

Book Reviews

ROBIN FLEMING, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England*, CUP, 1991. xxi + 257 pp. 34 maps and figures. £30.

Robin Fleming has produced an extensive study of the eleventh-century English nobility in the age of two conquests. Although her studies of tenurial change across 1066 encompass a broad section of that nobility, the book focuses on the great lords; the ealdorman and earls, especially the Godwine family pre-1066, and Corbett's Class A nobles post-1066. Its central argument is that there were two revolutions in land-holding in eleventh-century England, a slow but inexorable one after 1016, and a rapid and far-ranging one after 1066. The first destroyed the balance between king and nobles, the 'institutionalized amity' of the tenth-century polity, creating an overmighty nobility which culminated in the inordinate power of the Godwine family on the eve of 1066. The second restored, or created, a new balance between a powerful monarchy and a reduced and thus co-operative nobility 'united in purpose and interests'. In the process this second revolution in landholding reached down to village and settlement level, dividing and disrupting agricultural units, altering not only estate patterns but, in the short term at least, land values themselves. Antecessor/successor transfer after 1066 was only one of the principles on which land changed hands, chronologically the earliest; territorial transfers in which the Old English system of hundred and shire was used as a means of mopping up the land of lesser thegns into the greedy maws of great Norman barons predominated after 1075. In addition much land changed hands by simple theft or pressure in a private enterprise conquest of 'barn-burning and belligerence' creating a 'kleptocracy' in which Tom Paine would have easily recognized his band of Norman banditti.

Fleming's work provides important proof of the landed dominance of the Godwine family over other nobles and over the king himself by the 1060s. Her chronology of dispossessions after 1066 significantly extends our understanding of an unfolding, changing conquest and of the motivation of rebellion against it. She successfully questions some long-standing generalizations, showing, for example, that estates of late Old English great nobles were more geographically scattered than those of their Norman successors. This study will be a necessary starting point for any further work.

But her argument for a tenurial revolution fundamentally disrupting landholding is important but debatable. Her picture is based primarily on East Anglia and the south-east Midlands. These areas lacked great royal and ecclesiastical estates, such a force for continuity elsewhere, whilst their abundance of undertenants and free tenants attached in various ways to different lords does not simply mean that disruption here is likelier, but also raised problems both in the transfer of land and in the recording of tenancies and lordship in Domesday which may mislead. Domesday was a legal and political document whose formulae often hide conflicting claims and may present a 1066 situation to suit the 1066 victor. It is not an easy document from which to read off the pattern of land transfer, especially in an area of disputable lordship. It is remarkable that even in these areas the proportions of apparent non-antecessorial succession to land never exceeded 33 per cent and were normally much lower. Moreover, her contrast between the pre- and post-1016 polity is too sharp. The tenth-century nobility and their estates were already fluctuating and changing as a result of unification, advancing royal power and large-scale ecclesiastical endowment. Her amicable polity bound by kinship was already stressed by royal patronage, forfeitures and local separatism. By the 990s it and its estates were not much older than the 'rootless elite' which later faced 1066; the responses which muted resistance to William had doused the fires of tenth-century succession dispute. It is important to realize that the estates of the English nobility were not static; but they were in a state of change from 1066, 1016, 954, 899 ...

PAULINE STAFFORD

BRUCE M S CAMPBELL, ed, *Before the Black Death: Studies in the 'Crisis' of the Early Fourteenth Century*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991. viii + 232 pp. £35.

Most chapters originated as papers given at the Historical Geography Research Group's 1989 conference organized by Bruce Campbell, the book's editor. First, though, comes a survey by Barbara Harvey, who presided over the symposium at which they were presented. Examining the nature and extent of the crisis ('more than a mere fluctuation', but 'less than a turning-point'), she summarizes and rejects – as a sufficient explanation in itself – each of the rival theories on the shaping

of the pre-plague economy. Postan's Malthusian thesis, Brenner's Marxist argument, even the claims of monetarists and marketeers, fail because they are essentially endogenous and often do not fit the chronology of the English experience. One welcomes the calm sanity of an essay that recognizes how many endogenous and exogenous forces were at work.

Richard M Smith's study of demographic developments in England also deserves praise for modesty and caution in interpreting recent research. He leans, though, towards the higher estimates for population around 1300: it 'most probably exceeded 6.0 million' (p 49), a total not reached again until the 1760s. It remains obscure how far demographic changes before the Black Death reflect social factors like birth control or higher age at marriage, and how far outside forces like disease and war; Smith is hopeful that more studies of court-roll evidence would show 'the short-run responsiveness of mortality (and possibly nuptiality) to variations in harvest quality' (p 76).

Mavis Mate's chapter concentrates on developments in Kent and in Sussex, two counties with advanced agriculture but marked social and topographical differences. Such variations in adjacent counties emphasize how hazardous it is to generalize for the whole country. This reviewer questions Dr Mate's comment that the wage rate for mowing was 'always the most sensitive to changing economic conditions' (p 95), and is puzzled by the statement (p 104) that the money supply was eased by 'the introduction of a gold coinage and the minting of silver pennies and halfpennies'. Does she mean the minting of *lighter* pennies, as a result of the changes in 1344, 1346, and 1351?

J H Munro's essay on the textile trade notes the near-disappearance of worsted and other cheaper cloths from northern and Mediterranean markets, to be replaced with dearer 'new draperies' and high-priced Italian fine woollens. This, he contends, does not show that more people could afford expensive textiles (an interpretation hard to reconcile with economic decay), but that wars, piracy, and greater transaction costs bore more heavily on the cheaper cloths. This change, therefore, was crisis-driven. Munro is certainly right to stress the international nature of fourteenth-century problems; yet he slips across the Channel too readily and also strays into the post-plague period where it becomes impossible to disentangle the earlier crisis from the mid-century catastrophe.

Mark Ormrod's contribution, 'The Crown and the English Economy, 1290-1348', provides much revisionary data and is the most useful for the general historian. He lists the crown's receipts from lay subsidies, clerical subsidies (and the equally

lucrative kick-backs from papal taxation), customs and maltolt revenues, and the income from taxes in kind, most notably the three wool levies early in the Hundred Years War. Ormrod concludes that 'military activity in the first half of the fourteenth century drained away potential investment capital, depleted capital resources, disrupted internal trade and currency circulation, and reduced productivity' (p 182). But one notes that the clergy's especially heavy tax burden did not inhibit the rebuilding of many cathedrals and countless churches in this period.

Finally, Mark Bailey examines the effects of storms and sea-inundations, which damaged many eastern areas between 1275 and 1350. Bad weather not only eroded cliffs, washed away houses and mills, and ruined pastures with sea-water; it also imposed, for raising sea-walls and renewing drainage, costs that became unbearable when agriculture became less profitable. Bailey's essay typifies the great strengths of this book: careful research, and lucid, non-dogmatic exposition of the interplay of internal and external factors on the economy. The book's weaknesses are an emphasis on material from eastern England, and a certain vagueness about when the crisis did (or did not) happen. The editor let through an awfully obscure long sentence on page 36, an awfully ungrammatical one on page 108 ('A tenant ... could freely sell or give their lands to whoever they wished ...'), and a number of punctuation errors. There are also three mistakes in the quotation from Hallam cited on page 41.

DAVID L FARMER

L R POOS, *A Rural Society after the Black Death: Essex, 1350-1525*, CUP, 1991. xv + 330 pp. 34 figures; 29 tables. £35.

This study draws together the evidence relating to a wide range of economic, demographic and social changes in central and northern Essex during the late Middle Ages. The region is fortunate in having good evidence for population trends – evidence that Prof. Poos published in 1985. This evidence is restated here, with a full set of graphs for different manors, in chapter 5. To this is now added a reasoned and carefully nuanced analysis of the determinants of population changes through the later Middle Ages, paying careful attention to constraints on fertility. This highly original analysis concludes that social constraints on marriage brought about low fertility rates. The survey includes important new assessments of the employment structure, examining the demographic significance of the absolute and relative numbers of servants (living in their employers' households) and labourers (living in households of their own).

Chapter 10 discusses the availability of work for day-labourers and concludes that it was chiefly seasonal. In chapters 11–13 Poos also examines the characteristics of social conflict, the incidence of disaffection with the church and the extent of literacy amongst the different ranks of rural society.

The strength of Poos's work lies partly in his judicious use of current analytical techniques and partly in the importance of the questions he tackles. In both respects he has orientated himself as much to the work of Laslett, Kussmaul, Schofield, Wrightson and others on early-modern societies as to the studies of earlier periods by Razi and Smith. The background reference of the book is correspondingly broad. The evidence implies that in all essential respects – births, marriages, deaths, migration – the region's demographic parameters in the late Middle Ages were those of Early Modern England. We do not need to call upon some distinctly medieval demographic system to account for the prolonged failure of population figures to recover from the catastrophes of the fourteenth century.

Medieval Essex was in many respects distinctive, so that the conclusions to be drawn from its evidence will not inevitably be relevant elsewhere. The book draws out these differences where possible. The rural economy was highly commercialized by medieval standards, and the occupational distinction between market towns and ordinary villages was perhaps unusually weak. The proportion of smallholders remained constant through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the sources of employment were exceptionally varied. Chapter 3 is a valuable survey of the rural cloth industry that characterized the region. Occupational diversity had a direct bearing on the exceptional propensity of Essex men to engage in rebellion, as in 1381, 1413–14, 1450 and 1471. The accounts of these events here stress the multi-faceted character of rebellion and the variety of different interests involved. The occupational character of the region also has some bearing on the growth of Lollardy, though the evidence does not suggest that craftsmen and retailers were more literate than farmers; Lollardy was more likely to be the spur to literacy.

The peculiarities of Essex man in the fifteenth century will no doubt become a matter for debate. In some respects what was happening there was much the same as elsewhere – as, for example, in the movement of land values (chapter 2) and wages (chapter 10). Although it is possible to show some respects in which Prof. Poos has been lucky with his source material, the excellence of this study is chiefly owing to the talent that has been exercised in questioning and analyzing the evi-

dence. We may surely hope that comparable enquiries from other parts of the country will sooner or later enable us to say just how distinctive Essex really was.

R H BRITNELL

MAURICE LÉVY-LEBOYER and FRANÇOIS BOURGUIGNON, *The French Economy in the Nineteenth Century. An Essay in Econometric Analysis*, translated by Jesse Bryant and Virginie Pérotin, CUP and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, 1990. xv + 369 pp. £45.

One of the fondly-held expectations in the early years of cliometrics was that the construction of historical series of national aggregates would make possible quantitative macro-economic models of long- and medium-run economic change. The reasons why these hopes have remained unfulfilled are exemplified by this inventive essay on the quantitative history of the nineteenth-century French economy, the joint product of a professional economist and an eminent economic historian. Readers unversed in the arcana of macro-economic modelling, where big results often turn on a small hypothesis, will be no doubt relieved to learn that the failures are not hidden in the intricacies of economic modelling, but instead flow directly from the inability of imprecise and incomplete data to sustain elaborate arguments quantitatively.

The authors view French economic development between 1820 and 1914 as having been characterized by three phases: steady growth to about 1865, a slowdown and possibly a reversal during the next thirty years, followed by recovery in the two decades before the outbreak of World War I. Students of British economic history will find the chronology vaguely familiar, but here the climacteric is presented as a peculiarly gallic event. The authors argue that in the boom years between 1830 and 1870 to 1875, France's rural population literally ate too much of their real income gains and as a consequence consumed too few industrial goods, depriving French manufacturers the kind of market opportunity that might have caused them to invest and innovate more vigorously. As a consequence, French industrial development remained small-scale and geographically dispersed. In the second phase following the Cobden-Chevalier Treaty the French industrial structure found itself unadapted to world markets and had to go through drawn-out restructuring at a time when farming was having to adjust to drastic decline in the prices of the main agricultural staples. One consequence was to make investment outside France more appealing to French savers than investment at home. The surge in industrial

output before the First World War was not enough to make up previous losses and France entered the twentieth century with a relatively backward economy.

The underlying historical model is haunted by the nightmare of Vichy and implicitly aims at explaining why the French economy could not keep up with Britain and Germany. That the French economy somehow 'failed' is taken as self-evident. This unexamined vision leads the authors to project a stereotyped account of the economy as the sum of two sectors: traditional agriculture, suspiciously peasant-like, and modern heavy industry, which they take to be the natural site of nineteenth-century economic progress. Their model thus adapts dual-economy development economics that flourished in the 1960s to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe. Such analytical compression leaves no room for the complexity of France's rural sector in the nineteenth century, large parts of which were as advanced as England's by the middle of the nineteenth century, nor for the variety of its market relationships with the non-agricultural sectors and the outside world. France had many regional agricultures, some quite advanced and other relatively isolated. It is not obvious that much is gained by aggregating them into a homogeneous peasant sector to serve as a basis for modelling the behaviour of rural people.

The annual estimates of Gross Domestic Product and its major components are the most valuable by-product of this essay. Critical evaluation of the individual series has been slow to appear in France, so the series must be used with considerable caution. The annual estimate of agricultural product does not seem to this reviewer to represent a major advance over Toutain's older construction based on the more complete information provided by agricultural censuses. For most historical problems, the advantages of annual estimates are offset by the reduction in statistical resolution caused by the more narrow base of original information. The series are not adjusted for territorial changes, which make it impossible to assess the timing of agricultural change in the critical period between 1865 and 1880. One clear improvement over Toutain's estimate of agricultural value added in the late nineteenth century is the authors' recognition that Toutain's estimate of general overhead expenses, which he uncritically accepted from undocumented statements in the agricultural surveys of 1882 and 1892, is too generous and results in an estimate of agricultural output in the 1880s and 1890s that is too low. Their revision raises agricultural output in the last two decades of the century by 7.5 per cent. Taken as a whole, however, the

construction of the agricultural series is too poorly documented to be considered reliable. While the sources of data are indicated, precise details of the construction of the series are not, and it does not seem as though the underlying data were subjected to rigorous critical testing. There is simply no substitute for the painstaking reconstructions of national income that are the glory of recent American, Canadian, and British economic historiography.

Nevertheless, this is an important book and its authors have done signal service to the profession. Its hypotheses are sufficiently well-articulated to provide the basis for the next generation of scholarship on the French economy. All history is provisional, and in this respect the authors have provided us with a new and more elevated staging point.

GEORGE GRANTHAM

J R RAVENSDALE, ed, *A Peasant's Voice to the Landowners, by John Denson of Waterbeach, 1830*, Cambridgeshire Records Society, IX, Cambridge, 1991. xxii + 129 pp. £9.50.

'A pamphlet on the Poor Laws', observed Sidney Smith, 'generally contains some little piece of favourite nonsense, by which we are gravely told this enormous evil may be perfectly cured. The first gentleman recommends little gardens; the second cows; the third a village shop; the fourth a spade'. Denson's pamphlet falls into both the first and last categories, and there is little that is original about it. The value of *A Peasant's Voice* is that it is exactly that: the work of a copy- and freeholder who farmed some three acres at Waterbeach, eight miles north of Cambridge.

Enclosed during the Napoleonic Wars (the only lacunae in the otherwise exemplary editorial material is that we are not told exactly when), Waterbeach was the parish where Denson and before him his father had lived out their lives in a not-always comfortable subsistence. He recalls a three-year struggle to repay money borrowed to meet a copyhold fine, whilst when his family were young and his holding smaller, Denson had on occasion to present himself to the parish who set him to work in a local gravel pit. From his early adulthood, however, Denson recalls an essentially contented society, capable of supporting modest social mobility. Convivial social intercourse between farmers and their labourers was the norm, with May Day (Denson's vivid vignette will particularly interest cultural historians and folklorists) the high point of the community calendar.

Enclosure, though catastrophic in its implications for the smallholder and labourer, is presented as the culmination of a twenty- to thirty-

year period during which local agriculture became increasingly capitalized. Denson specifies as constituents of this process the erosion of wages, engrossment, 'the infernal thrashing machine', and increases in child and female labour and the use of horses.

A Peasant's Voice, however, is not merely a lament but a call for action by landowners to provide allotments for spade cultivation by the agricultural labourer. The latter, in close parishes especially, is 'worse off than the West Indian slave'. The blame for this, as for the collapse of the organic community recalled from the 1790s, is laid squarely on the tenant farmer. It thus follows that the tenantry cannot be trusted to alleviate the condition of agricultural labourers. All of Cobbett's familiar demonography is here, including the pianoforte in the parlour, without which it seems no self-respecting post-war agriculturalist could be without. The pamphlet is itself interesting evidence for the dissemination of Cobbett's ideas, and it is noteworthy that Denson was also a pioneer cultivator of 'Cobbett's Corn' (i.e. maize), on which he read a paper (reprinted here) to the Cambridge Horticultural Society in 1829. His enthusiasm for spade husbandry was born of practical experience, subsequently reinforced by learning of experiments by the Tyneside nurseryman Falla, possibly encountered by Denson in reading Robert Owen whom Falla also influenced.

A Peasant's Voice is one of the liveliest examples of its genre, and this reprint deserves a wide readership. It is accompanied by the earliest history of a Cambridgeshire parish, Robert Masters' *Short Account of Waterbeach*, printed in an edition of only twenty-five copies in 1795. Read alongside the editor's judicious selection of relevant diocesan records it gives an excellent insight into pre-enclosure land management in the parish.

MALCOLM CHASE

B A HOLDERNESS AND MICHAEL TURNER, eds, *Land, Labour and Agriculture, 1720-1920: Essays for Gordon Mingay*, The Hambledon Press, 1991. xxiv + 262 pp. 36 tables; 11 figures; 2 appendices. £35.

To review edited books composed of free-standing chapters can be notoriously difficult. Such difficulties can be compounded with a *festschrift* as contributors are often chosen (or omitted) exclusively for reasons of their relationship to the person honoured. Former students, past and present colleagues, earlier collaborators and friends might all expect a place. On the other hand, publishers with potential purchasers in mind might push editors to recruit only those whose collective effort would ensure some coherence of content. Such tensions

can be magnified many times when the book is for one of the stature of a Gordon Mingay who has so greatly influenced several generations of students and scholars and who has been so free and generous with his help and advice.

Dr Holderness and Prof. Turner are to be congratulated on successfully squaring this difficult circle. This is an important book for agricultural historians as it does contain new ideas, new interpretations and new facts on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century landownership and landed society, rural labour, and agrarian change. These themes provide a tight focus for the book as they have for Prof. Mingay's own scholarly research and writing. There are essays from two (of the *very many more*) of his research students, from four of his LSE and University of Kent colleagues, but by far the greatest proportion (eight in number) are invited pieces from his friends and peers in his own sub-discipline of agricultural history. The editors have selected wisely and organized carefully over the five years that the volume was in the making. Many of the contributors attended a symposium in Gordon's honour convened in 1988 by Prof. John Beckett and this can only have helped establish a focus for their writing.

A delightful appreciation of Mingay's life and work thus far by Theo Barker and a bibliography of his writings, mainly but not exclusively in agricultural history, compiled by J Whyman are followed by twelve substantive essays. On landed society there is Turner on the Bridgewater estates in Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire, Donald Ginter reviews the land tax as a source of evidence, and J V Beckett re-evaluates the Hammonds' thesis on the disappearance of cottagers. There are essays on rural labour by T L Richardson and Edwina Newman and on rural society in Kent during the First World War by W A Armstrong. High Farming as a concept, landlord investment in farm buildings as a capital improvement, and innovation dissemination in farming are examined by Holderness, A D M Phillips, and Nicholas Goddard respectively. Three essays review salient elements of agricultural change over the whole of the two centuries: Robert Dilley on livestock in Cumberland to 1870, F M L Thompson on the period 1870-1914 and Peter Dewey on the First World War itself.

Each of the essays is innovative and important; taken together the collection is of a value much greater than the sum of its parts. It is indeed a fitting tribute to the past and present contribution of Gordon Mingay to the study of English agrarian history. Though a single book cannot hope to emulate completely the contribution of the man, this fine *festschrift* should stand the test of time

well – as does so much of Gordon Mingay's own scholarship in agricultural history.

ROGER J P KAIN

R H CAMPBELL, *Owners and Occupiers*, Aberdeen University Press, Aberdeen, 1991. xx + 200 pp. 5 maps. £14.95.

As Professor Campbell points out in his introduction there are major gaps in recent research on the history of agriculture and rural society in Scotland. Compared with England, where regional studies have long been in vogue, Scottish economic and social history has lacked a strong regional dimension within either the Lowlands or the Highlands. Moreover, the study of agricultural change in Scotland has tended to emphasize the arable east rather than the pastoral west, while within the eastern Lowlands the Lothians have been given undue prominence. It is also true that the focus of research on agricultural change in Scotland since the seventeenth century has been on the era of the Improvers with the implicit assumption that there were few significant changes in farming or rural society from about 1850 until well into the present century. After 1914 the long-established estate structure of Scottish farming began to break up. In 1914 only 10 per cent of the improved land in Scotland was owner-occupied, but by 1939 this had risen to 39 per cent and by 1987 to over 60 per cent. The origins and the social impact of this revolution have received little attention. Professor Campbell breaks new ground in all these fields by focusing on south-west Scotland, an area with a distinct concentration on dairying, from the later eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries. The first section sets the scene by examining the south-west as a peripheral region, particularly in terms of communications, industry and population trends. The second section looks at agriculture. It shows how the rise of specialist dairying helped to shelter the south-west from the worst effects of the changing patterns of world trade in foodstuffs which brought depression to many rural areas further south. The final section looks at elements of social stability and change over the same period through the medium of landownership. Landowners came under increasing pressure in the later nineteenth century from a declining economic situation, rising estate expenditure, higher taxation and, from 1894, death duties. At the same time conditions were deteriorating for the tenantry who were increasingly critical of their landlords. Professor Campbell examines the case for and against the landowners and demonstrates how the origins of the social changes which occurred after 1914 were well established before the war. It is a pity that the book ends abruptly without a postscript

following the changes through to the inter-war period but this is nevertheless an important study in terms of its topic, period and scale of focus.

IAN D WHYTE

LEAH LENEMAN, *Fit for Heroes? Land Settlement in Scotland after World War I*, Aberdeen University Press, Aberdeen, 1989. x + 244 pp. £17.50.

With the Highland Clearances still a live and bitter memory, land hunger in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland was intense in 1914. Wartime recruiting promises of land for all when victory was won revitalized the crofters' determination to get the land back. Legislation to provide smallholdings for ex-servicemen was enacted during the war and the return of battle-hardened men from France made it impossible to back track in the 1920s, for military life had shaken traditional deference. Land raiding, a minor affair before the war, became widespread and a serious threat to the rule of law. In the Lowlands smallholdings were to be a cure for unemployment and rural depopulation, and the Board of Agriculture was given the thankless task of cobbling together land settlement schemes throughout Scotland, in most cases by forcing landlords to split existing farms. As if insufficient funds, a legal framework seemingly designed to be inoperable, and a bureaucracy of mind-numbing complexity and slowness were not enough of a handicap, it also faced ferocious hostility among landlords.

The financial stringency of the 1920s ensured that there was never any chance of meeting all demands and in the Highlands the Board was reduced to a fire brigade policy, responding to raids or the threat of raids with elephantine slowness. Isolated and unsuitable estates were often the only sites available and the Board seems to have been the despair of the Treasury since costs invariably soared, but political considerations usually left no option but to proceed. The civil servants were locked into a policy no-one seems to have been happy with, though apparently as pressures eased in later years a workable system did emerge. Leah Leneman clearly left no file created by the Board unperused and used oral history to give the settler's experience. The book begins and ends with attempts to understand land settlement as a whole, and these sections are admirable, especially in showing the importance of community co-operation in this type of farming, with some new settlements thriving while others could never cohere. Unfortunately its central core is a succession of intimately observed administrative case studies of the selection and acquisition of sites, organized on a geographical basis, each of which really stands alone. I found

this overwhelming even as administrative history, especially as the actual settlement process and later performance are usually not covered. This detracts from what otherwise is a fascinating subject.

STEPHEN CAUNCE

STUART WOOLF, ed, *Domestic Strategies: Work and Family in France and Italy 1600–1800*, CUP, 1991. viii + 207 pp. £25.

This volume of essays emanates from a research project financed by the European University Institute on the nature of work in pre-industrial Europe, in which labouring families are perceived as central actors on the economic stage. Novel methodological approaches drawn from a variety of disciplines complement an ideological framework which departs from the tendency to dismiss the social agent as either passive or defensive.

Each study in this collection illuminates an aspect of the relationship between work and the development cycle of the family, through the imaginative reinterpretation of familiar sources. The south-eastern region of France and north-central Italy provide the geographical context, and a representative sample of rural and urban locations is studied. In East Liguria, Raggio discovers commercial relationships in the oil trade regulated by local kinship and friendship links. The resolution of conflict among these groups, however, involved the participation of complex networks of non-local political alliances. His research further reveals the vital role of even the most economically disadvantaged areas in the process of exchange because of highly-developed social organizations. That economic transactions constituted social relationships is also indicated in Fontaine's essay on peddling in the eighteenth-century upper Alpine valley, where such strategies of trading families as transmission of property, efficient resource use, and development of distant external markets explain the survival of an under-endowed society. Within an urban context, Poni creatively reconstructs the market relationships between three Bolognan guilds, experimenting with a method informed by anthropology and economics. The activities of his chosen trades (butcher, tanner, and shoemaker), integrated by an exchange of skills, illuminate the nature of early modern transactions and their operation within a coherent structure of rules and practices. These regulations, designed by leading families, and suggesting a hierarchy of privileges, in fact reflected the principles of a moral economy in safeguarding the positions of less powerful social groups. Cornelli's original analysis of the Turin tailor's guild emphasizes the rarely considered yet possibly widespread distinction between the practising of a craft and the guild

representing the trade. Because the tailor's guild constituted a social group rather than a trade organization, the vicissitudes of the guild were influenced more by the experiences of political institutions and processes than by fluctuations in the economy. The interaction of urban institutions, the family life cycle and the labour market is explored by Cavallo through the vehicle of the relief of poverty in eighteenth-century Turin. The aim of the fundamentally paternalist charitable activities of the Ospedale was the maintenance of 'normal' living standards by targetting relief at particular families in difficult moments of the life cycle. Thus poor relief provision, influenced by bonds of protection, and thereby favouring some sections of the poor more than others, only partially reflected the structure of poverty.

Each contribution to this innovative volume fulfils the objectives outlined in Woolf's elegant introduction which provides a welcome coherence to the whole. The overall vision of the approach brings an originality of thought and direction to the study of pre-industrial structures and institutions. Received wisdom is likely to be more fundamentally challenged by a methodology informed by ideas rather than technique; and through the employment of such a methodology, this collection revises conventional understanding of pre-industrial social and economic processes. Further, by redefining the meaning of work and repositioning the active agents within a broad context embracing social, political and cultural forces, conclusions are reached that confirm the limited perspective provided by earlier mechanistic approaches. The potential that this collection suggests for rewriting the history of work and especially the interaction of the family and the labour market in both the pre-industrial and the industrial period is enormous. The next installment from the participants in this project and those they have influenced is eagerly anticipated.

KATRINA HONEYMAN

P BONNASSIE, *From Slavery to Feudalism in South-Western Europe*, translated by J. Birrell, CUP, 1991. xii + 352 pp. 2 maps. £35; P FREEDMAN, *The Origins of Peasant Servitude in Medieval Catalonia*, CUP, 1991. xx + 263 pp. 3 maps. £35.

The common ground shared by these two books is Catalonia, that land so called from the early twelfth century from the major institution of southern feudalism, according to Bonnassie, the *castlania*. This term is defined as 'a fief, composed of lands sited within the castellany [*castrum*] and, above all, of revenues ... belonging to it, a fief granted as remuneration for custody of the castles'.

'Northern' historians are warned that the *castlania* never included the fortress. Already, then, we northerners are introduced to one of the many novelties of this region, another of which is the astonishing wealth of archival material even from the early medieval centuries. Of this we were given a foretaste by the same author back in 1964 in an article featuring an upstart peasant family from a village near Barcelona (*Annales du Midi*, LXXVI). Both books impress the reader indelibly with their rich harvest of historical detail.

This common ground, however, is associated with two quite different open fields. Bonnassie's comprises ten chapters, all but one of which were published in article form at some point between 1968 and 1990 inclusive, while the exception comes from the author's magisterial thesis of 1976. This body of material has been translated sympathetically from the French, but the fact that it has not been reworked as a book means that the theme suggested by the title is not addressed consistently or even coherently. The contradistinction between slavery and feudalism is unsatisfactory. A slave is here defined anthropologically as 'a de-socialized being whose production and reproduction were entirely under the control of another', whereas Mediterranean feudalism is seen (following P Toubert) 'both as a system of institutions and as a structure of production and profit'. The single institution of slavery is pitched explicitly against a mass of institutions representing feudalism, including presumably serfdom, with the result that an implicit transition is not, and cannot be, resolved under such a title. Even the critical period that saw the decisive disintegration of public authority in Catalonia, described at one point as 'the years of the feudal revolution', is given variously as 1020-60 (p 108), 1010-40 (p 146), and 1030/40-60 (p 156). This unstable period of civil war was preceded by another secular change soon after the millennium - the extinction of slavery linked, it is suggested (again citing Toubert), with agrarian expansion that 'was, to a large extent, the achievement of the small proletariat of the enfranchised'. The period from c 950 to c 1025 is depicted as an interlude between slavery and feudalism, though the gulf between the *potentes* and the *pauperes* remained as wide as before. Public authority (Latin *bannum*) was shared out between castle-owning barons, their castellans, and their knights, so that 'the birth of chivalry corresponded to the new servitude; the two phenomena are contemporary and inseparable'. High medieval serfdom was not therefore a direct continuation of early medieval slavery and it was to affect a much larger number of people. For them 'alienation, humiliation and

subjection to arbitrary power ... seem to constitute the sombre triptych which best depicts servitude'.

Freedman picks up the story in the ninth century and takes it down to the formal abolition of servitude that resulted from the remarkable peasants' war of 1462-86. Enserfment was characteristic of Old Catalonia east of the river Llobregat, a land of dispersed habitat with no manors, little demesne exploitation, and few fortified villages. Peasants tended to be both serfs and hereditary proprietors, so that 'oppression and autonomy existed side by side'. Accordingly, 'the context for the growth of servitude ... was a pattern of small, often fragmented holdings, matched by a diffuse lordship among many institutions and individuals within the same area'. In contrast with England, lords in Catalonia came into contact with their peasants mainly as recipients of produce and other dues; they were interested primarily in rent extracted by political compulsion. This process, combined with a 'hegemony of small-scale production', lay at the heart of the feudal system of land tenure. The decisive period for the entrenchment of serfdom in Catalonia was from the late twelfth century to the legislation of 1283, which completed the legal structuring of the *remença* (Latin *redimentia*) system. When in 1283 parliament enacted a law of redemption fines for unfree tenants who left seigneurial lands to settle on royal ones, redemption became the key component of servile tenure. There was no uniformity, however, and serfs and free men lived side by side both east and west of the Llobregat.

The eventual revolt in the fifteenth century was not simply for personal freedom, but also for the right to remain on the traditional family holding as a free tenant. It was at the same time the product of an unusually prolonged economic crisis, in which lords used their jurisdictional and political authority to defy market forces and increase the price of redemption. Peasant resistance is detectable from the 1380s but, since demesne farming had never been important in Catalonia, lords were still permitted by the legislation of 1202 (the *ius maletractandi*) to coerce and to dispossess without explanation or justification. Lords won the long war of attrition against an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 *remença* households and the first armed uprisings occurred in 1450. When the *ius maletractandi* was abolished in 1462, the 'bad customs' (*mals usos*) that had been routinized only in the thirteenth century (but whose origins lay in the provisions of Visigothic and Carolingian law) now became the main target of peasant opposition. In the end personal servitude was itself extinguished, but rents, services, and seigneurial taxes were left intact. A radical programme had been successfully

implemented by a traditionalist peasantry backed up, to some degree, by an equally traditionalist royal court. As this excellent book demonstrates, social status matters and the law tends to legitimate both power and exploitation.

H B CLARKE

GRUPO DE ESTUDIOS DE HISTORIA RURAL, *Estadísticas Históricas de la Producción Agraria Española, 1859-1935*, Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación, Madrid, 1991. 1231 pp. No price stated.

Historical statistics which relate to Spanish agriculture were always generally acknowledged to be far from trustworthy. A classic example of their shortcomings, frequently cited by historians, is provided by official figures on wine production in the third quarter of the last century. While in 1857, the authorities calculated total Spanish output at 5.4 million hectolitres, twenty years later production was put at almost 30 million hectolitres! Even the Statistical Commission of the Realm, charged with collecting data on Spanish agriculture in the late 1850s, recognized that its findings were hopelessly unreliable and refused to publish them. More than a century later, such qualms did not prevent ambitious scholars from incorporating this dubious raw material into their own investigations. Fortunately for future generations of researchers, over the last two decades, a collective of agricultural historians who go under the name of the Rural History Studies Group have painstakingly amassed, refined and analyzed series of data on just about every aspect of agricultural production over the period 1859-1935. Their findings, which have previously appeared in journals, collected essays and monographs, are now published in a mammoth tome under the imprimatur of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

This definitive and indispensable work for economic historians of modern Spain is divided into two sections. The first part consists of a succinct essay of seventy-five pages in which the authors discuss the origins of statistical gathering in the Spanish countryside, methods of elaboration and how closely the Spanish collectors followed the recommendations of international bodies. The Group themselves are, as always, refreshingly modest about the reliability and significance of their data. Thus their statistics on arable farming, beginning in 1891, are stated to be 'usable', especially with regard to the so-called Mediterranean trilogy of wheat, wine and olives, upon which the original agricultural engineers expended most of their energies. In the case of forestry, any data which they offer researchers needs to be supported by further quantitative evidence, at least before 1900. Their

judgement on twentieth-century data presented here is that it is 'good'. As far as livestock is concerned, this is the least reliable of the three sectors in statistical terms. Official figures collected in 1865 are deemed 'acceptable' while those of 1891 are 'not in the least reliable'. A continuous series of livestock production for 1906-25 was described by the Ministry of Agriculture itself as deficient. There follow over a thousand pages of data, sensibly arranged by province rather than product. Whatever their recognized defects, these figures surely represent the closest we are going to get to the truth. As Josep Fontana maintains in his prologue to this impressive volume, we have reached the point where attempts at further refinements of existing statistical evidence are likely to yield ever diminishing returns.

JOSEPH HARRISON

DAVID W SABEAN, *Property, Production, and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870*. CUP, 1990. xxiii + 511 pp. £37.50 (hbk); £12.95 (pbk).

Numerous studies have appeared that employ the methodology of anthropology to interpret the past. The orientation of the discipline toward the study of small communities has resulted in most of these efforts being devoted to individual villages or relatively homogeneous rural areas of limited extent. The central concern of anthropology with personal relationships - within the family, kinship grouping and community - involves an area that is among the least accessible to historians employing the 'traditional' methodologies of the discipline. However, certain doubts remain from an historian's perspective as to the outcome of such research. The most important of these reservations concerns whether or not the results are really history. Whereas the central concern of the historian is the study of change over time, there is a tendency in the anthropological sort to present at best a series of static pictures of particular points in time. Beyond that there is the issue of the significance of many of the findings that are presented. The work under review, a study of a single village in the state of Württemberg, Southwest Germany, brings both of these concerns to mind.

The author's limited knowledge of agricultural history is illustrated at numerous points in the introductory chapters where the socio-economic background is considered. To take one example: the reader is informed that 'The great crises of 1816-17 and 1846-47 were due not so much to inadequacies of agricultural practices (the harvest failure of 1816 only brought a shortfall of 16 per cent) as to state policies and to the specific structure of village inequality'. Sabean appears to be

unaware that the post-Napoleonic wars agricultural depression was universal and that potato blight in the mid-1840s had a devastating effect, particularly in areas of predominantly small peasant farming like Württemberg. A shortfall of 16 per cent in 1816 would also have had a disastrous impact in a society where the majority of the population lived at the margin of subsistence even in relatively good years. Moreover, he fails to explain how the policies adopted by the state of Württemberg could produce such remarkable results or how the persistent 'specific structure of village inequality' (presumably social inequality within villages) could generate short-term crises.

The work is otherwise concerned with relationships between husbands and wives and between generations, as well as kinship and the process of transfer of property. Other than the latter, this reviewer lacks the anthropological training to give a considered critique. However, it may be pertinent to ask whether the effort has produced much of significance. Again, for reasons of space, one example will have to suffice. In a section devoted to abusive language in parent-child relations, we are informed that the use of such words as "ass-hole", "cunt", "snot", and words suggesting noisy communication [an odd reticence here] model social relations by use of bodily entrances and [sic] exists' (presumably "exits").

The concluding chapters on property transfer, a subject of interest to agricultural historians, present an extraordinarily detailed analysis of that process for an area of partible inheritance. Unfortunately, it offers little by way of explanation for the adoption of that form of inheritance. The author assumes the casual relationship to run from the development of intensive agriculture, in this case viticulture, whereas plenty of examples exist in Germany where partible inheritance stimulated intensive farming and domestic industry.

Perhaps the major deficiency of the book is the lack of a conclusion drawing together the findings of the research and their relationship to earlier work. This stems from its essentially ahistorical nature and an almost total obsession with the minutiae of life in Neckerhausen.

JOHN PERKINS

PÉTER GUNST, *Die Bäuerliche Gesellschaft Ungarns in der Zeit Zwischen den Beiden Weltkriegen*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1991. 247 pp. \$32.

Péter Gunst's excellent book is well translated into German by Lohanna Till. He writes about the peasants of Hungary: land owners and all who live by farming. He deals with multiple grades of peasants and labourers, their income and main life styles between 1918 and 1939. He uses an unexpec-

tedly large amount of official statistics: though defective, they are more detailed than those of richer countries. He has chosen a strategic moment after Hungary's truncation at the end of the First World War. He is dealing with a country only partly and slowly industrializing, having few outlets other than emigration (and disease) to prevent further rural overpopulation. Before 1918, the nation was overwhelmingly rural. Even in 1939 it could hardly be called a modern state.

Gunst looks at the complexity of this rural society, most farm owners having tiny farms, every man seeking some land or a bit more of it, and with a dozen types of farm worker. It is a sad story of extreme poverty, a tiny minority only living at ease. Of this Gunst provides a detailed and subtle analysis, illustrated, for example, by the description of large families crowded into a single room, and of a deficient agriculture, and illiteracy. They had few doctors, and a frighteningly large death and birth rate, but numbers increased. More children were wanted to give security in old age; fewer because of poverty.

This is not a folklore history of rural society. It rests on statistics alone. It shows a Hungarian population on the brink of modernity. Gunst explains how poverty, the lack of a few pengös to buy a small garden plot or modern farm implements, compelled them to be conservative. But statistics show young men going to the cinema, and the radio prizing open young minds, with the Second World War yet to extend the horizons of the young.

The map is too small, and our atlases can do no better. A book to be sold abroad should contain a brief account of the controlling geography of Hungary and the main agricultural systems. Some would have liked an interpolation of individual anecdotes on the straitened conditions of the peasants, but Gunst, probably advisedly, relying on his amazingly-detailed statistics, has produced a powerfully-true book.

D J DAVIS

VALD M MIKKELSEN, *Borrelyngen on Bornholm, Denmark: A Heath on Rocky Ground. Exploitation and Vegetation from Antiquity to the Present Day*, Biologiske Skrifter, 38, Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, Copenhagen, 1991. 51 pp. Illus. DKK100.

Pollen analysis, archaeological evidence, maps, and records give information on the vegetation and exploitation of the area from antiquity to the present day. The island of Bornholm was forested until about AD 1200 when deforestation and sheep grazing led to the replacement of trees by shrubs, heaths and pastures. Between 1890 and 1945 sheep

grazing was severely reduced and there was a considerable recovery of the vegetation including the spread of pine trees. Since 1979 parts of the area have been managed as a nature reserve and sheep were reintroduced to maintain the heath communities, though some areas were fenced to keep the sheep out. From that time very detailed records were kept of changes in the vegetation, soil depth and, particularly, soil moisture.

The paper goes into great detail about soil characteristics and vegetation but leads to relatively few conclusions. The style of writing does not make for easy reading and it must be said that the paper is of mainly local interest. The main conclusion is that vegetation types are strongly correlated with soil depth and moisture. However, there are some observations of interest to those concerned with the management of heaths and nature reserves. For instance where *Calluna* (ling) grows on thin soils it is likely to suffer severe damage or death in extremely dry summers. This may lead to an increase in *Deschampsia flexuosa* (wavy hair-grass) or, if trampling occurs, soil erosion may be severe. It appears that a greater intensity of sheep grazing is needed to preserve the *Calluna* dominated heath but at the same time that is likely to lead to greater erosion of the thin soils. This is a classic dilemma of conservationists but it might be argued that the granite laid bare by the erosion enhances the scenic value of the reserve and adds to the diversity of habitat.

DAVID D BARTLEY

RAY ABRAHAMS, *A Place of their Own*, CUP, 1991.

xi + 210 pp. 10 figures; 10 plates. £25.

The *talonpoika* or *bovise* – the land-owning farmer (all too commonly miscalled ‘peasant’) – has been the backbone of Finland’s society and economy for centuries. Although contemporary Finnish society is essentially urban and the service economy prevails, rural values and links with the land remain strong. Farm ownership was broadened by legislation after Finland became independent as well as through the resettlement programme after the Second World War. Furthermore, a high living standard coupled with low population density has favoured a stake in the land through no less than 450,000 summer residences, all of which keep the urban Finn in touch with his rural roots.

Within this setting, Ray Abrahams analyses the character of family farming in a community in eastern Finland with which he is intimately familiar. Vieki lies in an area which was for long on the physical frontiers of settlement. Its forests have only been drawn into the commercial economy within living memory and its agricultural practices have been slow to benefit from the technological

transformation that has characterized much of post-war Finland. *A Place of their Own* looks in detail for the first time in English at the complex relationships between land-owning, marriage, retirement, pensions and inheritance. It employs Finland’s distinctive range of records to help construct the genealogies of the families investigated and returns regularly for illustrations to the grass roots of the homesteads studied. It traces the patterns of cooperation in a community where the availability of labour is less than the availability of land, examines the influence of local institutions as agents of change, reflects upon the problems of agricultural surpluses and identifies the shifting grounds of government policies.

The bibliography ranges over a broad field of Finnish publication, the volume of which multiplies with such speed that it is almost impossible to keep abreast of it. Thus, the introductory section of the study might usefully have employed the agricultural folios 231 and 232 of the fifth edition of the *Atlas of Finland* (Helsinki, 1986). Although reference is regularly made to them, it might also have been interesting to reproduce a sample map or maps of land reorganization, excellent documents all too little known outside Finland.

Ray Abrahams suggests that he had possibly conducted a self-indulgent exercise into (what a Finnish businessman called) ‘a dying art form’. In fact, the results of his socio-anthropological study of Vieki might be repeated if similar investigations were conducted in many Finnish rural communities. The ‘art form’ as represented by the family farm will not die because of the ‘human factor’ – as the Finnish agricultural economist Nils Westermarck constantly reminds his colleagues. Finns retain an ideological commitment to the land; while, irrational as it may sound, as Ray Abrahams discovered, the influence of *maahenki* (the ‘earth spirit’) defies extinction.

W R MEAD

E KINGSTON-MANN and T MIXTER, eds, *Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of European Russia, 1800–1921*, Princeton UP, 1991, xviii + 443 pp. 4 maps; 14 tables; 21 plates. \$69.50 (hbk); \$19.95 (pbk).

In the history of the Russian peasantry significant contributions by Western scholars have been few and infrequent. Valuable Western studies in the past there have undoubtedly been but not until the 1980s did the Russian peasantry begin to attract widespread scholarly attention outside the Soviet Union. This collection of essays, which is underpinned by solid archival research and which skillfully fuses together the economic, the cultural and the political dimensions of peasant life, is one of

the first fruits of this new found interest. While the book lays no claim to being a comprehensive study of the Russian peasantry, its emphasis on the regional dimension, its challenges to some accepted interpretations and its raising of new issues, make it both a valuable contribution to the subject and a stimulus to future research.

Esther Kingston-Mann's thought provoking essay on the peasant commune and economic innovation challenges much conventional wisdom on the retarding effects of repartitional agriculture. She presents evidence to show that neither tenure issues nor peasant attitudes towards change weighed as heavily as other factors, where questions of innovation and productivity increase were involved. Moreover, though innovations were often initiated by freehold peasants, they spread more quickly in commune districts. Communes too had clear advantages when undertaking major projects as swamp drainage and in spreading the risks and dangers of grass roots rural development. Her findings echo those of Gordon Mingay with respect to British agriculture, namely that open fields were far more flexible and progressive than used to be supposed.

Jeffrey Birds explores the impact on village communities in the Central Industrial Region of the growth in urban migration and the strategies they evolved to secure a proportion of the migrant's earnings for the benefit of the village. He suggests that the role of the so-called kulaks, rich peasant/moneylenders in the village needs to be reappraised, asserting that they performed functions crucial to the economic wellbeing of the entire village community. More solid evidence than that presented by Birds will need to be adduced to clinch this particular argument.

Elvira Wilbur's examination of peasant poverty in Voronezh, one of Russia's poorest and most backward provinces at the end of the nineteenth century gives a 'bottom up' perspective of peasant society. She questions the traditional view of the peasants as hopeless victims, seeing the peasant family instead as a flexible and resilient institution. In her view the traditional reasons cited for rural poverty have been overstated. Her data reveal that 'demographic failure', such as the failure of a family to produce the two sons needed to maintain the minimum labour supply of four adults, was the largest cause of peasant immiseration.

Stephen Wheatcroft makes a significant contribution to the debate on Russia's late nineteenth-century agrarian crisis. His comparative regional approach to Russia's grain production statistics is masterly. While he recognizes the shortcomings of Russian livestock data, his survey of livestock production highlights the need for further research

in this area. How far livestock numbers per head of population can be used as an indicator of changes in peasant income is questionable. More important surely is the change over time in the value and volume of livestock products per head of the population, entering the market or consumed on the farm. Quite apart from the marked increases in Russian exports of pig products and dairy produce from the end of the nineteenth century mainly from Siberia, and the buoyant deliveries to the Moscow market of pigs from the Mid-Volga and the Black Earth provinces over the same period, what needs to be taken into account is increases in the size and productivity of Russian livestock.

From at least the 1880s Russian agricultural journals emphasized the benefits of crossing Russian breeds with West European stock: with Simmentals, Charollais, and Shorthorns in the case of cattle; and Yorkshires and Berkshires in the case of pigs. One journal (*Khozyain*, 1900, No 4), for example, describes how pig breeding in many Russian regions had been dramatically improved by the introduction of English breeds. It is conceivable that improvements in livestock quality and size mitigated the effects of the decline in livestock numbers per head of population, which Wheatcroft finds so grim.

In the field of peasant culture essays by Christine Worobec and Samuel Ramer advance our understanding of the values and attitudes prevailing among Russian peasants in widely differing regions of European Russia. Worobec reappraises the role of women in the patriarchal system, dominating Russian peasant agriculture. Ramer compares peasant attitudes to traditional healers and to modern medicine. It is a pity perhaps that this comparative approach is not applied as well to his subsidiary theme of the role of witchcraft and magic in peasant life. Here comparison with the alternative services of the clergy in blessing livestock and crops, as described, for example, in Engel'gardt's celebrated letters, could have provided a useful foil.

The final section of the book considers the political dimension to peasant life. Rodney Bohac's detailed research into everyday peasant resistance to serfdom on a single Russian estate in the early nineteenth century; David Christian's exploration into the significance of the 1858 - 1859 protests against the liquor trade; Timothy Mixter's analysis of the conflict in values between migrant labourers and employers in the southern steppe grain belt; Scott Seregny's account of Peasant Unions in 1905; and Orlando Figes's consideration of peasant responses to the Revolution, collectively demonstrate a degree of sophistication in peasant responses

to external events and opportunities that has hitherto been insufficiently recognized.

This pioneering book will prove invaluable both to historians and students of late Imperial Russia alike.

STUART THOMPSTONE

ORLANDO FIGES, *Peasant Russia, Civil War. The Volga Countryside in Revolution (1917-1921)*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989. xix + 401 pp. 5 maps; 41 tables; 13 plates. £40.

There are two moments in Dr Figes's study that remain in the memory. Plate 12 shows the reality of benighted Russia in those terrible years. It shows a group of peasant cannibals snapped with the remains of their victims during the famine in Samara province. Russia has always been hungry. Secondly, Dr Figes describes how the rural communes took control of the gentry estates: 'The peasants loaded on to their carts the contents of the barns and led away the cattle, excepting the property which had been left for the use of the landowner and his family. Pieces of large agricultural machinery, such as harvesters and winnowing machines, which the peasants could not move or could not use on their small farms, were usually abandoned or destroyed'. Then as now: waste and destruction in the midst of hunger. There are many more uncannily modern notes struck in these absorbing pages. What is described here led on inexorably to the first collectivization a few years later, which sounded the death knell for both farming and the countryside in what the Russians themselves now call 'the tragic experiment of communism'.

This is the first detailed non-Soviet history of the peasantry during 1917-21. Historically it is an interesting specimen, seen in the context of the opening of Soviet archives to foreign scholars. Dr Figes has used a wealth of primary sources in the central state archives, in provincial archives and from the local press. The study concentrates on the heart of Russia, the Volga region, meaning by that the Samara, Saratov, Simbirsk, and Penza provinces, together with the Autonomous Republic of Volga Germans - an area the size of the West Germany that was. In 1920 the population was getting on for ten million, of which the rural population comprised eight and a half million.

In the first part Dr Figes examines the breakdown of state power in the countryside and the transformation of agrarian relations during 1917. The rural population dismantled the old regime and, on its own initiative, i.e. the Bolsheviks were ineffectual, started on the tasks of the Revolution, as it understood them, chiefly the redistribution of the land. He next examines this system of

'peasant rule' during the first six months of 1918. Then he examines why the Volga peasantry failed to rise against the Soviet regime. In the second half of the book Dr Figes deals with aspects of the relationship between the peasantry and the Bolsheviks during the Civil War (1918-21), i.e. the period known as 'war communism'.

Peasant Russia, Civil War is impeccably and exemplarily researched. Despite its formidable scholarly apparatus - chapter three alone has 294 footnotes, and the others are the same - it has a smooth and stimulating narrative.

COLIN JOHNSON

V P DANILOV, *Rural Russia under the New Regime*, translated and introduced by Orlando Figes, Hutchinson, 1988. xii + 351 pp. £25.

Reforms which emerged in the USSR under Gorbachev have led to a revival of interest in small-scale agriculture and that of peasant agriculture of the 1920s in particular, partly because of its relevance for current agrarian reform as well as for the possibilities this suggested for an alternative path of agricultural development, based on voluntary cooperatization, to that of forced collectivization instituted under Stalin.

Decades before Gorbachev's rise to power, and contrary to the then current trend of Soviet orthodoxy, V P Danilov had begun to redirect the focus of rural studies towards the peasant village commune, a process which led him to suggest modification of the rigid marxist-leninist periodization of the agrarian revolution of 1917-21, and which ultimately led to his disfavour with the authorities. In the early 1960s the logic of his work led him to question whether the historical and technical basis of agriculture was sufficiently developed for collectivization, thereby challenging the Stalinist interpretation and virtually ensuring that he became *persona non grata* as far as Western researchers were concerned.

The re-emergence of this doyen of Soviet rural scholars under Gorbachev was a welcome event. By late 1987 Danilov was elected Head of the Soviet Peasantry Sector of the Institute of History of the USSR (the post he had been forced to relinquish at the end of the 1960s), while the climate of 'glasnost' and 'perestroika' permitted him to resume his studies in the USSR and made possible the present publication of Danilov's work in the West, the first in the recently launched Second World series, under the general editorship of Teodor Shanin. The series translates into English for the first time major Russian works, most of which are or have been controversial or pathbreaking and aims 'to let the Soviet authors and their historical predecessors in tsarist Russia speak with

their own voices about issues of major significance to us and to them'.

Rural Russia under the New Regime is an abridged version of volume 1 of a two-volume study in Russian of the Soviet countryside before collectivization. A third volume is also promised. The English title seems deliberately chosen to follow G T Robinson's classic study of the pre-1917 Russian countryside, *Rural Russia under the Old Regime*. While lacking the breadth of the latter, Danilov's work nonetheless provides an in-depth analysis of a much shorter period of history. Well quarried by Western scholars working on the 1920s, many of the book's findings and conclusions have already found their way into the Western literature and will be known indirectly to non-Russian readers. The same cannot be said about the second volume which is, as yet, untranslated. We can only hope that this is to be a future project.

The book is divided into three large sections covering the rural population of the 1920s (based mainly on the 1926 census); peasant land use; and peasant economy under NEP. The first section covers the structure and distribution of the population, employment and occupations. The second covers land and the peasantry from the October land decree of 1917 to the eve of collectivization, touching on: the land commune and communal land use; 'bourgeois' and 'socialist' trends in peasant land use (meaning for Danilov, individual and collective forms of tenure respectively); and land reorganization. Part three examines the number and size of peasant households, their demographic and socio-economic aspects (including partitioning) together with their productive capacity, the role of peasant economy in agricultural production and the kolkhoz in the 1920s. An all too brief conclusion rounds it off.

While generally being well translated and capturing the essence of the original, a few niggles remain. It seems unnecessarily confusing for the reader to have *uezd* translated as 'district' and *volost* as 'rural district', when parish might be a more meaningful (and now more common) translation of the latter for the English reader. Horse vet is surely preferable to horse-doctor (p 77), 'culture farms' (p 97) and 'collective economies' (p 101) are unclear in English, 'census souls' (p 113) surely require a word of explanation (in a note), while the occasional infelicity creeps in (such as, deprivation on p 97).

What then is Danilov's view of the 1920s? His view of the outcome of the agrarian revolution of 1917-20 is dualistic, emphasizing both positive and negative features. On the one hand, the levelling tendencies had created a largely subsist-

ence peasantry that could flourish under the freedom of NEP, developing a variety of tenurial forms from peasant communal to individualistic – the private households farms or *khutora* – with a variety of collective forms in between. This produced a more diversified agriculture together with increasing output and productivity; by 1929 per capita agricultural output was greater than that in 1913. Danilov illustrates how the new land commune (which was essentially the old peasant *mir*) survived because it continued to serve customary needs: it protected the less well to do (p 110). During the revolution, we are told, the *mir* flourished because of 'the peasantry's egalitarian and just ideals'; there was simply no alternative (pp 141, 143). On the other hand, the persistence of the *mir* retarded peasant farming, it restricted innovation, continued land redivisions and their accompanying economic evils, increased household partitions, broke up more prosperous households and created weaker ones, and threatened increasing productivity.

Ultimately, argues Danilov, there was no future for the *mir* in a developing society (especially a socialist one) and such an agriculture could not evolve in an economically-progressive direction. This well illustrates the straightjacket of Soviet orthodox thinking. Under the NEP, agriculture could only develop one way: along either a capitalist path, destroying the commune and the peasantry as a social stratum, (manifested in bourgeois trends in peasant land use, namely, private land enclosures) or a socialist one, which would transform the peasants into collective farmers via peasant cooperatives. With the former being politically unacceptable, Soviet orthodoxy demanded that he conclude that there was no choice: collectivization with its economies of scale and the application of advanced technology was the only solution. Such a conclusion, moreover, ignored his reservations based on his own evidence. This suggested there were other options.

Danilov's own statistics (see especially ch 3), for instance, reveal that collective farms were increasing in number from the early 1920s and that as early as 1925 the government took measures to foster and encourage collective farms. Such farms revealed higher average yields and a stronger market orientation than other peasant farms. Such gradual and voluntary progress suggests force was not necessary. Yet Danilov never confronts this issue. In fact, neither the grain crisis of 1927/28 nor forced collectivization from 1929 is considered; nor are possible continuities between customary peasant systems of land use and organization and socialist ones.

As indicated above, there is also abundant evi-

dence in the book of substantial increases in agricultural productivity during the 1920s. The NEP gave unprecedented opportunities for rural development and Danilov's evidence demonstrates the rapid recovery of peasant agriculture from revolution and civil war. This runs against the grain of his conclusion which argues that peasant farming within the framework of communal land tenure had little chance of ameliorating the low productivity of agriculture in the 1920s. Towards the end of the book the mir becomes 'a victim not a means' of rural transformation (p 203).

The book will thus doubtless prove useful for a non-Russian reader looking for information on land use and agricultural production during the 1920s. Yet the analysis of the dynamics of change within peasant society is at odds with the prevalent view in the West. As a product of the Brezhnev era; the book (first published in 1977) presented the facts: any interpretation was left to others. This explains the brief conclusion (3 pages out of 300). The original work now sits somewhat awkwardly alongside his current writings on the 1920s and collectivization which reflect the considerable political upheavals during the last decade. Now he argues that the simplest agricultural cooperatives (TOZY), which would form the genuine socialist path of cooperative collectivization, emerged spontaneously in the mid-1920s. At the latter time these were also championed by Chayanov who is now being widely rediscovered in his own country but, in 1977, was still mentioned only disparagingly as a 'bourgeois specialist' and a 'neo-Populist'. The entire account is also full of Bolshevik class analysis of the peasantry, making it appear very dated (see, for example, pp 66, 95, 107, 113, 134, 142-3). While the introduction usefully places this work within Danilov's other research and writings, it curiously omits discussion of how it differs from Danilov's current views and from changing Soviet historiography. An extended conclusion, incorporating some of Danilov's more recent thinking on collectivization, would be a worthwhile consideration for a second edition. It is irony indeed that for many radicals today Danilov's stance on such matters as collectivization is viewed as conservative. From swimming against the tide only a decade ago, he is now finding it difficult to keep abreast of the flow.

JOHN CHANNON

RALPH GIBSON and MARTIN BLINKHORN, eds, *Land-ownership and Power in Modern Europe*, Harper Collins, 1991. v + 265 pp. £40.

The dozen essays in this volume originated in a 1987 conference at which the Lancastrian concept of social history as a theory-free and unmodelled

but disciplined exercise in empiricism enjoyed a spirited gallop through a series of regional case studies drawn from France, Germany, England, Ireland, Italy, and Spain, all falling within the period from the French Revolution to the mid-twentieth century. These essays are pulled together by a powerful introduction by the editors, which not only identifies the key features of the individual contributions but also incorporates a very useful discussion of much of the recent literature on the histories of these countries which bears on questions of the distribution of political and administrative power; for good measure, the introduction also refers to the literature on the sociology of power, but for the excellent reason that the editors have not found the theories of any modern sociologists 'ideally suited to our purpose' this literature is not subjected to sustained scrutiny. Mercifully, therefore, we are spared any convoluted observations of universal, or at any rate European, validity about the exact relationship between owning land and wielding power, where the variables are property rights, estate size, property values and incomes, inheritance customs and dynastic fortunes, institutional structures, and the nature and concept of power itself, none of which is an unproblematic term. So what do we get, aside from twelve case studies most of which are well worth having for their own sakes?

The introduction starts with the confident declaration that 'this book is about the exercise of power'. This is, perhaps, more of an assertion of editorial intent than a statement of fact. The editors stick closely to this brief, which is not altogether surprising, and produce a cogent agenda, or taxonomy, for the analysis of power in rural societies. This does not distinguish as clearly as one could wish between the identification of the possession of power, of the means by which it was maintained and exerted, and of the sphere in which it operated – over the estate population, over a wider local district or region, or over the state apparatus – but it is an admirable, concise, guide to a subject of great interest to all political, social, and agricultural historians of modern western Europe. Given the subject, it is slightly curious that there is no real engagement with Arno Mayer's *The Persistence of the Old Regime* (1981), which is simply noted in a footnote, but it could be argued that the volume is concerned with the grassroots rather than the commanding heights of power. At the grassroots level the questions of landlord authority and its legitimacy, of brute coercion and more or less willing deference, and of the impact of the relative bargaining strengths in the market place of owners, farmers, peasants, and labourers, are fully discussed. The sheer volume of recent literature which is

brought to bear on this discussion, down to an article on 'Property and wood theft' (in modern Germany), rather colours an initial assertion that while there is a massive literature on conflict in rural society there is little on the actual exercise of power.

Turning to the case studies it is apparent that the attention of some of the individual contributors has wandered away from the editorial objectives, again not surprisingly. Several of them do not get much further than an analysis of landownership by estate-size groups within separate communes, drawn from cadastral records. Such data are very interesting for specialists, but they tell us very little about the presence or absence of large landowners let alone about the degree of their authority and power over peasants, labourers, or local communities, when the biggest separately distinguished properties are those of 50 hectares and over, or possibly 100 hectares and upwards. When it is considered that pre-1900 Britain has been characterized as very much an aristocratic society and polity when perhaps one-quarter of the land was held in great estates of 10,000 acres (roughly 4000 hectares) and over, and less than half in estates of 3000 acres (roughly 1200 hectares) and over, it is at once apparent that the measurement of power and influence requires a long scale of estate-sizes, and that power and influence, although dependent on a landed-estate base, extended far beyond the confines of that base. It did so through complicated networks of family, institutional, and traditional connections, which transmitted and radiated influence outside the acres owned. While some of the studies which do look at the large landowners of their regions remain inward-looking, for the good reason that the owners or head-tenants of latifundia in Apulia or in Badajoz were preoccupied with retaining their possessions and crushing, bloodily, peasant-labourer discontents, others include this external dimension. Here, there are contradictory indications. In Prussia the Junkers were preserved as large landowners largely because they captured the state power through filling the civil service and army; in Ireland the large landowners lost authority, legitimacy, and ultimately their estates, in part because they filled the civil service, army, and police, and the growing state power became increasingly autonomous and distanced itself from being the executive arm of landlordism. In many rural communities isolation from contacts with towns and 'subversive' ideas was a major component of lordly power; in Lancashire and Cheshire lordly power flourished, until the 1880s, in precisely the opposite kind of economic and ideological environment.

Underneath the well-ordered and persuasive

introduction lies a rich, turbulent, and much more anarchic feast of individualistic dishes that deserve to be savoured one by one. Clear thinking about their significance may be helped, according to taste, by the reminder that wine was of paramount importance to the economy of the Bavarian Palatinate.

F M L THOMPSON

PETER MATHIAS and JOHN A DAVIS, eds, *Innovation and Technology in Europe from the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1991. vii + 192 pp. £29.95.

This volume of nine essays comprises papers originally presented at the economic history summer school at the University of Warwick in 1986. It is the second volume of a series on industrialization; a later volume deals with agriculture which is largely excluded from this collection.

This is an extremely diverse collection of essays in style, approach and subject matter, written around the theme of technology and industrialization. In the first and final chapters, O'Brien and Stoneman examine theoretical approaches to technological advance and the process of diffusion. The other chapters present either general interpretations or specific case studies. Amongst the former, Mathias stresses the importance of resources for industrial advance especially, in the British case, cheap coal. In a polemic and entertaining essay, Berg attacks the conventional gradualist interpretation of modern industrialization, lumping together Mokyr, Williamson, Crafts and others and accusing them of undue adherence to dualistic development models as well as excessive aggregation. It seems highly unlikely that her perceived adversaries would find themselves totally in agreement about such matters, nor is it made clear why the conventional wisdom is at variance with her exposition of technical and organizational change at a microeconomic level. Aldcroft also traverses ground he has covered before in describing the links between changes in technology and general economic development from the late nineteenth century onward.

The case studies deal with less familiar topics. Davis describes the late industrialization of Italy in the nineteenth century, emphasizing imported technology, and cheap labour which implied weak demand. Lewis describes the successful attempts of the *ancien régime* to thwart mining development in pre-revolutionary France, demonstrating non-economic constraints on industrialization. In the twentieth century, Berghahn traces the varying reaction of German industrialists to American production methods. Whipp, in a very good paper, draws a sharp contrast between British and Amer-

ican motor manufacturing as manifest in speed of structural evolution towards concentration of production and technological maturity.

All these papers pay tribute to the importance of technological change, several reiterating what their authors have written elsewhere. Many interesting issues are raised but, in this collection, few substantive answers are provided.

C H LEE

WILLIAM N PARKER, *Europe, America, and the Wider World: Essays on the Economic History of Western Capitalism, Volume 2, America and the Wider World*, CUP, 1991. xvii + 372 pp. £45 (hbk); £17.95 (pbk).

The second volume of William Parker's collected essays, despite the title, mostly addresses domestic American issues. It contains seventeen essays from the 1970s and 1980s, seven of which are original or unpublished conference papers. The remainder are republished articles or chapters from various sources such as *Agricultural History*. There is a rough chronological and thematic order. First comes 'American civilisation: the impulse from Europe'; then follow sections on the South, the rural North, the Industrial North, and 'American values in a capitalist world' which comes up to the present. There are two 'annex' essays briefly summarizing Parker's views on agricultural productivity and cliometrics.

Parker emphasizes the importance of unquantifiable but well defined rural values especially middle income Protestantism in American growth and culture. Hence the South might have developed differently if the slaves had been given small farms in 1789, but remained poor post 1865 because of its pre-existing structure. The Old North West was exceptional because of the strength of its family farm society which enabled rapid exploitation of the huge new resources available and led naturally to 'The industrial civilisation of the Mid West'. Until 1930 this was the heart of the American system, but by 1950 a new – but in some ways inferior – balance had been created which included the revived South and Far West.

Parker, along with a small band of fellow cliometricians, has helped revolutionize American agricultural history. Yet an important sub-theme is the limits on cliometric history which misses both 'intimate questions of causation' and 'large phenomena of massive change ... huge shiftings of the clouds'. Hence as well as the expected counterfactualization and quantification, there is much terse intuitive analysis of the deeper implications of social change. Collections of this sort inevitably lack continuity, and risk – perhaps too much here – duplicating work easily available

elsewhere, but it is useful to have all these essays in one place, and throughout there are many fascinating insights on US agricultural history.

J R KILLICK

P D CURTIN, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History*, CUP, 1990. xi + 222 pp. 22 maps. £27.50 (hbk); £9.95 (pbk).

Over the last quarter century, Philip Curtin has been one of the most influential writers on Africa, the slave trade and the impact of the plantation system on the lives of Africans and Europeans. In this present book, he seeks to survey the history of European involvement with the sugar plantation system from the time of the Crusades to the late nineteenth century. Relying purely on secondary sources, he traces the beginnings of European contact with sugar in the eastern Mediterranean in the twelfth century, then considers briefly the migration of the plantation system via Cyprus, Madeira and São Tomé to Brazil, and finally discusses its development in its fullest and most celebrated form in the British, French, and Spanish colonies in the Caribbean between the 1640s and the mid-nineteenth century. In the course of his analysis, he reminds the reader of the dependence of the American sugar plantation system upon regular supplies of slave labour from Africa; this arose from the fact that the indigenous population in most Caribbean societies died out rapidly on contact with Europeans and the imported slave labour force usually failed to sustain itself through natural reproduction. He also considers the impact of the traffic in slaves upon West and West-Central Africa and of the whole plantation system upon western European, particularly British, economic development. In both cases, he inclines to the view that their impact on Africa and Europe has been exaggerated by some historians, and goes on to conclude, somewhat surprisingly perhaps given the persistence over three centuries of the American sugar plantation system and the European resistance to the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, that 'European slave traders and planters en masse may have gained very little' (p 205) from the plantation complex. As Curtin has so well documented, maintaining this particular system of commercial agricultural production was extremely wasteful of human life. To be told, therefore, that the sacrifice of life associated with the production of sugar in America for consumption in Europe ultimately failed to make more than a marginal contribution to wealth accumulation in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century western Europe may, for some at least, be hard to believe. As a result, it seems likely that this volume of essays

on the rise of the American sugar plantation system and its ramifications will prove to be just as provocative as some of Curtin's earlier books on the Atlantic slave trade and Africa. It is a very welcome addition to the extensive literature in its field.

DAVID RICHARDSON

TIMOTHY SILVER, *A New Face on the Countryside: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves in South Atlantic Forests, 1500-1800*, CUP, 1990. xii + 204 pp. 15 figures. £29.95 (hbk); £11.95 (pbk).

Before any readers of this journal pass on after reading the title of the book under review here, they should be told that it is not about the forests of Brazil or Angola. Though published by an English press, the term 'South Atlantic' is used in an American sense to define what was the English South, an area bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the lower Susquehanna, the Appalachians and the Okefala swamp which encompasses the former colonies of Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia, the principal area of English settlement in the south.

The time span chosen is from 1500 to 1800, Dr Silver deciding that the invention of the cotton gin, which changed the nature of agriculture in the Old South and led to the creation of the Cotton Kingdom, provides a better dividing line than any of the political changes in the later eighteenth century. As the result of the impact of Europeans and their African slaves on land which had previously been inhabited by Indians, the area had begun, in the words of the itinerant Anglican minister, Charles Woodmason, who travelled in the Carolina backcountry in the 1760s, to 'wear a New Face'. Appearing in a series of 'Studies in environment and history', this book attempts to measure human impact on the chosen area, based on printed works without recourse to manuscript material. Dr Silver contrasts the different attitudes of the Indians and the Europeans. The Indians hunted animals, fished, grew crops, and harvested wild fruit to provide for their sustenance but did not keep livestock. They used wood for housing, for canoes, and for firewood, using fire to clear land, to facilitate travel, and to provide protection by destroying cover for marauding animals and human enemies. The Indians had no notion, as Hugh Jones of the College of William and Mary commented in the early eighteenth century, of providing for futurity but nevertheless within the context of their culture, their belief systems, and the forest they inhabited were able to provide for their survival.

With the Europeans came a different attitude. They found it less easy than they expected to

import Old World agriculture though they were able to establish animal husbandry and came to adopt indigenous crops, notably corn. But they wanted marketable goods which turned out to be tobacco, timber (and such derivatives as tar and turpentine), rice, indigo, and skins. The most serious impact was on the forests which were drastically reduced by the action of Europeans and their negro slaves. In their turn Indians were influenced by European imports, by guns, alcohol, and European diseases which reduced their numbers. It is now widely recognized that early America was not an unspoiled wilderness ravaged by Europeans; rather that the 'changed face' of the land was the product of the activities of the Indians and Europeans and the Africans they imported and the interaction of their cultures with the environment. To this story Dr Silver provides an effective introduction.

WALTER MINCHINTON

BARBARA L SOLOW, ed, *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System*, CUP, 1991. viii + 355 pp. £35.

In the past quarter of a century the study of slavery and the slave trade has been advanced by the publication of monographs such as those by Philip Curtin, Joseph Miller, Seymour Drescher, Johannes Postma, Jay Coughtry and others, and by the compilation of collections of papers presented at conferences at Colby (Maine), Waterloo (Ontario), Aarhus and Bellagio amongst others. Though *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System*, with its over-ambitious title, does not confess to its origins, it does in fact consist of a dozen such papers, headed by an introduction by Barbara Solow, read at a Harvard conference in 1988. The topics are therefore not those which would be chosen to illustrate the title – and, as the index shows, the slave trade bulks as large as slavery – but are those which, with the aid of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, could be extracted from a group of peripatetic scholars who are known to have interests in the general field. The papers range from a review of 'Slavery and Colonization' and 'The Old World Background of Slavery in the Americas' to a study of 'Exports and the Growth of the British Economy from the Glorious Revolution to the Peace of Amiens' (without dates) to a presentation of 'some scraps of data' on 'Credit in the Slave Trade and Plantation Economies'. Some papers cover a century or more and are general in approach while others, like that on 'The Slave and Colonial Trade in France just before the Revolution', are densely numerical and cover little more than a handful of years. Nor is the order in which the papers are printed chronological: 'The Portuguese Southern

Atlantic Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century' is item six while 'Economic Aspects of the Growth of Slavery in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake' is essay eleven. For those interested in particular topics, the footnotes of individual essays will provide useful bibliographical guides. But the tendency of some contributors to refer to inaccessible sources is to be deplored. Footnote 35 to the paper on 'Precolonial Western Africa and the Atlantic Economy' reads 'For a full discussion of this paradox and a rather different resolution to that suggested here, see [Stefano] Fenoalta', apparently, as another footnote reveals, a paper entitled 'Europe in the African Mirror: the Slave Trade and the Rise of Feudalism'. Could not the editor have found space for this paper, written in 1988 but still unpublished, in this volume? For the agricultural historian there are some snippets of information but little that is not available generally in the literature. It is nice to have the papers in this moderately-priced well-produced volume available but, like many another collection of essays, whether it can be commended to purchasers unequivocally is doubtful.

WALTER MINCHINTON

DONALD H AKENSON, ed, *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, VII, Langdale Press, Gananoque, Ontario, 1990. 406 pp. C.35.

The contents of the seventh volume of *Canadian Papers in Rural History* show some marked contrasts with recent predecessors in the series. Almost half of the 406 pages is taken up by an extended study by William N T Wylie of 'The Blacksmith in Upper Canada', which in its highly detailed exposition of the smith's tools and techniques, and its numerous illustrations, constitutes virtually a separate book in itself. It will be of very great value and importance to historians of rural crafts on both sides of the Atlantic.

Two of the other contributions to the volume will also be of much interest to historians generally, and particularly to those with a special interest in Irish history and the study of migration. Ruth-Ann Harris writes on seasonal migration between Ireland and England prior to the Famine, and D H Akenson (the editor of the volume), offers a most interesting discussion of letters penned by Irish emigrants to Australia, New Zealand and North America.

Five of the remaining six pieces deal with Canada: studies of handloom weaving in eastern Ontario, of the nature and control of markets and technology in Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta, and of family limitation in central Canada in the mid-nineteenth century. However, of most interest to readers of this journal may be the sixth

article, one by Colin A M Duncan on the historical position of English agriculture in the economy.

Mr Duncan's stance is to argue that new light is thrown on English agricultural development if it is seen, not as an adjunct to modern industrialization, but as the primary basis of the economy, one that was independent of industrialization, and 'was early on deeply modern, was possessed of a radically innovative social structure even'. This helped account for the special position enjoyed by agriculture after the onset of rapid industrialization; but its very success in expanding production with a rapidly shrinking proportion of the country's resources led eventually to its loss of its central position in the economy.

This extremely bare summary does not begin to do justice to the rich complexity of Mr Duncan's treatment, but nevertheless it does not seem that his re-interpretation will appear very radical to British agrarian historians. Moreover, some of the elements of his argument rely for detailed support on some long outdated sources, and are marked by a degree of exaggeration – an unjustified confidence in the prevalence and effects of long leases, for example—while the inevitable consequences of the enfranchisement of a rapidly expanding urban population are neglected. Nevertheless, it is a piece which offers many insights and is well worth pondering over. It alone is a very good reason why this volume should not be overlooked by British agrarian historians.

G E MINGAY

SARAH CARTER, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy*. McGill-Queen's UP, 1990. xi + 323 pp. Illus. £33.20.

Confronted by a dwindling buffalo population Canada's Prairie Indians during the final decades of the nineteenth century were for the most part more than happy to abandon a hunting way of life and take up an agricultural mode of production, capitalizing on an existing knowledge of farming that had been gleaned from neighbouring Indian groups and White Settlers. For their part, the Canadian government, anxious to open up the West for the benefit of the national economy, were more than happy to encourage and assist the Indians to take up farming, not least because a hunting way of life was construed by the Victorians as wild and uncivilized. This book describes very well how, notwithstanding this apparent convergence of interests, things went, for the Indians, horribly wrong.

With the focus on the Plains Cree in the period 1870–1896, in what today is southern Saskatchewan, the author documents the starvation, poverty, and low levels of productive output

which were associated with the Indians' introduction to farming, in spite of the government making available implements, animals, and Euro-Canadian instructors – the result being that by the end of the period Indian productivity compared most unfavourably with that of their White homesteader neighbours. Not surprisingly, from the Prime Minister down to the humblest Indian, people asked, 'Who is to blame?'

This book considers two main possibilities, which were heavily debated at the time. First, the opinion of officials in the higher echelons of government, that Indian efforts in the farming scene were fatally compromised by their ignorance and indolence – traits, it was said, which would inevitably ensure that draught animals got eaten, implements neglected, and surpluses traded for alcohol. Then, second, the view of the Indians themselves, shared by many 'local-level' officials, that the Indians were enormously enthusiastic for agriculture but that government policy frustrated their endeavours at every turn.

Sarah Carter argues, convincingly in the main, that the facts support the second view, and provides a context to the debate by exposing the government's hidden agenda whose aim was to deprive the Indians of their reserve lands and assimilate the people into western culture. In parallel with the debate itself there is a measure of repetition in the way the author puts her points which makes the first half or so of the book rather slow going; moreover there is a certain idealization of the Indian, who never ever seems to be in the wrong. The book becomes more compelling in the second half when the unfolding ecology and social organization of prairie dry-farming is described, and indeed becomes positively gripping when Hayter Reed, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, takes centre stage: a true villain, he sees it as his task to obstruct Indian-style development at every turn, and in the bizarre subsistence farming policy he imposes on the Indians, produces a nightmare that must be read about to be believed.

DAVID RICHES

KOSMAS TSOKHAS, *Markets, Money and Empire: The Political Economy of the Australian Wool Industry*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, 1990. viii + 235 pp. 6 figs. \$29.95.

The central task of Kosmas Tsokhas is to take issue with what he describes as the myth of Australia's domination and exploitation by Great Britain. His study of the Australian wool industry focuses on relations between London and Canberra between World War One and 1950, and on the role and behaviour of the Australian and Anglo-Australian

pastoral companies engaged in the financing and marketing of the wool crop.

He argues that in peacetime wool markets were too diversified for Britain to exercise exclusive buying power, and that even in wartime when imperial purchasing agencies were established, London failed to exploit its position. Since wool was of such huge importance to the Australian economy, securing good prices was high among the priorities of Australian politicians involved in wartime negotiations, and their bargaining power was enhanced by control of information about crops, prices and costs. British power was weaker not only because their negotiators lacked information but more importantly because interests were conceived in global/strategic terms which made it worthwhile to make financial concessions if this resulted in Australian co-operation with the military aims of the imperial government. Pursuing his theme of antipodean strength and autonomy, the author argues that in the 1930s the Australian government acted in an 'assertive, confident manner'. Nobody who has examined Anglo-Australian economic relations between the wars will wish to dispute that judgement, nor probably to take issue with the general theme. Really more surprising is the author's claim to originality in suggesting that it may have been Britain that was exploited by Australia.

Nonetheless Dr Tsokhas's case is well substantiated, and he has used not only Australian government archives, the papers of prominent Australian politicians, British Colonial and Dominion Office material, but also the records of trade interests, notably those of the major pastoral companies, both Australian and Anglo-Australian. Fresh light is thrown on intergovernmental negotiations in war and peace. Company records provide sometimes fascinating detail about how companies reacted when their clients defaulted on their debts in the crisis of the 1930s. Taking over or selling the sheep stations was seldom an attractive option for the creditors, so instead they exercised tight and what must have been humiliating control over their clients' farm operations and personal expenditure. A number of Australian Mercantile's clients were restricted to £200 per month: graziers were banned from using motor vehicles, having to make do with their horses instead. Children had to be taken out of private schools. Other companies insisted on giving their permission before livestock was purchased, wells bored or fences mended. Debtors were pressed to draw on financial support from other family members.

The documentation does give authority to Kosmas Tsokhas's theme, but outside six footnotes in chapter one only six secondary works are

featured in the remaining 458 footnotes. This is ungenerous to other scholars, but, worse, is perhaps reflected in a lack of perspective in the book. The study often lacks context, and the reader's nose is kept too close to events. There is little sense of developments in the fortunes of the industry beyond a few charts which are weakly linked to the text, or much mention given to the volume of production, movements in the price of wool or in the distribution of exports.

That said, this is an impressively documented study which adds substantially to our knowledge of the Australian wool industry.

TIM ROTH

M MORNER and T SVENSSON, ed, *The Transformation of Rural Society in the Third World*, Routledge, 1991. xii + 320 pp. £35.

Most of the chapters contained in this volume are revised versions of papers presented at the 1987 Nordic Historical Congress, and the book illustrates the difficulties of fashioning a coherent collection from such a variety of contributions. While the editors have sought the lowest common denominator in 'rural change', the book lacks a unifying perspective or theoretical framework that would facilitate analysis and comparisons between otherwise diverse regional agrarian histories. Following an interesting prologue on the mythological construction of the 'Third World' and an editorial introduction, the task of developing some explanatory model falls to Hettne in Chapter Two. Here we are presented with a review of Wallerstein's world-system project as offering a possible framework in which global and local level changes can be linked and analysed in conjunction. The case is far from convincing especially if, as Hettne proposes, the complex process of transition is simply reducible to two highly functionalist paths: towards either capitalist or socialist agrarian relations. Such abstract categories obscure, rather than reveal, the richness of rural struggles against domination and incorporation.

Chapter Three critically examines the 'new orthodoxy' of agrarian change, in which the virtues of peasant production, including efficiency, responsiveness to market conditions, and labour absorption capacity, are emphasized. This gives a flavour of the rather stale debates presented in this book for the current orthodoxy amongst rural scholars tends toward the view that it is not especially helpful to speak of peasant production as if it was a universal constant that throughout history conformed to the same characteristics. Moreover, it is surprising that most of the authors in the volume continue to approach the study of rural change in the Third World in terms of

comparison with the original agrarian transition in NW Europe.

The remaining eight regional chapters are highly disparate in subject matter and focus: two deal with Indonesia; three with Africa (of which the best is a study of agricultural systems in late pre-colonial Tanzania); one with contemporary China; and two with Latin America. The most satisfactory is that by Lundahl and Vedovato on poverty and landownership in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the only chapter in the volume to address the problems of resource scarcity confronting rural households. Ultimately one is left feeling that there is little that ties this collection together beyond the Nordic origins of the contributors. It is a pity that more was not made of this to offer a more distinctive perspective on issues of rural change in the South.

COLIN SAGE

LOREN BRANDT, *Commercialization and Agricultural Development, Central and Eastern China, 1870-1937*, CUP, 1989. xiii + 232 pp. 2 maps. £30.

This thought-provoking study takes issue with much of the conventional thinking about Chinese farming between 1870 and the outbreak of war with Japan in 1937. Where most scholars believe that the commercialization of Chinese agriculture impoverished and polarized the villages, Brandt argues that the benefits of commercialization were evenly spread and that before 1937 farm output grew at least twice as quickly as the population. She also challenges the prevalent view that because of the small size of China's foreign trade and high transportation costs, the international economy barely influenced Chinese farming. She finds on the contrary that markets for farm products became inseparably tied to the world, thanks to China's old and cheap system of water transportation and to the introduction of trains, steamers, and modern means of transmitting price information. The main effect of this integration was to change the structure of domestic prices and thus to speed agricultural commercialization and specialization. According to Brandt, these developments did not (contrary to common belief) reduce but actually drove up productivity and income; in that respect China was no different from Japan. This rise in well-being was evenly spread; there was no increase in the concentration of land-ownership, and households of all sizes used the markets effectively.

Brandt relates her findings to the crisis of agriculture under Mao, who imposed highly restrictive commercial policies, including local self-sufficiency, on the villages. In her view, the high growth rates of output and factor productivity in

farming since 1978 are simply a resumption of China's earlier course, interrupted by war and Mao's experiments.

Time will tell whether Brandt's promotion of Adam Smith over Karl Marx as the saviour of Chinese agriculture is right. (For an opposite view, see William Hinton's *The Great Reversal*.) Her explanation of the past will stand or fall with her data, which are stronger on the integration of markets than on productivity and the distributive consequences of commercialization.

GREGOR BENTON

Azania: Journal of the British Institute in Eastern Africa, xxiv, 1989, special issue on the 'History of African Agricultural Technology and Field Systems', Nairobi, Kenya, 1989. 124 pp. £10.50.

This is a special edition of the annual journal of the Nairobi-based British Institute in Eastern Africa. It embodies a compilation of the papers given at the Institute's two-day Colloquium on 'The History of African Technology and Field Systems' which was held at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford during the summer of 1988. This in turn followed on from the 1981 Canberra conference on 'Prehistoric Intensive Agriculture in the Tropics' where much attention was devoted to the countries of South-east Asia and the Pacific but little to Africa. The eleven contributors, drawn from the sixty participants at the Colloquium, are mostly university based African specialists from a variety of countries that include Britain, Sweden, Germany and Japan as well as Africa itself.

One of the main purposes of the discussion, borne out by the papers, was to publicize and encourage multi-disciplinary approaches to the study of African agriculture. It is not just a matter of looking at cultivation techniques or of analysing seed remains from archaeological digs. Such methods, it is suggested, have an important place but have too often been used in isolation and resulted in the denigration of 'traditional' and apparently unchanging agricultural systems as primitive and backward. Rather, the whole social and economic environment, combining the full range of oral and written sources as well as the physical evidence on the ground, should be drawn in to give a fuller picture of the cultural context within which agricultural systems operated.

All the papers have extensive bibliographical notes attached and so render the *Journal* a valuable reference point for pursuing this subject. The overall impression is of the great variety, complexity and sophistication of the agricultural systems operating across the Continent in the pre-colonial period. Above all, far from being

immutable, they were changing and adapting over time to meet new conditions and circumstances. With the problems of famine in Africa now so often in the headlines, it is suggested more than once in these pages that relief agencies and others involved would do well to take a longer look at the historical perspective of African agriculture before jumping to perhaps over simplistic solutions to present difficulties.

ROY BRIGDEN

MICHAEL WILLIAMS, ed, *Wetlands: A Threatened Landscape*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1991. x + 419 pp. Illus. £70.

It is far from easy to define wetlands. They have an importance out of all proportion to their area. Even with the loosest of definitions, they cover only about 6 per cent of the earth's surface. Ubiquitous, they are found in nearly every climatic zone and continent. Almost invariably, they are intermittent and local in their occurrence. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that they have attracted so little research interest – that is, until recently, when the threat to their continued survival has encouraged studies of their soils and plant and animal life, and their manifold contributions to human well-being.

Michael Williams begins by outlining what is known as to the processes and functions that characterize these areas which are neither sound land nor good water. Chapters follow on their hydrodynamics and sedimentation, soils and ecology, and the wealth of evidence as to their diversity and human use in the past (Bryony Coles). Examples drawn from the Netherlands and Fens that fringe the North Sea, the wet prairie and Mississippi bottomland and hardwoods of the United States, and the swamps of the south-east of South Australia, illustrate both the causes of wetness, and the technical steps taken to overcome that wetness, in the temperate world. Despite the obvious differences in experience, both geographically and in the timing of the drainage effort, common threads emerge.

A further case study of the agricultural impacts of drainage is provided by a chapter (John D Richards) recounting the evolution of three of the most important deltaic zones in South and South-east Asia, namely the Ganges-Brahmaputra, the Irrawaddy, and the Chao Phraya (in Thailand).

Chapters review the losses of wetlands brought about by port industrialization and urbanization, and the conflicts and policy issues arising from the burgeoning recreational use of wetlands. The volume concludes with an overview of the losses and gains sustained during the past few decades, and

the prospects for greater care and protection being conferred on so valuable a resource in the future.

For once, a publisher's blurb is right to extol a book as being the most comprehensive to date in its coverage of a complex, yet important, topic. For British readers, it appears at a fascinating time. The future of intensively-farmed lands, which were once 'wetlands', is undergoing fundamental appraisal. Rather than maintaining flood defences

at very high cost, it might make better sense for the land to be restored to a more extensive form of farming, in which greater account could be taken of the visual and wildlife elements of the countryside and opportunities for outdoor recreation. There are many pertinent historical and global perspectives to be gained from this well-illustrated book.

JOHN SHEAIL

Shorter Notices

JOHN WILLIAMS-DAVIES, *The Craft of the Blacksmith: Llawr-y-Glyn Smithy*, University of Wales Press, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, 1991. 35 pp. Illus. £3.95.

In common with his colleagues elsewhere in Europe, the Welsh blacksmith enjoyed an exalted position in rural society since medieval times. His craft, hedged about with all manner of arcane, if not mystical lore, was absolutely essential to the basic functioning of everyday country life until the horse ceased to be the primary source of power on the land. If he was concerned, first and foremost, with farriery tasks, the smith also fashioned the whole gamut of agricultural tools and domestic impedimenta; from ploughs and waggon fittings to candlesticks and doorknockers. In the days before those expensive necessities, the veterinary surgeons, were common in the countryside, the smith frequently doubled as a horse-doctor, while the smithy itself, a warm and friendly place, became a haven of retreat and repository of gossip for local denizens with little better to do. Visitors to the forge of John Williams of Llanddeusant, who achieved some local reputation as a dentist, could witness the discomfiture of his miserable patients, while John Owen of Moelfre in Clwyd would provide haircuts for an appropriate fee.

In this brief, and generously illustrated booklet, John Williams-Davies provides a detailed description of the tools and the trade of the blacksmith with particular reference to the Llawr-y-glyn smithy in the Trannon Valley in west Montgomeryshire, which actively functioned until 1963 before being dismantled and eventually re-erected at the Welsh Folk Museum. Using the accounts of Andrew Humphreys, who operated the smithy in the 1860s, Williams-Davies illustrates the enormous variety of the blacksmith's craft and demonstrates the extent to which payments in kind and mutual obligations between farmers and blacksmiths cemented the latter into the tightly-knit system of cooperation characteristic of much of Welsh rural

life in the years preceding the Great War. He subsequently discusses the ways and means by which the blacksmith adjusted to the development of mechanization and preserved the essentials of the craft of farriery in readiness for today's equestrian renaissance.

Few readers will quibble at spending £3.95 on Mr William-Davies' admirable production. On completing the booklet, however, they may reflect on just how inadequate is the scholarly literature on this all-important subject – to which the author's suggestions for further reading bears witness. The National Library of Wales and other repositories on the Principality contain abundant documentation and Mr Williams-Davies would perform a signal service to historians of rural Wales (and elsewhere) if he were to forge a full length scholarly work from this promising material.

R J MOORE-COLYER

PATRICK EYRES, ed, *The Wentworths. Landscapes of Treason and Virtue: The Gardens at Wentworth Castle and Wentworth Woodhouse in South Yorkshire*, New Arcadian Press, Leeds, 1991. 170 pp. Illus. £25.

This unusual book is described by the editor as a compendium of text and image and is published as number 31/32 of the *New Arcadian Journal*. The first section, by Michael Charlesworth, considers the way in which Jacobite and Hanoverian politics are represented in the gardens of Wentworth Castle and Wentworth Woodhouse. The second main section, by Patrick Eyres, examines the extent to which the Wentworth Woodhouse estate can be seen as an exemplar of a Whig landscape of improvement. The final section is an essay by Wendy Frith on the career of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu concentrating in particular on contemporary views of her travels in Turkey and her introduction of smallpox inoculation to Britain.

The first two sections are based upon very close readings of the garden buildings and ornaments

and their inscriptions. These are linked to the political careers of the estate owners and the rivalry between the two estates. Charlesworth examines how certain garden buildings were the direct forerunners of the Panorama which developed as an entertainment during the 1780s and 1790s. Eyres considers the views of Arthur Young and Humphry Repton on Wentworth Woodhouse. He also discusses the development of model mining villages by earl Fitzwilliam in the late eighteenth century. Wendy Frith's fascinating essay is notionally connected to the rest of the volume because the Sun Monument built at Wentworth Castle in the 1740s was dedicated to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. She attempts, convincingly in my opinion, to gain an understanding of what it meant, in 1720 'for a woman to instigate a major medical development, and one moreover that originated in Turkey'. Little indication, however, is given as to why this particular monument should have been built at Wentworth Castle.

This eclectic collection is very fully illustrated with 164 drawings by eight artists. The drawings include panoramas of the estates together with many architectural details. Unfortunately the maps do not clearly show the relationship between the two estates. The book, which lacks both a table of contents and an index, is a welcome and very enjoyable addition to the literature on garden design and landscaping in the eighteenth century.

CHARLES WATKINS

DAVID IREDALE and JOHN BARRETT, *Discovering Your Old House; How to Trace the History of Your Own Home*, Shire Publications, Princes Risborough, 1991. 112 pp. Illus. £3.50.

This little book is a completely re-written version of one produced by David Iredale in 1968 in the early days of the admirable series of Shire Publications. There are 112 pages of small format but with closely packed material illustrated by new photographs and appropriate drawings. About half the book is a summary of vernacular domestic design and construction and the remainder is a summary of the sorts of library and archive material available about houses in general or, conceivably, about the reader's own house. The book covers Great Britain but with some Irish references also.

Inevitably the book has the defects of its virtues. Some material is over-compressed: the reference to *scarf joints* on page 24 would test an expert let alone a beginner; and some could be misunderstood as for example the reference to the distribution of *clay lump* on pages 18 to 19. But the authors have compressed a great deal of infor-

mation useful to the beginners in domestic vernacular architecture in a small and handy compass.

R W BRUNSKILL

PAUL GLENNIE, *'Distinguishing Men's Trades': Occupational Sources and Debates for Pre-census England*, Historical Geography Research Series, 25, Cheltenham, 1990. vi + 141 pp. £7.95.

It is widely recognized that accurate information about long-term historical and geographical shifts in occupational structure would not only illuminate a wide range of debates about economic, social and cultural change in 'pre-industrial' England but would also influence the form and nature of the debates themselves. Unfortunately, pre-industrial England was also pre-census England: historians are confronted not with comprehensive statistics but with a plethora of incidental information gleaned from historical documents of varying accuracy and utility. As a result it is extremely difficult to generalize and the detailed local studies which are gradually accumulating offer only random shafts of light.

It is the intention of this monograph to direct readers along theoretical and conceptual paths that will eventually locate these isolated studies within a systematic framework. The first chapters provide a critical assessment of pre-census occupational sources, mainly from the early-modern period, and of the various methodological issues involved in working with them. The stress laid on their inherent age- and gender-biases is commendable and so are the frequent reminders in the remainder of the text that what are being discussed are indeed 'men's trades' rather than the occupational structure of the entire workforce. The second main section emphasizes the value of the militia ballot lists and other defence lists compiled in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, illustrating their usefulness by a county study of occupational change in Hertfordshire between 1759 and 1851. Hertfordshire may have been a special case since it is the best documented of all English counties but Glennie's advocacy of his pet source is persuasive, especially when the possibilities of applying nominal linkage techniques to the records are taken into account.

This critical survey of the sources, methods and conclusions of recent work on occupational structures and change is a valuable introduction to the topic and may well succeed in its stated intention of providing an illustrative stimulus to further research.

JOYCE ELLIS