

Book Reviews

HILARY H BIRKS, H J B BIRKS, PETER EMIL KALAND and DAGFIN MOE, ed, *The Cultural Landscape – Past, Present and Future*, CUP, 1989. xv + 521 pp. Illus. £37.50.

This book is a record of the highly successful international symposium of the same title, held in western Norway in 1986. Its theme, introduced by Faegri in the preface, is that all vegetation types have been created or modified by man thus creating a cultural landscape with gradients of human impact both now and in the past. The book is divided into three sections: eleven papers on the Present and Future, eighteen papers on the Past, and twenty-three abstracts of other contributions to the symposium.

Most of the papers are concerned with land use and agriculture in Europe (including the British Isles) and bring out the wide variations in farming practice, related to climate, relief, soils and history, which exist now as in the past. This can be considered over a wide area as in the paper by Rackham or on a much smaller scale as in the paper by Indrelid but all show the need to consider the whole cultural landscape, rather than just its elements, if its ecology is to be understood. There are important papers illustrating different methods of documentation and analysis, from descriptive plant sociology to powerful new methods such as canonical correspondence analysis. Several papers consider the processes involved in landscape change, including changes in culture, population size and input of nutrients into the soil. The paper by Emanuelsson attempts to show these relationships as a model which could be of importance in explaining patterns in the cultural landscape in simple ecological terms.

The second part of the book deals with the past and largely uses the results of pollen analysis in reconstructing and understanding past cultural landscapes from 1000 to 6000 years ago. Although modern developments such as the use of pollen influx diagrams, the study of modern pollen deposition and the importance of size and location of study sites are highlighted (papers by Aaby, and Hicks) the emphasis is always on the use of these techniques to gain more and more detailed information about cultural and agricultural history. There is much of interest to archaeologists and historians of agriculture, such as the transition from hunter-gatherer to agriculturalist, the man-induced initiation of blanket bog in Connemara, changes in forest composition in Switzerland, heathlands in Denmark, Waterland in the Netherlands, upland farming in North Wales and agricultural history in the Lofoten Islands and in Greenland.

Often in books of this kind the quality of the papers is highly variable but in this case, although the papers will be of varying interest to different people, the standard is high throughout. The book is well produced and remarkably free from mistakes. One drawback which is mentioned in the introduction to Part Two is that radiocarbon dates are quoted in a number of ways; there is now an internationally accepted high-precision calibration curve (Radiocarbon 28, (2B), 805–1030, 1986, Calibration Issue), use of which would greatly simplify understanding of papers such as these, and avoid the confusion which can trap the unwary.

It has not been possible to mention all the topics covered by this splendid book but it should be read by all those interested in the development of vegetation, agriculture and landscapes, and also by those interested or involved in the conservation of these landscapes.

DAVID D BARTLEY

PAUL STARKEY, *Animal-Drawn Wheeled Toolcarriers: Perfected yet Rejected*, Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn, Braunschweig/Weisbaden, 1988, 161 pages. £9.55.

The wheeled toolcarrier was conceived in the 1950s as a means of improving agricultural practice in the developing world. Initially, France and Britain led the way but subsequently other non-European centres of research and manufacture emerged and promotional schemes were launched in many countries across Africa, Latin America and Asia. This has continued through to the late 1980s, during which time an estimated 10,000 wheeled toolcarriers have been built to about 45 different designs with a combined cost, inclusive of all research and development work, that runs into tens of millions of pounds.

Paul Starkey is an agricultural consultant whose considerable overseas experience has given him many points of contact with the wheeled toolcarrier programme. In this very detailed analysis that pulls no punches, the curtain is drawn aside to reveal that the whole business has been, well, a failure. As the title suggests, the uncomfortable truth is that the wheeled toolcarrier is a good idea that has not worked.

The principle of the toolcarrier is a wheeled frame, drawn by animals, onto which a whole range of modern attachments for cultivating, seeding and weeding can be fitted. It can even be converted into a cart. This one versatile device would replace the odd assortment of ancient, and therefore much less efficient, single purpose implements currently in use and soften up the native farmer for a follow up stage

of tractor-based mechanization. Over the years the design was perfected and in carefully organized trials on the carefully tilled soils of research stations around the world the toolcarrier was shown to be a success. Glowing reports in research journals helped to complete the rosy picture and prompt both national and international agencies to foster take-up by offering toolcarriers to farmers at heavily subsidized rates.

Down on the farm the story was rather different. There was little interest in toolcarriers and where farmers had been encouraged to try them they were nearly always discarded soon afterwards or used solely in a single purpose mode, often as a cart. The reasons were many: they were awkward and heavy to use, and the task of conversion to other operations was long and complicated; they were expensive to buy and were only accepted at all when virtually given away by the sponsoring organization; their supposed increased efficiency ignored social and cultural factors at local level. In short, the toolcarrier offered the farmer very little in the way of tangible benefits and actually reduced his level of flexibility.

How could such a mistake not just be made but continue to be made and compounded at such expense over three decades? A lingering neo-colonial approach of western countries and experts to improving Third World agriculture is a feature but there are other contributory factors: the gullibility of aid organizations; lack of communication between teams of engineers and researchers from different countries; the tendency, driven by vested interest, to always put the best gloss on research results when it comes to writing them up. Above all, the exclusion of the native farmer from almost every stage of the developmental work is seen as fundamental.

Paul Starkey is not afraid to point the finger but is equally keen to emphasise the positive benefits that will emerge in the future if the collective lessons of the experience are digested fully. This is a fascinating piece of investigative history that should be read by anyone who has ideas about teaching the Third World how to farm.

ROY BRIGDEN

KARL GUNNAR PERSSON, *Pre-Industrial Economic Growth; Social Organization and Technological Progress in Europe*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988. viii + 159 pp. £25.

No one would set out to summarize the economic history of Europe without having a message. The main message of this challenging book is that innovation is a normal feature of economic life in stable societies and that Europe has enjoyed slowly growing per capita incomes since at least 1100. Though the author recognizes that in principle productivity growth might not keep pace with

population growth, he does not take the possibility very seriously. Apart from a handful of observations from a partial choice of secondary sources, he pays no attention to any evidence for long periods of stagnation in European economic history.

His confidence derives from the growth of towns. To cut a short story shorter, he takes growth in the urban share of the population of Europe to indicate rising per capita expenditures on urban goods and services, and so to imply rising standards of living. Guesses about urban ratios and other economic aggregates for the years 1100 and 1300 take precedence here over more local evidence of medieval economic performance. Since urbanization is a principal theme of European economic history between these years it is unnecessary to quibble about statistics. If a growing proportion of townsmen is indeed acceptable evidence for rising productivity, much of the argument passes muster even without reliable aggregate figures. The author does not discuss the empirical status of his hypothesis, whose reliability seems to be weakened by evidence from Africa over the last twenty years and from India in the decades before Independence. But his book gives an important new perspective from which to approach the big questions about pre-industrial economic development.

Whether the argument helps to defeat the stagnationist hypotheses of Postan and others is another matter. Estimates of urbanization between 1100 and 1300 contribute nothing to a debate about the years 1260–1349. Dr Persson does not discuss the evidence relating to urban growth in that crucial period. If his hypothesis is dependable, it could be that he has supplied stagnationists with a new twist to the old tale.

R H BRITNELL

C DYER, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England, c.1200–1520*, CUP, 1989. xvi + 297 pp. 4 maps, 8 figures, 19 tables. £25 (hbk); £8.95 (pbk).

Like all good textbooks, Christopher Dyer's new study of standards of living does more than survey what was already known. Even in conception it is original, since no study like it has ever been written. After an opening chapter that defines medieval England's main social categories both in the late thirteenth century and in the late fifteenth, there are three chapters on aristocratic getting and spending, two on peasants and one on townsmen. The study concludes with separate chapters on wage-earners, charitable provision for the poor and the influence of weather. It has full references to published and unpublished sources, and it is indexed.

Within the broad categories of aristocracy, peasants and townsmen, Dr Dyer pays careful attention to the

distinctions to be made between narrower social groupings. He succeeds both in discussing the main issues clearly and in presenting a rich array of historically specific evidence. The hypothetical modelling of thirteenth-century peasant budgets in chapter 5, for example, is based on facts relating to Robert le Kyng of Bishop's Cleeve in 1299-1300, and this permits an unprecedentedly careful explanation of the relevant chronological and local variables. Its value is much enhanced by the comparable exercise for 1475 accompanying it.

Perhaps the book's most valuable contribution to current debate is the input of new material from household accounts relating to aristocratic incomes and expenditure. Current wisdom tends to the view that the accumulation of properties by landowning families safeguarded their incomes in the late Middle Ages. Having raised the question whether the nobility was adversely affected by falling rents, McFarlane answered it with 'a most emphatic NO', an emphasis that effectively marginalizes the relevance of economic history for an understanding of noblemen and their ways. Dr Dyer argues that in fact most landowners did experience financial embarrassment, particularly between 1400 and 1480, though they showed remarkable resilience in adversity. He stresses the importance of accounting as an aid to sound financial strategy in hard times.

The juxtaposition of documentary and archaeological evidence is an attractive feature of the discussion of peasants, whose budgeting cannot be illustrated from anything equivalent to aristocratic household accounts. The evidence of manorial rentals relating to the size of tenants' holdings leads to disturbingly pessimistic conclusions for the late thirteenth century, partly because of our inability to make proper allowance for wage-earning and non-agricultural activities in rural society. Archaeological material, by contrast, gives a more encouraging view because of its slant towards the more durable structures and artifacts. The two types of evidence do not complement each other very smoothly, but putting them together undeniably permits a more satisfactory description of peasant living standards than any based on documentary evidence alone. The exercise also raises some interesting questions, such as the reasons for an improvement in peasant housing during the thirteenth century.

Studies of standards of living are notoriously vulnerable to the charge of ignoring any values other than materialist ones. But though Dr Dyer describes his research as 'deliberately concentrated on material things' he makes some interesting observations about the values associated with aristocratic status. He sees aristocratic life styles not simply as careless hedonism or deliberate ostentation but as a calculated balancing act in which a wide range of values were in play. His

discussions of attitudes to patronage and to charitable giving are well founded and illuminating.

As an introduction to the main social categories of medieval England and their changing relative well-being between 1200 and 1520 this excellent book will guide the reader further, faster and more securely than any other.

R H BRITNELL

NICHOLAS GODDARD, *Harvests of Change: The Royal Agricultural Society of England, 1838-1988*, Quiller Press, 1989, xiii + 359 pp. Illus. £16.

The Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) has just completed 150 years of uninterrupted existence, and to celebrate the occasion Nicholas Goddard has written the Society's sesquicentennial history. The title of the book is intriguing. It conveys a constant theme of the work of the RASE, the role of communicator and hence catalyst of change, which in its wake produces the punning 'harvests' of change. From the outset the RASE was to be that catalyst, and increasingly the change was to be derived from the application of science to agriculture. In this we recall the motto of the Royal, 'Practice with Science'.

The origin of the RASE was a strange mixture of typical English 'clubiness' and a more practical desire to make agriculture enter the world of science, invention, and nineteenth-century modernity. In entrepreneurial England bristling with the innovation of industrialization, the post-Napoleonic Wars depression of prices did not produce a corresponding entrepreneurship in agriculture. Instead we got a call for extending agricultural protection. The early nineteenth century was a relatively barren time in England for the development of agricultural science. Waiting in the wings was the example from manufacturing industry, the application of science and capital to the objective of raising productivity. But standing in the way was the power politics of the landed interest and the Corn Laws, in conflict with the ascendant manufacturing interest and Repeal. One solution to a political impasse was to ignore it, and so the RASE was founded in 1838 (originally as the English Agricultural Society) as basically a non-political association. However, its early prominent founders, Earls Spencer and Fitzwilliam for example, were leading Whig landowners and politicians, and the politics of free trade characterized the influential if not the majority view in the early years of the Society. The founding fathers were forward-thinking politically, but their clarion call was increasingly an emphasis on the application of science, particularly chemistry, to agriculture.

Thus were the origins of the Society, and what follows in the book is a dense history of the RASE,

rich both in practical agricultural matters and interpersonal relationships. Goddard performs the task of entertaining and informing both the Society's members and academe very well. The book is both lavishly illustrated and scholarly in presentation.

We round off this review with two aspects of the work and long history of the RASE. Clearly it is/was more than simply the organizer of the annual Royal Show, but as an organ of dissemination for new agriculture the Royal is/was very important. As the shop-window of science in agriculture the Royal always had an important function to perform. But the other method of dissemination, and one which academic historians much appreciate, is the long history of the *Journal of the RASE*. On its pages there has been much basic information and controversy. For example, the *Journal* was at the heart of the dispute between J B Lawes and Justus von Leibig, the former relating his field experiments at Rothamsted and advocating additional nitrogen for successful plant growth, and the latter avowedly anti-nitrogen and pro-mineral additives. The *Journal* early on, in publishing the technical importance of chemistry to agriculture, did much to promote the application of external, non-farm inputs to farming, and one of its functions, generally to disseminate new agriculture, continues to this day. The RASE has come a long way since 1838 and now boasts a permanent site at the National Agricultural Centre at Stoneleigh to display its activities throughout the year and host its annual Show. May it flourish further still in the next 150 years.

MICHAEL TURNER

ANTHONY C RAPER, *Weyhill Fair . . . 'the greatest fair in the Kingdom'*, Barracuda Books, Buckingham, 1988. 112 pp. Illus. £15.

Anthony Raper has written an attractive, brief, popular history of one of Britain's principal fairs, Weyhill, from its prescriptive origins to its final disappearance in 1959. This is not the heavyweight product of the professional historian to set alongside Bourquelot's analysis of the fairs of Champagne, Moore's recent study of St Ives, or Edwards's work on early modern horse fairs, but is still a useful addition to historical work on an under-studied subject.

Weyhill probably had much more ancient origins than its first, thirteenth-century, charter indicates: the location of the fair site, at the meeting point of three parish boundaries and as the focus for a number of driftways, points strongly to its early date. From the first, perhaps first-surviving, charter, the fair grew and developed its long-term concentration on the

sales of sheep. Owned for a period in the fourteenth century by Chaucer, the fair may have been a supplementary source for the characters of the *Canterbury Tales*. From 1599 the fair was held under the Andover charter, with a pie powder court, and remained sufficiently profitable in the 1680s to be the focus of a protracted Chancery case over its siting. For the eighteenth century, documentary detail survives for its use for hirings, as a great hop fair, and for cheese, in addition to the primary focus which remained sheep. Prosperity lasted unabated until the late nineteenth century, during which time the Fair acquired permanent shops and booths, a ghost which threatened Leadbetter the hop-merchant, and its own horse-fair song.

Decline, once commenced, was rapid: sheep sales demonstrated a downward trend from the mid-1860s, fell rapidly to the First World War, and by the 1920s the business was a shadow of the level half a century earlier. Cattle sales did better to the 1940s, though were still small, and the last attempt to revive the fair for this purpose, in 1959, was 'a dismal show'. The bulk of the ancient site is now covered with the plant and vehicle store for a large building and contracting firm.

This little book is copiously illustrated. It reproduces excellent seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century maps of the Fair, together with many illustrations of its booths, weights, pens, and pleasure grounds, drawn largely from early twentieth-century photographs, and is consistently attractive if rather too light on deeper historical analysis. This amateur study serves to remind us all that the detailed history of most of Britain's great fairs remains largely unwritten.

J A CHARTRES

GUY M ROBINSON, *Agricultural change, geographical studies of British Agriculture*, North British Publishing, Edinburgh, 1988. XV + 369 pp; 63 maps and diagrams. £18.50.

This book is not a textbook of agricultural history, but a series of studies of agricultural change in Great Britain over the last one hundred and forty years: Guy Robinson argues that the current problems of farming are more easily understood if the development of agriculture is known. His book differs from that of an agricultural historian in that it is very much concerned with changing geographical distributions. His first chapter reviews changes which have taken place in agricultural geography over the last thirty years. Agricultural geographers have adopted three approaches. First they have been concerned with environmental aspects; second, they have emphasized

the role of economic forces in causing change; and third there has been interest in what is called the 'behavioural approach', where the decisions of individual farmers are studied. He goes on to discuss the major substantial interests of agricultural geographers – in agricultural decision-making, diffusion theory, government policy and the marketing of agricultural produce. The book concerns itself with those aspects of British agriculture since the 1840s, with linking chapters on broad patterns of agricultural change.

The book begins with a rapid gallop through High Farming and the Great Depression with some interesting material on the distribution of land ownership and labour employment, and the way in which contrasting regions – the claylands, the uplands, and the light soils responded to falling prices. The changes in crop and livestock distribution are charted, first by using Weaver's crop combination method, then by the more sophisticated use of Principal Components Analysis, which reveals some of the most important regional distributions in Britain and their changes. British farmers responded in various ways to the falling cereal prices of the late nineteenth century. Two of the most interesting were the growing importance of dairying and horticulture, and Dr Robinson devotes two useful chapters to the growth of these enterprises, with particular reference to their location. His chapter on horticulture benefits from his own work in the Vale of Evesham. A final chapter on agricultural decision-making completes that part of the book that deals with the period before the 1930s. In this he deals not with trends or forces but the activities of individual landlords and farmers, particularly those in the claylands, that part of the country which suffered most from depression. The Guy's Hospital Estates and those of the Duke of Sutherland are dealt with.

The rest of the book deals with the period from the 1930s to the 1980s. Here of course, government policy comes centre of the stage, and an account of legislation from the 1940s to CAP is given. But in addition, an attempt is made to show how government policies, particularly in the post-war period, have affected different parts of the country and there is a valuable account of the Less Favoured Areas policy. Diffusion theory, to which agricultural geographers have perhaps paid too much attention, is used to inform short studies of the spread of sugar-beet, maize and oilseed-rape. A useful chapter on the marketing of agricultural produce – with particularly interesting material on Pick Your Own marketing – is followed by a section on decision-making among hop farmers.

Geographers will find many parts of this book useful in teaching courses on the historical geography of British agriculture. Agricultural historians will probably find the methodology of most interest. There is an excellent bibliography, an abundance of illustrations, and an appendix detailing the statistical analyses used in the text.

DAVID B GRIGG

H F MARKS, edited by D K BRITTON, *A Hundred Years of British Food and Farming. A Statistical Survey*. Taylor and Francis, 1988. xiv + 275 pp. £40.

This volume was produced for British Food and Farming Year. It comes with a letter from the Duke of Edinburgh as patron of the event and an advertisement from the NFU Mutual Insurance Society as a major sponsor and insurer to the exhibition. The object of the volume, according to the author's and editor's preface, is to update the MAFF 1968 publication *A Century of Agricultural Statistics* and to widen its scope.

The 1968 publication cost 17s 6d equivalent to £5.80 at 1989 prices. Its successor thus is almost seven times as expensive in real terms. It would have cost the average farmer in 1968 between 2 and 3 per cent of a week's income to acquire the MAFF publication. Today's farmer would need to spend over 30 per cent of his or her week's income to acquire the present work. These calculations are made from data provided in the volume. There are no figures available to perform a similar calculation for the average agricultural historian but we may presume that such a person would equally notice that the tools of the trade were getting more expensive.

For the historian of British agriculture in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries *A Century of Agricultural Statistics* is a valuable source. It brings together the main official series in an easily accessible form, provides the necessary information on the sources and their pitfalls and in addition provides a sound, if inevitably unexciting, commentary on the major trends and features that are revealed.

In updating these series the volume under review is performing a useful service. It is useful also to have the data converted to modern units of measurement: decimal currency, tonnes and hectares from £ s d, hundredweights and acres. It does not wholly replace the previous publication since, presumably for reasons of space, only a selection of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century observations are given in some cases. A more serious limitation, indeed a defect, is that for some series only a selection of observations for the 1960s and 1970s is presented so that the user has to go to the original sources in any event to complete the data set. Thus the Corn Returns Prices, one of the longest complete economic time series in

existence. The *Century* gives data from 1777 to 1966. The present volume contrives to omit observations for 1967-9, 1971, 1973-4 and 1976-9. Numbers of tractors is another example. The *Century* gives biennial observations from 1946 to 1966. The present volume presents a series with a variable period, rendering it useless for any econometric work. Some of the years chosen are ones omitted from the *Century*!

The scope is widened by the provision of material that is mainstream but was not available for the earlier volume. The volume also incorporates material for areas that were outside the scope of the previous work and additional analyses of the previous material. There is a substantial amount of financial material derived from the Annual Review and its successor and from the MAFF Departmental Net Income Calculation. In collecting this together the volume performs its most valuable service. The scope is extended to forestry and to household expenditure on food. It is useful to have this material brought together but the user would have to return to the original sources for explanatory notes since what is given here is sparse. Thus on woodland on agricultural holdings one is told that 'The statistics need to be interpreted with caution'. Well, yes - all government statistics should carry a health warning - but it would be nice to know a little more. The major innovation lies in the tables giving all the financial data at 1986 prices. This is useful but the deflators used should have appeared in an appendix.

Where the volume is really deficient is on the commentary that accompanies the data. The format of a series of short laconic paragraphs is irritating and much better use could have been made of the space. But above all the wealth of detailed comment in the *Century* is missing. The general summary of the period given in the introduction is bland and brief to the point of banality. Some of the comments in the similar section labelled 'Major Statistical Trends', are confusing if not misleading. The author and editor have done themselves less than justice here. At root the trouble is a lack of clear idea of audience. Is this an expensive glossy for the general public, a serious academic work of the genre of Mitchell and Deane, or a semi-official pot-boiler? One might have expected the text, given the stated objective, to have taken the story forward beyond the *Century* and to have modified the text of the *Century* in the light of the longer perspective now available. If that was the author's intention it has not been carried out.

The volume of material gathered together means that the book is certainly worth a place on the shelf. But the academic market warranted a cheaper and less glossy product with more words per page.

Something in fact closer in appearance and content to *A Century of Agricultural Statistics*.

JOHN BOWERS

MARK CLEARY, *Peasants, politicians and producers: the organisation of agriculture in France since 1918*, CUP, 1989. x + 209 pp. 23 figs. £25.

French farmers have often been characterized as highly independent and individualistic, and yet France boasts one of the most intricate and powerful networks of cooperative organizations in Western Europe. As readers of this journal will recall, Dr Cleary is no stranger to this paradox, having published in its pages a study of peasant unions in south-west France and a most helpful review and bibliography of French agrarian history since 1750. Drawing inspiration from such scholars as Barral, Mendras and Tavernier, his present monograph focuses on the varied character, aims and achievements of farmers' associations, and analyses evidence from fieldwork and archival work conducted over the past ten years in seven carefully selected regions which include Aquitaine, the Massif Central, Brittany and the eastern Paris Basin.

After an examination of broad trends in rural demography, landownership and technical modernization, a suite of chronological chapters explores the changing character and influence of cooperatives, syndicates and farming associations during the past hundred years. Conflict between church and state was instrumental in shaping some organizations before 1914, while others were pragmatic groupings concerned with loans and mutual aid. Once the trauma of the Great War and the pain of recovery were over, agrarian syndicates experienced a decade of mounting influence, being encouraged by the state and by producers of market-orientated goods such as wheat, sugar beet and wine. During the depressed 1930s corporatist philosophy was used as a means of regulating the nation's remarkably large and internally diverse farming profession. This approach was enhanced under the Vichy regime as the virtues of the family and of peasant life and the advantages of forward-looking rural associations were extolled by Pétain and Caziot. With peace restored, the cooperative sector was enlarged to embrace both production and marketing of farm goods. In addition, the challenge of promoting the life chances and living standards of rural dwellers was grasped by farmers' associations, of which the Jeunesse agricole catholique, with its emphasis on education, was the most influential. A complex array of agricultural legislation in the early 1960s set an official seal on 'la révolution silencieuse' in the French countryside. However, decades of hope and a goodly measure of solid achievement were soon followed by disillusionment as reduced public expenditure on farming, growing

'mountains' and 'lakes' of surplus foodstuffs, and increasing intervention by the Common Market ensured that agricultural prosperity could not be taken for granted. By virtue of their long-established importance, farmers' associations continue to remain in the forefront of economic and social policy making in France.

To my mind Dr Cleary's carefully written study has two overwhelming merits. The first is a clear and penetrating understanding of the political economy of French agriculture and especially of the evolving relationship between family farmers and the central state over the past one hundred years. Throughout the discussion agricultural change is related to the gradual transformation of French capitalism. Agricultural modernization is shown to be shaped as much by political and ideological decisions as by the march of technology and changing farm structures. The second merit is a facility to complement generalization and necessary quantification with an excellent selection of case studies to reveal the aspirations and frustrations of farmers at many positions along the political spectrum and working in agricultural situations as diverse as the vineyards of Languedoc, the high pastures of the Massif Central and the rich arable fields of Aisne. Carefully reported interviews with veteran activists and studies of agricultural labourers and farming women are particularly illuminating. Two dozen maps and diagrams, a review of sources consulted in provincial archives, and a comprehensive bibliography complete this monograph which will appeal to geographers anxious to trace the context of current debates regarding the future of the European countryside, to sociologists keen to appreciate the tension between the desire for self-reliance and the necessity for cooperation to ensure economic survival, and to historians wishing to explore the complex presence of the past in the present.

HUGH CLOUT

YVONNE JACOBSON, *Passing Farms, Enduring Values: California's Santa Clara Valley*, William Kaufmann, Los Altos, Ca, (UK distrib, W H Freeman, Oxford), 1984. 240 pp. Illus. £43.95.

This is the history of a Californian landscape the Santa Clara Valley, centered on San Jose. The author, daughter of one of the Valley's orchardists, surveys its development from the oak-covered plain of hunter-gatherer Indians to an area dedicated to high technology industry and its concomitant highways and parking lots, low-cost housing and suburban shopping centres. In between these two eras in its growth the land saw the Spanish colonization of the mission period, the rancho system of the Californios under an independent Mexico, the grain cultivation

of the first US settlers and, most significantly, its transformation into one of the greatest fruit-growing areas of the continent. The Santa Clara Valley became the world's largest centre for the canning of fresh fruit and the processing of dried fruit, the dried prune being its most famous product, but also specializing in apricots, cherries and pears. At the peak of production in the 1920s, 125 square miles of orchard with eight million trees, 'the largest orchard the world has ever seen' blossomed every springtime on either side of the old Spanish royal highway, El Camino Real. Forty canneries and thirty packing houses processed the Valley's output for national and international markets.

Sixty years later about 8000 acres of orchards remained. From small beginnings in aerodynamic research and development in the 1940s to missile and space programmes based on that key component of modern high technology industry, the semiconductor, the Valley gave birth to a new electronic age. For the Santa Clara Valley is Silicon Valley. The 156 square miles of the Valley floor, 32 per cent of which was classified by the USDA as Class 1 agricultural land, containing up to forty feet of alluvial top soil a million years in the making, has almost vanished under concrete, tarmac and suburban lawns.

The author has produced a very well illustrated and readable history of the beginning of fruit culture in the Valley, the role of the small family farms and their labour force, the changes in horticultural techniques and the processing and marketing of the produce. The result is a most evocative account both of a lost landscape and its rich products and of the community which worked it, living in settlements with names like Paradise, Edenvale and Sunnyvale, described by Walter Stegner in his foreward as an almost ideal Jeffersonian agrarian democracy: 'what was once as wholesome, prosperous, and egalitarian a community as the imperfect human race is ever likely to produce.' It is difficult not to share the author's eloquently expressed regret that the 'Valley of Heart's Delight' has evolved into 'the heart of Silicon Valley'.

JOHN S CREASEY