn tractor driving on the family Ferguson.

In 1945, Harry Ferguson was an inventor with a remarkable invention (and well-protected by patents), but no one wanted to make it.



The first Ferguson tractor

Six Ferguson tractors with single furrow deep digger ploughs, at Upware In The Fenland, 1948. Photo: Courtesy MERL

Previously, in 1936-9, he had been in partnership with David Brown of Huddersfield and then with Henry Ford in the USA in 1939-45, but both of these relationships had come to an end. Once again, Harry Ferguson was looking for a manufacturer, preferably with a spare factory, to manufacture his revolutionary tractor.

The solution was found in the shape of the Banner Lane factory in Coventry. This had been a government 'shadow factory' in the war, and was about to revert to its owners, the Standard Motor Co. An agreement was reached between Ferguson and Standard. Ferguson provided the designs, Standard made the tractor. Standard also put up most of the money to equip the factory. The final piece of the jigsaw was to persuade the government to allow enough steel to be allocated to the new company to make the tractors, and to import engines from the USA.

Production at Banner Lane commenced in 1946. It rose rapidly, to a peak of 73,623 tractors in 1951. The factory itself was expanded several times, but the core, complete with its impressive late 1930s style entrance hall in veneered woodwork, survives. On entering, the visitor is confronted with a severe-looking photograph of Harry Ferguson on the wall, and photos of the Ferguson at work. Further in, there is a well-organised museum of Ferguson tractors and their many Ferguson-designed implements. Also included is the first Ferguson to come off the production line in 1946 - the 'little grey Fergie'. By 1953, when Harry Ferguson sold the firm to Massey-Harris, 359,091 more had been produced. The Ferguson system was to become the basis of every tractor in the world. The revolution which began at Banner Lane in 1946 is still going on.

Peter Dewey was Secretary of the BAHS (1998-2002); he is researching the history of the British agricultural machinery industry.

"Harry Ferguson had a new concept: he called it the 'unit principle' ... the Ferguson system was to become the basis of every tractor in the world"

THE HISTORY AND SCALE OF VERMIN KILLING

By Roger Lovegrove

Since time immemorial Man has taken it upon himself to wage war against those species of birds and mammals which he believes conflict with his livelihood, personal safety or, latterly, recreational or sporting interests. A great amount of archival information over the past few hundred years is known to exist but until now there has never been a comprehensive attempt to assess it.

The five-year project in which I am involved seeks to trace the history of vermin control in Britain over the past 400 years or so. It has always been known that parish records throughout England and Wales (sadly not in Scotland however) are a rich treasury of payments that were made for killing specified vermin. However until now there has been no attempt to make a comprehensive study of these records county by county. The reservoir of data is enormous and a daunting challenge, for the archives covering several thousand parishes are held in over 70 record offices in England and Wales. Nevertheless the rewards are great and represent a unique historical record of the relative abundance of many familiar species together with accurate catalogues of the rate at which they were killed in parishes throughout the land, going back in some cases as far as the sixteenth century.

It was in the mid-sixteenth century (1532) that the first of a series of 'Tudor Vermin Acts' entered the statute book requiring every parish to raise a levy out of which payments would be made for the heads of different species of designated vermin. The main thrust of the legislation is encapsulated in the title of the 1566 Act 'An Acte for the preservation of Grayne'. Notwithstanding this, some of the species listed – hedgehog, dipper, woodpecker, hen harrier, – stretch the imagination to the limit in terms of relevance as agricultural pests. However these lists form the backbone of the research and the Tudor Acts make a convenient starting point for the research.

The churchwardens' accounts, parish by parish, give a mouth-watering glimpse of the wealth of wildlife in some parts of the country in

past centuries. At the same time they reveal unimaginable totals of annual kills: hedgehogs by the thousand, kites by the hundred, house sparrows by the million etc.. The research throws up many unexpected patterns and presents enigmatic questions. The pattern and intensity of killing is dramatically different from one area to another: why? How can this be related to agricultural or other factors? Why was there virtually no vermin control in Essex or West Sussex when it was rife in the counties around them? Why were there virtually no birds of prey killed in the counties of eastern England? Already there are significant differences appearing between the areas of Rackham's 'ancient countryside' and the 'planned countryside' which replaced much of it.

Of course these early records in England are only a part of the story. The picture in Wales is tantalizing because there may well have been much of excitement to find, particularly in the mountain regions – eagles, martens, wild cats – but the Welsh records are little better than fragmentary and very few data exist. After churchwardens' payments ceased in the nineteenth century, many parishes saw the establishment of Rat and Sparrow Clubs which continued the destruction of a wide range of vermin with target species selected at will. Some of their annual totals were as impressive as the earlier parish ones. The most consequential evolution however was the development of sporting estates which rode on the back of the enclosures, giving landowners complete control over their expanded estates and the opportunity to employ gamekeepers to carry on the war against offending wildlife in a far more ruthless and efficient way. An assessment of the effects of their efforts has yet to be approached and poses difficulties in England and Wales because of the apparent dearth of accessible estate vermin records over the past 150 years or so. This is the flip side of the situation in Scotland where older records are desperately few but estate vermin lists are relatively abundant and shockingly terminal.

There is still much to do in the two remaining

Roger Lovegrove retired seven years ago from a senior position with the RSPB.

Amongst other activities, he now serves as a board member of the Countryside Council for Wales.

"The churchwardens' accounts, parish by parish, give a mouth-watering glimpse of the wealth of wildlife in some parts of the country in past centuries. At the same time they reveal unimaginable totals of annual kills"

years before the project is completed. A volume is being produced for OUP in 2006 and it is hoped that a home will be found at MERL for all the data which will form the sound basis of a national archive of vermin control.

There are many areas in which I would greatly welcome information ranging from the existence and accessibility of estate vermin records in England or Wales to pre-nineteenth-century

Scottish data, records of former fur markets in England, regional distribution of Rat and Sparrow Clubs etc. If you are interested or able to help in any of these ways I would be very pleased to hear from you. Contact by e-mail to roger.lovegrove@virgin.net or by post to Roger Lovegrove, Upper Ffynnant, Llandinam, Powys, SY17 5 AA.

FARMING TO HALVES: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON AN ABSURD AND MISERABLE SYSTEM

By Liz Griffiths

Farming to halves is the little known English version of sharefarming, sharecropping, Mezzadria or metayage tenure, a commonplace system in Europe and the New World but strangely absent in this country.

For this perception we have to thank Arthur Young. In his *Travels through France*, he famously identified metayage as the root cause of the backward nature of French farming. 'The poor people who cultivate here are matayers, that is men who hire the land without the ability to stock it; the proprietor is forced to provide the cattle and seed and he and his tenant divide the produce ... It is an absurd system which perpetuates poverty and excludes instruction ... in this most miserable of modes of letting land the defrauded landlord receives a contemptible rent, the farmer is in the lowest state of poverty; the land is miserably cultivated and the nation suffers as severely as the parties themselves'.

As Young made only too clear to his French hosts, Britain was indeed fortunate to have avoided such a deplorable system and to be blessed with well-defined relationships between landlords and tenants which protected capital, encouraged investment and promoted improvement. Large farms leased for 21 year terms at fixed rents provided the tenant with every incentive to innovate and to exert himself, and achieve production and rent levels which were the envy of Europe. 'Land which in England

would let at 10s. pays about 2s. 6d. for land and livestock' in France.

Until recently metayage tenure has attracted little interest from British historians. The general belief was that it simply did not exist within Britain: it was a French problem for French historians to examine and explain. However, a growing body of evidence from leading Norfolk estates shows that in the seventeenth century, farming to halves was a recognised strategy for effecting improvement to marsh and breckland, and for dealing with vacant farms and failing tenants. It was often found in partnership with the leasing of dairies as landowners diversified into more profitable enterprises after corn prices slumped in the 1670s. Chance references from well known published accounts – it is mentioned on the first page of Robert Loder's well known accounts – also indicate that forms of sharefarming were widespread in rural society in all parts of Britain. But whilst we know that farming to halves was widespread in Norfolk, but we have little idea of its occurrence elsewhere.

The purpose of this note is to alert historians to the activity, but also to call for references. The term 'farmed to halves' sometimes appears as 'put', 'sown' or 'let to halves': the crucial phrase is 'to halves' which implies some arrangement for sharing the inputs and dividing the crops. If you know of examples, or come across them in your own researches, please let me know at E.Griffiths@Exeter.ac.uk.

Dr Liz Griffiths has written on the history of seventeenth-century estates in Norfolk: she is now working with Dr Jane Whittle on the seventeenth-century household accounts of Alice Le Strange.

BAHS NEWS

Agriculture, landscape and alternative agriculture: essays for Joan Thirsk

Members of the society will be interested to hear that the collection of essays given at the conference in honour of Joan Thirsk's eightieth birthday in 2002 is now in the press and should be published in April or May, in time to be distributed with part one of the *Review*.

The contributors to the volume are David Hey, Chris Dyer, Peter Edwards, Richard Hoyle, Liz Griffiths, John Broad, John Chartres and Paul Brassley and the subjects discussed range from goats in medieval England, through woad and liquorice growing, wetland enclosure, early modern dairying and twentieth-century government interest in rural industries.

Non-members of the society will be particularly interested to note that the volume will be distributed gratis to individual subscribers for the year 2004-5 as will future supplements. At £15 membership of the Society remains a steal!

The Executive Committee has accepted a further proposal for a supplement and has another in hand. Nonetheless, the Editors remain interested in hearing from authors with suggestions for future supplement volumes.

Agricultural History Review

Articles to be published in the next part of *Agricultural History Review* include:

'*Fields, farms and sun-division in a moorland region, 1100-1400*' by Richard Britnell;

'*Malthus, marriage and poor law allowances revisited: a Bedfordshire case study, 1700-1834*', by Samantha Williams;

'*Robert Bakewell (1725-1795) of Dishley: farmer and livestock improver*', by David L. Wykes;

'*Young women, work and family in interwar rural England*', by Selina Todd;

'*Reflections on American agricultural history*', by R. Douglas Hurt.

Spring Conference 2005

The Society's Spring Conference will be held at the University of Leicester on 11-13 April 2005. Offers of papers should be sent to Dr Broad.

Rural History Today

The Museum of English Rural Life has indicated to the Society that it is unable to continue its financial support for *Rural History Today*.

After Richard Statham left the Museum in September to take up a post with the Birmingham Museum Service, it also became clear that there was no one in the Museum who was able to undertake the origination of *Rural History Today* which Richard did with great skill. Accordingly, this issue is supported by the University of Reading through a small sum made available to the Centre for Rural History. Whilst we are grateful for this aid, and we look forward to continued co-operation with MERL in the future, the Society has to acknowledge that it has lost its partner in *Rural History Today*.

Accordingly, the Society's Executive Committee has considered what, if any, future *Rural History Today* might have. It was unanimous in its view that the publication had quickly established itself as an attractive publication, one which was valued by its membership and which served to communicate the discipline to a wider audience. However, whilst the Executive Committee restated its commitment to *Rural History Today*, it acknowledged that the arrangements for its publication needed to be placed on a new footing, possibly with a new partner. Whilst many of the details need to be worked out, the Society is interested in hearing from potential partners, whether academic institutions or rural history museums, or, alternatively, individuals who would be interested as acting as managing editor of *Rural History Today*. Access to a DTP package and a facility with the same would be advantageous: so too would a willingness to take ideas and turn them into text. Exactly what other duties might be attached to this post is open to discussion. Anybody interested in discussing the possibilities is invited to contact Professor Hoyle to discuss what might be involved or to register their interest with the Society's secretary, Dr John Broad.

Changes in the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England

by Paul Brassley

The first volume of the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) was published in 1840; volume 163, which appeared in December 2002, turns out to have been the last to be published as a printed, bound volume.

Volume 164 appeared in December 2003, but only on RASE's website (www.rase.org.uk/journal). The editorial simply notes 'that this is the first year that the Society's Journal has not been published in hard copy'. It's a downbeat way of announcing the end of one of the longer continuous publications runs of any journal. For those of us who have used its articles, show records, and even advertisements as historical resources, it is worth pausing to mark its passing.

Of course, this does not mean that the Journal will no longer be published. Plans are already in train for the next volume. But readers will have to go to the website. There they can pay £5 to download an individual article (only the abstracts can be read for nothing) or £35 to download the whole volume. If they are registered users of a library which has paid for access there will be no charge for an article.

It is interesting to speculate on the implications of this for agricultural historians. A printed version will still be kept at the Society's library at Stoneleigh, so it will still be possible to consult it there. How many back volumes will be retained on the website remains to be seen. It is, presumably, a casualty of the recent problems of the agricultural industry; luckily we still have all those bound back issues in libraries around the country as a superb source for more than 160 years of farming history.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Continued from back page

little contact with the outside world. This view is still widely held by the general public. The assumption that villages were self-contained has been widely questioned and even refuted by studies of migration, marriage patterns, political consciousness, marketing and employment. This is not, however, a straightforward question of alternatives. The degree of movement and outside contact varied from one period to another, and between different regions. Historians of demography, of inheritance and the land market, labour migration, urbanization and so on have different perceptions of the nature of the village community and the contacts between its inhabitants and outsiders.

These problems will be discussed in papers by Christopher Dyer, Jane Whittle, Steve Hindle, Keith Snell, Henry French, David Brown and Ian Whyte. Between them they will bring together village studies in every period between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries, drawing their examples from a wide range of landscapes, from the West Midlands to the northern uplands.

For more information contact Christopher Dyer at the Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester, 3/5 Salisbury Road, Leicester, LE1 7QR, e.mail cd50@le.ac.uk, Telephone 0116 252 2765.

FIELD SPORTS AND RURAL SOCIETY SINCE 1850

Centre for Rural History, University of Reading, 14 September 2004

The provisional programme for this meeting includes papers by Michael Winstanley and Harvey Osborne (University of Lancaster), 'Gamekeepers and poachers in late Victorian England'; Ed Bujak (University of Evansville at Harlaxton), 'Sport and the survival of landed society in late Victorian Suffolk'; Richard Hoyle (University of Reading), 'Foxhunting in the twentieth century: the fortunes of the Oakley Hunt'; Michael Tichelar (University of the West of England), 'Attempts to ban hunting under the post-war Labour government' and papers by Ian Roberts (University of Durham) on Hare coursing and by Charles Watkins and David Matless on Otter hunting.

Further details and a full programme will be published after Easter: for the moment, please direct enquiries to Richard Hoyle, r.w.hoyle@reading.ac.uk.

NOTES & QUERIES

The British Agricultural History Society's web page includes a section where anyone browsing the site can submit questions about agriculture and rural society that they need specialist help to answer. Some have produced answers, but perhaps some readers who do not use the website can help with the following.

"One of my husband's grandfathers served in the Ag. Coy Labour Corps. I have not been able to find much information on this section of the forces and wondered if any of your members would be able to recommend any reading material or other sources of information."

"I am researching hair sheep, particularly Barbados Black Belly and St Croix. I have a theory that they entered the UK from slave ships and traders from the Caribbean between 1600 and mid 1800's and were used to improve the little semi wild indigenous sheep as still found in the Scottish Isles. I am part of the the Nolana Project (no lanolin/wool), we have bred a Glamorgan (Nelson) Welsh from a Cameroon crossed with a Wiltshire Horn. I need to locate evidence that UK sheep map have stemmed from African sheep."

Any answers please to John Broad, Department of Humanities, Arts and Languages, London Metropolitan University, 166-220 Holloway Road, London N7 8DB.

This issue of *Rural History Today* is published by the British Agricultural History Society with financial aid from the University of Reading.

Rural History Today would be pleased to receive short articles, press releases, notes and queries for publication. Articles or suggestions for articles should, for the moment, be sent to Professor Richard Hoyle, r.w.hoyle@reading.ac.uk.

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 Assistant Treasurer, BAHS, c/o School of Historical Studies, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Dr. Exeter, EX4 4RJ. Enquiries about other aspects of the Society's work should be directed to the Secretary, Dr John Broad, Dept of 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. Articles for submission to *Agricultural History Review* should be directed to Prof. Hoyle at the School of History, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Reading, Whiteknights, PO Box 229, Reading, RG6 6AG.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

BRITISH AGRICULTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY SPRING CONFERENCE

Pollock Halls, University of Edinburgh, 5-7 April 2004

The British Agricultural History Society's Spring Conference 2004 will be held at the University of Edinburgh from 5 to 7 April 2004. The conference will mark the Society's foray north of the border by lectures on Scottish farmers and woodlands from Professor Christopher Smout and on highland settlement and agriculture from Professor Robert Dodgson. Dr Heather Holmes will examine the dissemination of farming ideas in Scotland in the eighteenth century, and Dr Susanna Wade Martins will lead our excursion to look at the historic legacy of high farming in the Lothians. An extended new researchers session will include reports on research into Scottish enclosure, as well as discussions of twentieth-century English rural housing, and landownership. Dr Leigh Shaw-Taylor will present a paper challenging current positions on the English yeoman's position in the countryside, while our guest speaker is Prof. Jan Bieleman from the University of Wageningen who will talk on 'Dutch Cattle Breeding and Dairy Farming in Transition, 1850-2000'. For further details please contact Dr John Broad, Department of Humanities, Arts and Languages, London Metropolitan University, 166-220, Holloway Road, London N7 8DB, (email j.broad@londonmet.ac.uk) or go to the society's web pages at www.bahs.org.uk.

Bursaries are available to help students attend this and the society's other conferences. Details can be obtained from the Society's secretary.

CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITIES: PLACE AND PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, 1918-1939

Gregynog Hall, near Newtown, Powys, 21-22 April 2004

This interdisciplinary conference is organised by the Inter-war Rural History Research Group, and will take place at the University of Wales conference centre at Gregynog. It follows the IRHRG's successful inaugural conference at Dartington in 2002. The 2004 conference takes as

its theme the issues relating to rural community in the inter-war years, looking at the variety of ways in which people thought about community – as it was, and they thought it should be. Perceptions of change and decline in the British countryside in the early twentieth century were often closely linked to laments for the loss of a supposed 'organic' rural way of life. The nature and future of communities in the countryside became a subject for discussion amongst politicians, sociologists, geographers, agricultural economists and writers. Many rural educational, cultural and leisure organisations saw their role, at least in part, as being concerned with recreating vibrant communities in the countryside. The conference aims to develop discussion on this important topic, by bringing together researchers from a variety of disciplines, all with interests in the history of the countryside between the wars. The keynote speakers are David Matless and Richard Moore-Colyer. The conference papers cover subjects including the invention of rural community, modernisation in the countryside, film and theatre in rural settings, therapeutic communities in the 1920s, caravan camping, the impact of Foot and Mouth Disease, farmers and agricultural science, agricultural educational establishments, and market gardening. The sessions run from Wednesday lunchtime through to mid-afternoon on the Thursday, all based in Gregynog Hall, with a conference dinner on the Wednesday.

The full residential rate is £79, including a conference fee of £15. Funds may be available to defray travel costs for students. For further details and a registration form please contact Clare Griffiths (clare.griffiths@sheffield.ac.uk), or Lynne Thompson (L.Thompson@exeter.ac.uk).

THE SELF-CONTAINED VILLAGE, 1250-1890

Centre for Local History, University of Leicester, 3 July 2004

The Centre for English Local History is organizing a one-day conference on 3 July on the theme of 'The Self-Contained Village? The social history of English rural communities, 1250-1890'. The commonly held assumption amongst historians until comparatively recently was that rural populations before the nineteenth century were static and continuous, and that villagers had

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