

Annual List and Brief Review of Articles on Agrarian History, 1981*

By RAINE MORGAN

THE important issue of relationships between economic development and activities in the countryside is a dominant theme in this year's collection of articles. Earle and Hoffman (65) for example, offer a comparative analysis of labour in rural England and in the grain and cotton economies of the United States in an attempt to explain different processes of industrialization. They argue that relative labour costs either side of the Atlantic were precisely the reverse of those postulated by Habakkuk; and they further maintain that the nature of agrarian systems was crucial in the transition to industry through its influence on the labour supply. Thus, whereas in America cheap unskilled labour from rural 'staple' economies could be profitably exploited in conjunction with machine technology, intensified farming in England after 1800 raised wages of the unskilled and removed a critical incentive to invest in factory machines. The importance of the putting-out system as a vehicle for the development of manufacturing and emergence of wage labour is stressed by Millward (142). However, in a study of rural textile production in the West Riding, Hudson (114) raises doubts about the validity of proto-industrialization as a concept and suggests that rural industries were not necessarily a stage in the transition to factory production. Rather they should be viewed in an agrarian context, reflecting the differential decline of manorialism and the enclosure and consolidation of land. With a more traditional approach Frost (78) investigates relationships between rural industry and agrarian economy in the Black Country while charting the gradual separation of farm and forge after 1560. Findings confirm the picture postulated by Thirsk of domestic crafts flourishing in an upland economy specializing in stock where open wastes attracted families requiring subsidiary employment. But a much less straightforward conclusion emerges from Rogers' inquiry (171) into why the framework knitting industry of south Nottinghamshire came to be located in some villages and not others during the period after 1670. Pressure on land was apparently not linked to industrialization

here. Instead villages with weak manorial control, a compact social structure, and the freedom to exploit resources were those where knitting usually became established. The relevance of wage rates to living standards in the pre-industrial economy of England is discussed by Woodward (225), who shows that self-employment combined with farming protected building craftsmen against the sixteenth-century price inflation. Instead it was the unskilled landless labourer without by-employment whose worsening circumstances are most accurately mirrored in the Brown-Hopkins index.

There are two articles on the study of the birth of agriculture. Fussell (80) traces ideas on the origin of farming from the eighteenth century into mid-Victorian times when the Bible and classical writers provided virtually the only terms of reference. In the other, Harris (96) offers a wide ranging historiographical survey in which he welcomes the rejection by prehistorians of that sharp distinction between hunter-gatherer and farmer. But while the gradual modification of natural ecosystems by man is the more fruitful approach, he warns that the plethora of new models of origins will fail to enlighten unless there is a much more precise questioning of new data with which to test them, specifically on the time-scale of change and its intermediate stages. A new classificatory framework for studying prehistoric economies is offered by Bailey (10), who distinguishes between indirect, opportunistic and controlled exploitation of resources. Archaeologists have also supplied important new data. Wendorf and Schild (214) report dramatic evidence from the Nile valley which pushes back the domestication of plants 8000 years earlier than previously supposed. There is however no sign of population pressure, environmental stress or change in size or structure of population groups — phenomena that have become associated with the transition to cereal growing. Instead settlements remained small and hunting and gathering continued as the basic subsistence activities. At home Andresen *et al* (3) have applied a new analytical approach to the study of material from Star Carr. After investigating the processes that have resulted in the accumulation and differential destruction of material they argue that the site was a hunting and butchering station occupied for only short periods throughout most of the year. The importance of

* Publications are dated 1981 unless otherwise noted. References to articles or off-prints should be sent to the Bibliographical Unit, Institute of Agricultural History, University of Reading.

leaves and fodder in early economies is stressed in a number of articles. Garbett (81) has evidence from pollen analysis indicating that gathering involved elm, oak and lime trees, and he argues that the initiating of elm decline can be linked directly to over-exploitation. Also, investigation of a Mesolithic site in Dorset by Palmer and Dimbleby (150) has furnished evidence that ivy was imported by man, doubtless for winter feeding, and thus indicating first tentative attempts at domestication. According to Spray (190), holly provided another vital winter resource, and as late as the eighteenth century was a common browse for sheep in the Pennine foothills. Neolithic longhouses in Europe are the subject of a paper by Marshall (137). In the light of ethnographic parallels from the New Guinea highlands he maintains that both types represent adaptation to adverse weather conditions and that wind direction is the major influence on orientation of structures. Since European examples differ markedly from present day wind directions, significant climatic change since the Neolithic is implied.

For the medieval period Whyte (217) considers rural settlement studies in Scotland and suggests that there has been no clear framework and much oversimplification. His paper stresses the potential use of untapped documentary sources and also the need for an integrated multi-disciplinary approach. Much discussion recently has centred upon the pattern of Anglo-Saxon settlement in England, and Arnold and Wardle (6) explore the major shift from poor upland to valley areas. They re-emphasize the importance of the seventh and eighth centuries, and raise questions about the cause of that shift and its implications. Using tax documents to assess rank-size distribution of settlements in Nottinghamshire, Unwin (205) has found that contrary to expectations smallest units were not the most common despite high mobility in settlement size and different methodological approaches. Improvements to our understanding of Anglo-Saxon farming over the past four decades are summarized by Fowler (76) in a review of changing sources and research methods. The origin of the Lincolnshire hundred is examined by Roffe (170), who notes that it was a Danish institution which arose out of a basically non-manorialized society and was constituted with local government and tax raising purposes in mind. Consequently it bore little relationship to estate and settlement structures as was the case with the hundred of hidated England. The records of 14 Wiltshire manors have been studied by Hare (93) to establish who took over the demesnes when they were eventually leased in the fifteenth century. He finds that most went intact to substantial local tenants while a minority of lessees were wealthy industrialists and merchants from outside. Importantly the transfer created the prototype 'gentle-

man farmer' who in later centuries took a leading part in agricultural change. Field systems are closely researched in two articles by Campbell (32, 34), who questions both the importance of population pressure in their systematization and the theory of ethnic origins. The vital element, he believes, was strong manorial control, and where this was lacking (as in Norfolk) peasants used their freedom from common rules to intensify their farming as population grew. Evidence from east Norfolk is also used to show how demographic pressures, which promoted extreme fragmentation and an intensified land use in medieval times, also underlay engrossment, consolidation and gradual dissolution of common fields after 1500. The conventional link of the narrow-rig with open field agriculture is denied by Drury (63), who prefers to view it as resulting from the use of fixed mouldboard ploughs where neither land tenure nor drainage needs demanded the broad high curving features typical of much medieval cultivation. In another article on Wiltshire Hare (92) contrasts the stability of chalkland farming after 1350 with the advance of pastoralism and enclosure of land in the clay vales. Postles (157) has collected further data on medieval fleece weights and demonstrates their extreme lightness at this time. Although a slightly higher weight is detected in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, the average even here still did not exceed 2½ lb. There are a number of important articles on agrarian society. Hatcher (100) examines the condition of serfdom from the perspective of the unfree, and demonstrates that the balance of advantages and disadvantages could alter dramatically over time. Further, these changes were rarely the product of market forces alone. Thus when thirteenth-century inflation threatened villeins, custom restrained lords from realizing the increased value of land and made them a protected and even privileged group. But earlier, when labour scarcity and land surplus should have favoured the unfree, lordly rights to restrict movement seriously inhibited attempts to escape servitude. Emmison (67) offers a brief guide to Fines — an important set of documents which often detail property acreages not available in deeds. The imaginative use of court rolls continues to enlighten and enliven the study of peasant communities. In his study of a Warwickshire manor, Razi (162) denies contentions of the Toronto School that bonds between family and land were severed or weakened after the Black Death with the growth of individualism. Blaming over-reliance on surnames in family reconstitution for this view, Razi has amassed evidence showing the strength of kinship ties in land transfers and greater economic interdependence in the post-plague era. The contents of a fifteenth-century barrel-latrine from Worcester have been analysed by Greig (88), who maintains that such

unlikely data sources can provide valuable insight into diet, living conditions and rubbish disposal in the past. There has been a tendency for historians to dismiss medieval industrial development in Wales, but a survey of cloth making spanning three centuries convinces Jack (118) that it formed a varied and vital element of the economy which did not merely pass half-made goods to English craftsmen for finishing.

For the early modern period two major data sources have been re-examined to gain a clearer picture of population changes. According to Campbell's revised estimates from the 1522 muster returns and 1524-25 subsidies (33), England's population amounted to a mere 1.8 million in the early sixteenth century. This argues an even steeper demographic fall in the late medieval period than previously thought and probably only small recovery thereafter. Despite their importance neither the contours nor causes of Ireland's pre-famine population growth have been definitely settled by historians, due to lack of reliable data. But Daultry *et al* (52) have re-appraised Hearth tax series to ascertain trends regionally. They find significant provincial differences but conclude that over all, despite insecure growth before 1750, advance was quite dramatic by European standards so that demographically at least Ireland remains an outlier. The Civil War has largely been the concern of political historians focusing on *élites* and party faction but now broader issues are attracting attention. Underdown (204) plots the geographical distribution of allegiance among the lower orders in the west country and relates it to settlement patterns, culture and the nature of rural economies. Strong regional differences are also highlighted in Dias's study (58) of popular allegiance in Derbyshire. Reasons for withdrawal of active state intervention in seventeenth-century grain markets are considered by Outhwaite (148), who denies those traditional explanations emphasizing the role of London institutions and of less serious dearths. Instead, he pinpoints adverse reaction to provision for food shortages which subsequently proved unnecessary, and those agricultural interests in Parliament unwilling to curb high prices. Contributory factors were better local poor law provision, and certain excise changes which discouraged government from restricting industrial uses of grain. On landownership Habakkuk (90) tries to estimate broad changes in the size-distribution of estates before 1640 compared with the eighteenth century, while Clay (42) considers why the great owners into whose hands land tended to accumulate after 1660 were also largely responsible for fuelling an extremely active land market. He argues that strict settlement was an ineffective device for keeping properties intact, and that while over-spending due to extravagance or

heavy financial provision for the family often caused sales, frequently they resulted from a desire to consolidate lands following the inheritance of distant properties. In another paper Clay (41) focuses on tenure systems and their implications for land management. He shows that lifeleasehold typical of western England required much less supervision of husbandry practices than rack-rented estates, and were also less likely to result in bad farming than previously supposed. The usefulness of rental records is demonstrated by Wordie (226), who sets information from some West Midland estates beside comparative evidence from the country at large. Findings suggest that tenants were under no great financial pressure before the Napoleonic Wars, but thereafter more efficient estate management, decline of the long lease, and a new attitude towards tenants rendered their situation a much less comfortable one. In his survey of debates on enclosure Blum (24) concludes that the pessimistic view of effects upon small owners has not been disproved and charges historians with minimizing or even denying high social and economic costs. However, Turner's study of how costs were defrayed (200) does emphasize the distress of small owners whose financial burdens were disproportionately high. Non-Parliamentary methods of enclosure have attracted little attention in the past. But in six East Midland counties surveyed by Reed (164) they accounted for over half of the total area, and he urges greater enquiry into their extent, chronology, motives, costs and consequences. The links between farm size and efficiency are explored by Phillips (155) in his study of the Leveson-Gower estate. Here, greater efficiency was not an immediate or automatic consequence of farm enlargement between 1714 and 1779. Rather it was consolidation and the alteration of farm layout after 1780 which had the major impact. On production and marketing, Edwards (56) surveys the Shropshire cattle trade during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, highlighting greater market orientation of producers and emergence of specialist middlemen. Woodlands have often provided a significant proportion of landed income, and Barton (13) describes their management and economy on a large Hertfordshire estate during the 1670s and 1680s. Improvement is the theme of several articles. It has been believed that in Scotland it was the great landlords who alone initiated change in the eighteenth century. However, Whyte (218) describes the systematic planting and encouragement to tenants by a small proprietor and suggests there was considerable exchange of ideas at all levels of estate ownership. The importance of husbandry covenants in leases is emphasized by Stanes (191) in a study of Devon examples, and he argues that through them landowners imposed high standards on farming

from an early date. Grove (89) has analysed the advanced ideas of Cressey Dymock. In 1651 this little known innovator proposed a reasoned model of zoned land-use aimed at maximizing the economy of labour on newly drained fenland, in which many of Von Thunen's concepts were anticipated. A variety of approaches are evident in articles on agrarian society. Rollison (172) focuses upon the curious ceremony held to mock a local tenant farmer in an obscure Cotswold village in 1716, and uncovers a complex web of conflict, factionalism and intrigue. The ceremony, which expressed deep resentment towards established society, also reflected the huge gulf between gentry and plebeian cultures. With the need for an alternative to Gregory King's questionable social table, Horn (109) outlines a method employing a variety of local sources for the study of wealth and occupation, illustrated with evidence from the Gloucester Vale. The value of local study is also confirmed by Pickles' search for causes of out-migration from a rural area in Yorkshire between the 1660s and 1740 (156). She finds no golden age for labourers here as farming activity declined and wealth fell. A series of useful drawings of farm buildings found with the Ulster Plantation surveys are described by Blades (22). They reflect seventeenth-century approaches to design materials and construction more clearly than modified structures of today. The development of farmyard types in Ireland in relation to farm economy and terrain is traced by Ó Danachair (147), while Tyson (203) documents the planned rebuilding of two tenanted Cumbrian farmsteads during the eighteenth century. Greedy landlords have been a common target in explanations of agrarian violence in Ireland. Nonetheless, Maguire's investigation (136) of unrest after rent increases and renewal of fines on the Donegall estate demonstrates that here at least the cause was not so simple. For although the scale and suddenness of changes in the 1770s were likely to antagonize tenants, rent increases were modest. More to blame was the complex structure of sub-letting which allowed heaviest burdens to fall upon insecure, hardpressed occupiers whom the Earl of Donegall neither created nor controlled.

Questions of land ownership feature prominently in articles dealing with the modern period. Soltow (189) has analysed the British land tax of 1798 to disclose the distribution of property values and the level of owner occupation at that time. The stress on continuity within the British peerage between 1750 and 1830 is questioned by McCahall (134), who argues that land ceased to be the pre-eminent qualification for ennoblement, particularly after 1800. This partly reflected a fear of denuding the Lower House of propertied men but was also linked to a broader policy of rewarding services to the Crown. From a

different viewpoint, Rubinstein (174) argues that there was a near cessation of land purchase by *élites* in business and the professions after 1800 because it was less possible, less profitable and socially less advantageous than before to enter landed society. Early nineteenth-century census returns from an Irish barony are analysed by Soltow (188) to determine how landholding varied with age and change in occupational status. In a study of landownership trends in Scotland after 1870, Clark (40) finds that although areas with the largest properties suffered the sharpest decline in mean size, this was not true of all counties, and he urges detailed investigation of individual estates and the growth of state-owned land. In an important article on crop productivity in Europe Chorley (38) looks closely at the question of nutrient supply, and in particular at the crucial role of legumes, in boosting yields by raising the nitrogen content of soils and farmyard manure. Another source of raised output has been improved varieties of grain, and Austen *et al* are among those (8, 166, 182, 183) who provide a measure of their contribution over the past century. Turner (199) uses the 1801 crop returns to determine the distribution of major crops in England and Wales, and to provide an estimate of total arable acreage. His figure of between 7 m and 8 m acres compares favourably with contemporary ones. The implications of tithe commutation are assessed by Vamplew (208), who argues that most importantly it allowed farmers who raised their earnings by greater livestock production to reduce tithe payments as a proportion of their total income. The study of high farming in Victorian Britain is reviewed by Perry (152), while Dodd (60) dissects the 1854 crop returns for south-western Scotland to show the healthy state of farming there. In an article on post-famine agricultural adjustment in Ireland, Hazelkorn (101) questions why Marx's prognostications were not realized. Mainly this reflected his ignorance of tenant ambitions, land fever and the nature of agrarian capitalism in that country, which inhibited the emergence of large farms and pools of landless labourers. The impact of the late nineteenth-century depression is of growing interest. Colyer (44) charts the political and economic decline of the Cardiganshire squirearchy after 1870, and links it to mounting debts, growth of taxation and shrinking rental incomes. By contrast, Blackwell's study (21) of papers from Sussex country houses finds no evidence of deterioration in either life style or social status between 1880 and 1914. Land use changes in the Evesham Vale over the same period are traced by Robinson (168) employing multi-variate analysis of the agricultural returns. He detects vigorous expansion in horticulture, reflecting transport improvement, the smallholder movement and changes in market demand. The position of

labourers, particularly women, in the agrarian economy has also been the focus of much detailed research. Snell (187) has gathered data from settlement examinations, and argues there was a real fall in the earning capacity of women in southern counties after 1760 due to reduced field work and a shift from summer to lower-paid spring tasks. In the pastoral west, however, income rose with the maintenance of more even year-round employment. In an attempt to assess the effect of real wage levels on participation rates of women and children in farming, Saito (180) concludes that in the 1790s they were obliged to work if income of the breadwinner fell below 10s, but when earnings exceeded it leisure was preferred. Kussmaul (130) uses statistics from the Lincolnshire archives to explain social, spatial and temporal mobility of farm servants in the late eighteenth century, while in another pessimistic view of labour Armstrong (5) argues that demographic rather than institutional factors played a dominant role in the deterioration of living standards after 1815. It is D C Moore's view that deference to traditional *élites* conditioned voting behaviour of farmers, but Fisher (72, 73) is critical of this view, and in a study of a mid-nineteenth-century election detects vigorous self-assertion by tenants and defiance of landlord influence when interests no longer coincided. The adoption of farm equipment is explored in a number of articles. Wilkes (219) relates the early diffusion of the seed drill and horse hoe to problems of labour supply and advances in engineering but he also believes that pioneers had a decisive influence. Tillage equipment of south-western counties is described by Jewell (120), who shows how implements evolved to meet special requirements of ley farming in difficult terrain. The comparatively late spread of the scythe for harvesting in Ireland is explained by Bell (15) as largely the result of persistence in sowing grain on ridges. Only when drainage was improved and ridges flattened could the tool be effectively used. Farm sale notices are collected by Mutch (145) to chart the adoption of harvesting machinery in Lancashire up to 1914. He links high wages and uncertain supplies of casual labour to surges in adoption after 1860, while in another article Miller (140) shows how high costs of operation and lack of demand at this time doomed the first contract steam plough company to an early failure. The histories of agricultural education and science deserve more attention than they have received in the past, and Colyer (47) highlights this neglect in his study of developments in Wales since early in this century.

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