

Annual List and Brief Review of Articles on Agrarian History, 1992*

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THE use of science for reconstructing pre-historic land use and environmental change is again evident in the scholarly literature. Renfrew, for example (175), explores the use of modern biochemical genetics to provide insights into the histories of human population and brings his evidence to bear on the current study of language, the archaeological record and the spread of agriculture. Recent cytogenetic investigations of wild and cultivated plants from archaeological sites are described by Blumler (21) who furthers our understanding of domestication, diffusion and the origins of agriculture. The powerful method of quantitative isotope analysis has also brought a new dimension to the examination of archaeological finds, and Stoss-Gale (208) explains how it can be applied to bone remains, where the type of food consumed leaves an unambiguous imprint, allowing calculations to be made of dietary habits. More conventionally Hatton and Caseldine (94) chart the vegetation and land-use history over a millennium at a Devon site, while Green and Lockyear (84) examine charred plant remains from buried soils in Hampshire to reveal the densities and distribution of species as well as past horticultural land use and possible ancient boundaries. The potential of crop weeds as indicators of farming practice is discussed by Jones (112); archaeological weed assemblages from parts of Europe suggest that an intensive garden-like regime rather than field cultivation may have been widespread among early farmers. Wood *et al* (232) explore the problems of interpreting skeletal remains for information on the health implications of the transition to settled agriculture. On the transition to agriculture in northern and western Europe Armit and Finlayson (6) postulate a gradual transformation within a pattern of great regional diversity where selected parts of the farming socio-economy are adopted at varying rates. The modern phenomenon of human-induced climatic change is not new according to Schule (194) who argues that prehistoric man is likely to have

sufficiently influenced the carbon, nitrogen and water flux of the biosphere to trigger climatic oscillations. Current research on the fenland pre-historic sites are reported by Hall (88), Pryor (174), Scaife (191) and Taylor (210), and Cunliffe (47) proposes a new model for Iron Age pits in which the storage of seed grain is seen as a religious or ritual activity rather than for food preservation. Rejecting the model that equates calf slaughter with dairying McCormick (129) reassesses early bone assemblages and finds no evidence of the practice either in Britain before the late Iron Age or in Ireland before c 500 AD. Patton (162) highlights evidence from the Channel Islands to challenge the view that megaliths reflect local availability of building materials, suggesting instead that cultural factors linked to territorial boundaries outweighed practical considerations of transportation.

Medieval settlement, society and economy are heavily represented in the periodical literature this year, and there is evidence that the computer is being increasingly exploited for research. Hodkinson and Davnall (99) report on the computer simulation devised to test hypotheses about ancient land tenure and inheritance where the sources are incomplete and unstatistical in nature, and Keen *et al* (117) outline some of the computing tools for storage and analysis of antiquarian records. Davnall *et al* (52) describe the *Taxatio* database being set up to record information from the thirteenth-century taxation assessment of ecclesiastical income, and Moffett (146) explains the logistics of making a humanities database of images and associated information available on the world network. Settlement studies continue to attract a disproportionate amount of attention. Taylor (209) looks at changing perceptions of the subject, and Roberts (180) considers theoretical and practical problems of dating villages. The emergence of the village is set in a European context by Pesez (165), and Beresford (16) provides an historical account of the representation of deserted sites on Ordnance Survey plans. Barker and Grant (11) survey current knowledge on the Roman landscape and argue for the multi-disciplinary approach with data placed in an economic, political and cultural context. This approach is adopted by Allen and Fulford (4) who

* Publications are dated 1992 unless otherwise noted. References to articles or offprints should be sent to the Bibliographical Unit, Rural History Centre, University of Reading. The Master Index containing over 50,000 classified references on British agrarian history and rural society can be consulted by appointment.

combine documentary, archaeological and geological evidence of the inner Severn estuary in their study of Romano-British reclamation and land use. It has been widely believed that planned landscapes originated in the later Iron Age or Roman period but Rippon's analysis (178) of a range of data suggests that they are predominantly of later Saxon origin. In the light of new evidence from Mucking, Essex, Hamerow (90) considers the 'middle Saxon shift' model which supposes the widespread displacement of settlements in the seventh or eighth centuries. On the Welsh experience Thomas (213) presents a new model of the hypothetical farm holding based upon the analysis of ecologically significant farm-name elements, in order to chart its development between c 1250 and 1600.

Wickham (228) underscores the neglect of early medieval social history and offers proposals for constructing models for comparing rural societies in western Europe. The involvement of the English peasantry in politics during the thirteenth century is explored by Carpenter (31) who questions the absence of destabilizing movements at this time. The causes of Cade's rebellion in the fifteenth century are reassessed by Mate (140), who illustrates the complex nature of grievances and the difficulty of disentangling various strands of political and economic discontent. How the artificial devices of fosterage and godparenthood were used by the upper echelons of medieval Welsh society to bind a child to the world beyond its own natural family are described by Smith (203), and Bennett (15) explores an informal method of welfare support in England. This took the form of ale selling amongst neighbours to raise funds for those in crisis, reaffirming communal solidarity and helping the poor to survive. The impact of the plague-induced increase in female heirs on succession and wealth patterns is investigated by Payling (164), who detects upward mobility into the landed class and an increase in the wealth of established landed families. Roffe (181) identifies the *Descriptio Terrarum* as a pre-Domesday survey of Peterborough Abbey's Lincolnshire properties which casts an independent light on the nature of Danelaw society and economy in the eleventh century. Taking the long-term comparative approach in his study of bridge development between late medieval and modern times, Harrison (92) finds support for views which emphasize the advanced state of the medieval economy and the lack of any profound transformation between 1500 and 1750. Dyer's study (62) of the medieval trading network shows that considerable activity was conducted outside the formal system of boroughs and markets, and Farmer's investigation (71) of manorial accounts for information on millstones provides insights into changing patterns of

purchase and medieval transport arrangements. The impact of the Black Death on a local economy in Suffolk is explored by Lock (126), who demonstrates that although mortality was as high as 55 per cent the effects were mitigated because death was concentrated amongst those too young or too old to work. The impact of the catastrophe on demesne management is explored by Saaler (190) who demonstrates the quick reaction of administrators to new circumstances. On rural industry Postles (171) examines the change in status and gender of peasant brewers in Devon, and detects a change of emphasis in the later Middle Ages, away from the rural poor to the peasant aristocracy. On farming, the view that deer parks were status symbols is dismissed by Birrell (19) who shows how owners farmed deer with skill and intelligence to obtain a significant return of high status meat for gifts and hospitality. Clark (37) offers an economic interpretation of soil exhaustion and land use. He argues that cultivators chose to reclaim pasture because the nitrogen store boosted yields, but conversion to pasture was less attractive because nitrogen release was a slow process and high interest rates rendered it uneconomic. Cosgel (43) proposes a risk-aversion hypothesis to illustrate how attitudes towards risk affected the allocation of land and labour within a manor, and Power and Campbell (173) develop a methodology for classifying demesne-farming systems using cluster analysis. Taking the long-term view Overton and Campbell (157) marry information on Norfolk from two different documentary sources to examine developments in the neglected livestock sector. Results indicate an approximate doubling of stocking densities between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, implying a more dynamic character compared with arable farming.

Among other studies which cross conventional time periods Loschky (127) compares changes in real income between late medieval and modern times in the Phelps-Brown Hopkins index, and finds that they understate the case when set against other evidence. It is argued that the measurement should include a consideration of the household production function and a revised index is offered. Maccurtain and O'Dowd (130) set the agenda for women's history between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, calling for more scholarly research into their role in landowning, domestic economy, rural employment and protest. Tsoulouhas (220) provides an econometric analysis of technological changes in England between the early modern period and the mid-nineteenth century, and proposes a model to explain causal links with population growth. On early modern source material, Dyer (61) assesses the accuracy of the Bishops' census of 1563 for the study of population and

household size, and Snell (204) draws the attention of rural historians to the research potential of poor law records. The origins and impact of government policy between 1527 and 1630 to provision markets when harvests failed are investigated by Slack (201), who concludes that the effect was to remedy differences in the social rather than in the geographical distribution of scarce grain. An explanation of the sixteenth-century rebellion in the north of England is provided by Bush (29), who highlights the infringement of traditional rights resulting from taxation and enclosure, and King (120) explores the web of conflicting interests which ultimately led to the 'great gleaning case' of 1788. On food, Moffet (145) describes the contents of latrines used by Civil War troops to illustrate the great variety of fruits, vegetables, herbs and other plants available at the time. The interaction between scientific institutions and agricultural progress is examined by Lerner (124), who concludes that the former failed to accelerate changes in farming. In a study of farming practices in the eighteenth-century Highlands and Islands Dodgshon (55) demonstrates how socio-economic and physical conditions rather than inertia explain the preference for 'primitive' labour intensive techniques. Ward (227) considers the methods used by indebted noble landowners to increase income following the Civil War, including altering the nature of tenancies from copyhold to leasehold, and rack renting, while Hoyle (106) states his reservations, questioning how easily changes in rental policy could be effected.

The growing importance of computer technology in studies of the early modern and modern periods is again evident in the literature. King (121) identifies problems of applying the family reconstitution technique to computerized demographic records in order to interpret the impact of proto-industrialization, and Davies (50) discusses the automated record linkage of enumerators' books and registration data. Anderson (5) considers the ESRC data archive as a resource centre of the future, and Zweig (239) looks at the advantages and drawbacks for historians of the shift from paper records to electronic documents. On sources Farrant (72) provides a critical appraisal of the Board of Agriculture reports compiled by the Arthur Youngs, and Woods (235) describes Irish travel writings. The profusion of traditional lore in the works of John Guy are noted by Dugan (58) while Kain and Wilmot (113) compare the copies of diocesan and Public Record Office tithe maps to find that they differ markedly in both content and style.

On social history Horrell and Humphries (102) analyse over 1300 household budgets for the period 1787-1865 to find that family earnings grew less than male earnings. Optimistic interpretations of

living standards may therefore be overstated. Guinnane (86,87) focuses upon the household system in Ireland and uses new sources to explore the dynamics of household inheritance patterns and the factors influencing the age of leaving home. In an economic explanation of Ireland's slowness to industrialize, O'Rourke links the emigration of productive labour to the lack of capital flowing into the country. Kelly (119) investigates the subsistence crisis in Ireland during 1782-4 and maintains that the efficiency of poor relief kept mortality within bounds and contributed to the surge in population growth thereafter. Also on Ireland, Luddy (128) calls for greater attention to be paid to the role of women, in areas including the family, household and domestic industry. McMurray's study of women cheese-makers (134) contrasts the experience of England and America, demonstrating that England was more resistant to capitalist forces due to demographic and cultural factors. On protest Tebrake (211) examines the role of Irish peasant women in the land reform movement, and Bohstedt (22) appeals for greater attention to be paid to food rioters as adaptive responses to economic and political change, and less upon the common moral motivations — *pace* E P Thompson. Barber (10) describes the complex issues which underpinned the bitter tithe disputes in north Wales, and Howell (104) traces developments in Welsh farm workers' trade union organizations from the late 1870s. Although indifference was widespread before 1914, this was replaced by militancy which resulted from the influence of the Labour Party and other trade unions. On elites in society Rubinstein (183) shows that although under one quarter of those worth over £100,000 derived their wealth from land, wealth derived from industry and manufacturing was strikingly less. The assumption of a general crisis this century amongst the greater landowners and landed families of England is challenged by Thompson (216) who ponders their survival strategies. The most significant and effective, it would appear, has been the exploitation of the land itself, and the tapping of the generous flow of public subsidies and tax relief. On food adulteration Atkins (7) documents the pernicious effects of dirty milk and shows that the results were more serious and its amelioration much later than is commonly believed.

On the economy O'Brien and Prados de la Escosura (149) investigate agricultural labour productivity levels at home and abroad, concluding that European economies have been constrained in their industrial development by unfavourable land-labour ratios and an environment unsuited to animal intensive regimes capable of releasing man-power for industry. Turner has constructed an important new UK agricultural output series from the original

unpublished manuscripts of J R Bellerby and presents an index of composite agricultural prices. On the Irish agrarian economy McGregor (133) develops a statistical model to demonstrate how the land and labour markets interacted to generate the size distribution of land holdings, and Walsh (226) identifies the main influences on the mechanization of Irish farms since 1920. There have been national and regional studies of small farm decline, but Sheppard (200) focuses upon a single parish, in the Weald, to identify the mix of factors promoting change in the nineteenth century. For the period since 1939 Allanson (2) provides an analysis of the size distribution of agricultural holding in England and Wales, highlighting the survival of small units. The struggle between Britain and Australia over wheat prices and shipping during the First World War is analysed by Tsokhas (219), who shows how military needs persuaded Britain to grant favourable terms, but when troops from Australia were no longer needed, economic considerations took precedent over political ones. The environmental impact of land use is attracting more attention. Duncan (59) explores the damage caused by agriculture during the nineteenth century, contrasting it with a kinder system in the eighteenth when it was supported by social and legal constraints on farmers. Sheail (196) charts the progress of legislation to protect the rural environment from development this century and in separate articles (197-9) analyses the post-war conflicts over the use of high value farmland for coal extraction and the provision of public water supplies.

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Notes and Comments

(continued from page 62)

From time to time we have published lists of research in progress, but as there are intervals of some time between their appearance it is hoped this spot will fill the gap where someone wants information in the short term. This service is open to all members and if you feel it would be of some help you are urged to send your name and address, along with your request, to the Secretary of the BAHS, Dr Richard Perren, Department of History and Economic History, University of Aberdeen, Taylor Building, King's College, Old Aberdeen, AB9 2UB.

BERKSHIRE RECORD SOCIETY

A new society was launched in Berkshire in October 1993 to publish editions of some of the many important documents in the county record office and elsewhere relating to the county. Texts identified for publication include Tudor and Stuart probate accounts, glebe terriers and eyewitness accounts of the Swing riots, 1830. For further information and application forms, contact Dr. Peter Durrant, Berkshire Record Office, Shire Hall, Sheffield Park, Reading, RG2 9XD.