

Book Reviews

DAVID CROUCH, *The Image of Aristocracy in Britain 1000–1300*, Routledge, 1992. xiii + 392pp. £45. This is a book which seeks to establish a 'model of a three-stage formation of modern aristocracy'. What, in short, made an aristocrat in medieval Britain? David Crouch answers this question by exploring the rituals, titles and symbols which characterized the British aristocracy. This is a floating world of outward symbols not a study of lordship; no lords here riding roughshod over their tenants and lands, no big sticks only their symbolic equivalents, not 'real power' but that which has 'no other existence but in the minds of men', the image not the reality of aristocratic lordship. Yet contemporaries may have lived more commonly under the reality of the image.

Crouch's three stages belong to the period between 1000 and 1300. Firstly, signs and marks of aristocracy were universally recognized in the eleventh century, imitated by a widening range of people in the early twelfth century, and increasingly defined and regulated by the crown from the later 1200s. The exposition in the first part is chronological. Employing Duby's model of social diffusion Crouch follows the role of the crown in the dissemination of magnate symbols and, in the thirteenth century, its increasing dominance. The traditional cultural leadership of north-eastern France, always euphemistically called 'international' in English writing, encourages an attempt to situate the model within a British context. The adoption of aristocratic culture in England is throughout balanced by reflections on Wales and Scotland, the latter Anglicized and international by the early twelfth century, the former assimilating titles, knighthood and heraldry only in part. This makes for a somewhat broken narrative and, memorably, the occasional 'international Welshman' (p241), but it is a courageous effort to escape from Anglocentrism.

The writer refines his adopted model in a number of areas. The use of heraldry as a definition of the family is seen as a borrowing, not from the English crown, but from the nobility of northern France. Only those symbols which had little aura of power, it is argued, conform exactly to the model of cultural diffusion from the crown. In other areas Britain's nascent aristocracy borrowed promiscuously from the church and from classical exemplars. More importantly the British aristocracy ceased to be indistinguishable from its European counterparts at the level below the knight before 1300. In this, the third of Crouch's phases, regulation and exclusivity were attempted. The evidence is suggestive

rather than conclusive but the author postulates a defensive and uneasy adoption of symbols at lower social levels, a certain timidity. One is tempted to find here, though in fairness the text does not advance such a conclusion, the origins of English deference. Differencing in the Welsh experience is attributed to the durability of native rituals and titles but no similar cause would explain the English experience.

The second part of the study reviews the trappings and insignia of aristocracy, banners, rods and seals, and examines the rise of heraldry. There are brief considerations of architecture, the castle and the hall, and of patronage both within and without the household. The behaviour of aristocrats on the hunt, in their choice of companions and in their patronage of religious institutions are also explored. There are many interesting insights here, not least on the appearance of livery badges in the thirteenth century or the role of chantries in the twelfth century. But there is more than a touch of the unnecessarily encyclopaedic where detail crowds argument.

Despite its length there is no room for consideration of the reception of these images of aristocracy except between near-equals. There is consideration of stone as a building material, of the organization of space in noble halls and of the acquisition of symbolic buildings, towers and walls. But there is hardly a peasant in the whole book whose attitude to these images in his own landscape might tell us so much about the impact of noble culture. This is a minor weakness in what remains an ambitious and rewarding study.

PHILIP MORGAN

TREVOR JOHN, ed, *The Warwickshire Hundred Rolls of 1279–80. Stoneleigh and Kineton Hundreds*, OUP, 1992. x + 374pp. £40.

The 1279 Hundred Rolls have long been a familiar and a valuable source to medieval social and economic historians. Not only do they cover a large area of the countryside in considerable detail, but they describe villages rather than manors, and villages on small estates as well as on large. Not for nothing have they been called 'the only source for English agrarian history in the medieval period which can be compared with Domesday Book'. They lend themselves, as Kosminsky, most notably, demonstrated, to the use of the statistical method, and they would seem an obvious candidate for computer assisted analysis. The 1279–80 Hundred Rolls for the two Warwickshire hundreds of Kineton and

Stoneleigh, though hardly unknown to historians, have hitherto remained unpublished, and their appearance in the British Academy's Records of Social and Economic History Series is very welcome. Trevor John has set out to produce 'the most accurate and complete possible' text, based primarily on an Exchequer version which is contemporary with the survey itself. This has been supplemented by a late fifteenth-century copy and also by a late fourteenth-century copy of part of another, now lost, document which was also more or less contemporary with the survey, perhaps the original return. The editorial process is usefully and lucidly described in the brief introduction. The text is given in Latin and in full; it is clearly laid out and a pleasure to read. There are maps showing the location of the two hundreds and of the parishes within them.

The surviving Warwickshire Hundred Rolls deal first with the town of Warwick, then go on to describe well over a hundred villages, including the odd failed or failing 'borough' such as Bretford. In each case, there is a brief description of demesne resources, though these are not valued, and then a list of all the landholders in the village, with their holdings and their rents and services. Happily for the historian, Kineton and Stoneleigh hundreds included land in both the anciently settled and manorialized Felden, in the southern part of the county, and in the Arden country north of the Avon, where much woodland survived. They therefore reveal contrasts between simple and complex manorial structures, between areas of light services and areas of heavy services, and between areas of predominantly free and of predominantly unfree tenure.

There is much else of interest with regard to subjects as diverse as woods, parks and warrens, on the one hand, churches, hermits and judicial rights on the other. Common rights are occasionally noted; more often we read of resources, not least many fisheries, which used to be common but which have been appropriated by the manorial lord, or are at least held on a dubious basis. We see the clusters of 'independent' and, more frequently, 'seigneurial' water- and windmills which we now know to have been characteristic of this period. The village of Harbury, to quote just one example, not only had six lords and six demesnes but no fewer than five windmills.

As the editor justly observes, as well as lending themselves to systematic analysis, the Hundred Rolls are full of specific detail. At Barford, Hubert the Mariner held his cottage and two acres freely in return for a minimal rent, maintaining a boat and, apparently, ferrying people across the river Avon. At Kenilworth, there was a cottager called Mariota the Tailoress — perhaps a tailor's widow, perhaps

not — but in any case, one hopes, now operating independently. Returning to agrarian history more strictly defined, there is a detailed description of the duties and the perquisites of the *famuli* at Long Compton, down to the *interiora* (*sic*) and the 'taylpes' of the pigs which fell due to the swineherd.

The volume comes without any editorial notes or comment on the content of the document it prints, which is arguably a sensible policy. Less justifiably, it has only a cursory index. Though this is nowhere expressly stated, the index is more or less confined to personal names. The hard-pressed reader interested in, say, mills or gallows or fisheries, is given no help. In view of this, it is all the more unfortunate that so many references to person's names are either missing (e.g., most of those on ff 16b–17) or wrongly recorded (e.g., a batch of those on f 3). Both forenames and surnames are, of course, interesting in themselves. They are helpfully given here as they appear in the manuscript, with only the minimal obvious extensions.

JEAN BIRRELL

MAURICE BERESFORD and JOHN HURST, *The English Heritage Book of Wharram Percy Deserted Medieval Village*, Batsford, 1990. 144pp. Illus. £19.95 (hbk); £10.95 (pbk).

The full title and the introduction precisely explain the main aim of this book: 'to give the general reader an account of the progress of research at Wharram Percy up to the end of the July 1989 season of excavations' and to 'help the visitor to interpret the site for himself'. Along the way it does a good deal more than that for the findings at Wharram are always seen in the context of other deserted sites elsewhere in England and of adjacent parishes in the Yorkshire Wolds. As is to be expected the book is delightfully written, in the form of a quest, by two authors who so obviously share with Rose MacAulay the pleasure of ruins. There is a good deal here for agrarian historians. For example, the authors discover, from evidence both within the Wharram tofts and on the surrounding fields, that midden rubbish was regularly and thoroughly cleared out and spread about in the Middle Ages, but not in the Anglo-Saxon period. One wonders: could the change in practice have had something to do with the introduction of the common field system which probably resulted in less intensive manuring of fallow by livestock, and therefore a need to maximize inputs to the land? The very processes of village origins are touched upon. It is suggested that the appearance of a village at Wharram, replacing more scattered settlement, may have taken place in the late Saxon period. The evidence is circumstantial, as seems always to be the case when this knotty problem is addressed: the

abandonment of possible middle Saxon sites which now lie out in the fields (p 24); the fact that major tenurial changes were associated with the coming of the Scandinavians and may have acted as a stimulus for nucleation (p 84). The authors rightly point to the importance of a great but enigmatic boundary bank, 8 ft high in places, which separates the tofts of Wharram's regularly laid out west row from their associated crofts and which is post-Conquest in date. Could it be that we should be thinking of two phases in the origins of Wharram, a late Saxon process of nucleation and a replanning shortly after the Conquest? Could the replanning, if that is what it was, have followed the devastation and depopulation which apparently affected the Wolds after the Harrying of 1069-70? If that was the case, could the massive bank have been some kind of defensive work erected in troubled times? It testifies only to the difficulty and intractability of the problem of English village origins that the most thorough investigation of a single village ever undertaken should have failed to answer the question of when and how it all began.

There is also much for agrarian historians in a final chapter entitled 'The site after desertion'. After the last villagers left, possibly in the early sixteenth century, two houses remained at Wharram, the vicarage and a single farm which went with the pastures. Their seventeenth-century successors have both now been excavated and the structures matched with the documentary evidence of glebe terriers, leases and probate inventories. The history of land use after desertion at Wharram Percy is a model for the Wolds at large. Hedges decayed, covenants in a lease prevented much ploughing up of the good pastures and the selions of the glebe became lost and indistinguishable. Then, as befits a parish in countryside dominated by the monument erected to commemorate the improving zeal of Sir Tatton Sykes, the land was torted up for arable in the late eighteenth century and new farmhouses built. There was of course no existing resident labour to help with the new farming operations, so men and women were imported back to Wharram, not to live in their own dwellings as in medieval times, but as servants crammed into the top and segregated rooms of the new farmhouses. Even they have now gone, but thanks to these two authors with all of their helpers, and thanks to this book, new life has been bestowed on this most illustrious of deserted villages.

H S A FOX

R W HOYLE, ed, *The Estates of the English Crown, 1558-1640*, CUP, 1992. xviii + 440pp. £50.

The numerous properties belonging to the English crown formed by far the largest landed estate in

the country, even after the sales of Elizabeth and the early Stuarts. The income derived from them was an important element in the finances of the government throughout the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century, as also, of course, was the capital derived from their sale. The administrative machine required to manage the lands was a major source of patronage for Tudors and Stuarts alike. And the socio-economic evolution of numerous localities, literally from Cornwall to the Borders, whether single manors or much larger areas such as the various royal forests, was influenced (often decisively) by the fact of crown ownership. Yet despite the undoubted importance of the crown estates in the political, financial and agrarian history of the country, there has been remarkably little written about them — as this reviewer discovered some years ago when he had the task of synthesizing what secondary literature existed. The task was an easy one for there was hardly anything to synthesize: some work on sales of crown land under Elizabeth, a pioneering book on the royal forests of Northamptonshire, a chapter here and a pamphlet there, and a few articles derived from otherwise unpublished theses — there was not much else even in the mid-1980s. This may have been partly a matter of fashion, of postgraduates and their supervisors being attracted to fields where things were 'happening' in an historiographical sense and avoiding one into which few or no others had yet ventured. Another reason, however, is suggested by a reading of the present book with an eye to the sources upon which it is based. These appear to be a tangled thicket indeed: varied, voluminous yet sometimes tantalizingly incomplete, some of them not well organized or indexed, others intractable and only yielding up their secrets after the application of much hard labour. However, now that Dr Hoyle and his collaborators have hacked their way through at least some of the gorse and thistles, it will be easier for others to follow, and the rich harvest with which they have been rewarded should certainly encourage them to do so.

The book under review is not a comprehensive history of its subject: indeed so large and complicated an undertaking would this be that it is doubtful whether one will ever be written (although I would be delighted to be proved wrong in this judgement!). However *The Estates of the English Crown 1558-1640* is the next best thing, a set of fourteen essays by six different authors on different aspects of the estates and their management, all of them substantial and some of them extending to fifty pages or more. A few of them, indeed, may be too long for some tastes but on balance the value of communicating detailed information in subject areas where hitherto so little has been

known at all justifies the multiplication of examples and the detailed narratives which occupy many pages in some of the contributions. Richard Hoyle, the editor, is by far the largest contributor, his one short and four full-length pieces making up some 40 per cent of the entire book. His introduction alone is a valuable addition to the literature, and contains (besides much else) useful discussions on the amount of revenue the crown derived from its lands at different dates, on the sales of crown lands, on crown policy towards rent and rent increases, and on the Auditors of the Exchequer whom he describes as 'the linchpin of the whole administration [of the estates] and...should this book have any, its heroes'. For agricultural historians, however, his later chapters on tenures and attempts to reform the management of the estates will perhaps be more interesting: the latter, despite strenuous efforts, achieved little in the face of practical difficulties, especially tenant resistance. The one of David Thomas's two contributions devoted to leases in the time of Elizabeth nicely compliments Dr Hoyle's discussion of tenures, whilst Joan Thirsk's essay on 'The crown as projector on its own estates' looks further into efforts to increase the yield of the lands through searches for 'concealments' and the like. The story she tells is inevitably a largely unedifying one as the claims made on the crown's behalf by private 'projectors' progressed from the merely ingenious through the devious to the totally outrageous, ultimately provoking opposition in parliament. Peter Large contributes a lively and interesting essay on Feckenham Forest in which, again, the theme emerges of the crown's failure to increase the revenues from its properties in the face of local opposition, whilst most of what financial benefit its policies did yield went to officials and other manorial lords rather than to the crown itself. Graham Haslam reminds us that the Duchy of Cornwall had a distinct entity within the crown estate, even though for much of the period there was no male heir to the throne to hold the title of duke. And finally Madeleine Gray contributes two pieces, one of which is on the mechanics of crown land sales, whilst the other (in the context of Wales) is the only real treatment in the volume of the important issue of the crown lands as a source of patronage.

Even a long review could not begin to pick up all the interesting issues for agricultural historians this book raises. But this much should be stressed: hitherto there has been an element missing from the discussion of many aspects of the agrarian history of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, most notably in the histories of estate management, of land ownership, and of the landscape — an element whose absence has seldom been noticed. Thanks to the work of the six

historians whose work has been collected together in this book we no longer have any excuse for not taking it fully into account in our thinking, our teaching and our research.

CHRISTOPHER CLAY

R C RICHARDSON, ed, *Town and Countryside in the English Revolution*, Manchester UP, Manchester, 1992. ix + 278 pp. £40.

Every serious student of the history of England's civil wars will find this collection of essays to be of compelling interest. In the main they are revisionist in tone, although it must be added, in view of the historiography of this subject, 'revisionist' with a small 'r'. Dr Richardson, in his preface and introductory chapter, explains that the purpose of the collection is, 'to overcome the traditional separation of subject matter' in 'the two fields of urban and agrarian history' (p ix). The collection is, 'about the distribution of allegiance and neutralism in the Civil War, about religious tension and disagreement, the seriousness of the impact of the military conquest, about the extent and speed of recovery, the ways in which urban and rural interests were shared or remained separate and divided, and about how far the English Revolution was urban led' (p 14). Nine further papers follow, but it is noticeable that while the first five are very specifically urban studies, each examining closely events in a specific town, the last four deal equally clearly with exclusively rural themes. This point surely lends weight to Dr Richardson's complaint about a 'traditional separation of subject matter', but this problem is addressed in his introductory chapter, and by the production of this collection as a whole.

In chapter two Keith Lindley immediately sets the revisionist tone by building on the work of Valerie Pearl and Ian Archer to suggest that the allegiance of London, or at least of its ruling elite, was more finely balanced in 1642 than is often supposed. The strong conservative elements within the city came progressively to the fore during the Civil War and its aftermath. David Scott next takes a close look at 'Politics and government in York, 1640–1662' and concludes that, 'the Civil War period saw the first steps towards the formation of permanent political parties and the "divided society" of the Augustan era' (p 65). Ann Hughes then presents a study of Coventry, proudly independent before the Civil War, strongly Parliamentary during it, and staunchly Presbyterian thereafter. Its pride was humbled in 1662 by the destruction of its walls, and it fell under the dominance of a vengeful local gentry. Chapter three is on 'Bristol's "Wars of Religion"', by David Harris Sacks, perhaps the most interesting chapter in the book. His evidence strongly supports the views of those who

hold that, yes, the Civil War *was* about religion, but it was not *just* about religion. Sacks is able to show that the Puritan merchants and tradesmen of Bristol shared a consensus of belief not only on religious matters, but also in social, political, and economic fields, the latter most clearly demonstrated by their universal abhorrence of 'monopoly' in its widest sense. Ian Roy next gives us a detailed and harrowing account of the sufferings of 'The city of Oxford, 1640-1660' as royalist capital during the Civil War, and under the Protectorate, although its recovery was swift after the Restoration.

Joan Thirsk opens the 'countryside' section of the collection with chapter seven on, 'Agrarian problems and the English Revolution'. Dr Thirsk identifies a number of agrarian problems that came to prominence between 1640 and 1660, and evaluates the success of attempts to deal with them. Barry Coward next provides a chapter on 'The experience of the gentry, 1640-1660'. This experience was, inevitably, too diverse to be effectively summarized in a brief review, but the chapter is a compelling one, making it clear that the experience was not one which most gentry would ever want to repeat. C B Phillips next contributes a chapter on 'Landlord-tenant relationships, 1642-1660', and discusses the extent to which tenants would automatically adopt the views of their landlord, or follow him into battle. Buchanan Sharp concludes the collection with chapter ten on 'Rural discontents and the English Revolution'. This again is certainly one of the more interesting contributions, for Sharp vigorously attacks the views of David Underdown on the differing allegiances of wood pasture and arable fielden areas during the Civil War, and shows that by 1660, in some areas at least, political views were decided more by local interests than by any form of ideology.

As is usual with such collections no generalized bibliography is provided, but the footnotes at the end of each chapter provide a goldmine of references to publications in many of the less well-known journals, and in other sources likely to be overlooked even in these days of computerized retrieval systems. The collection as a whole is a distinguished one, which will prove of great value and interest to all historians of those turbulent times.

J R WORDIE

R J MOORE-COLYER, ed, *A Land of Pure Delight: Selections from the Letters of Thomas Johnes of Hafod, Cardiganshire, 1748-1816*, Gomer Press, Llandysul, 1992. xiii + 314pp. Illus. £15.95.

TREFOR M OWEN, *A Pocket Guide to the Customs and Traditions of Wales*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1991. viii + 136pp. Illus. £4.95.

Thomas Johnes of Hafod was a remarkable gentle-

man — a welcome contrast from many of his idle, pleasure-seeking fellow Welsh squires — whose passion was to create his estate at Hafod into one resembling a 'fairy scene' conforming to the 'picturesque' ideal. Here a previously neglected, slovenly and hungry peasantry would be transformed, Johnes hoped, into enterprising, prosperous tenants, and all estate dependents be succoured and protected by a benevolent landlord. But he was far more than a good landlord: he was an exceptionally cultured squire, who laid out vast sums in adorning his new mansion, completed in 1788, with paintings, sculptures, books and collections of old manuscripts.

Such a figure has naturally long attracted attention. This latest study by Dr Colyer is superb, a volume to be treasured both on account of its brilliant introduction covering seventy-five pages and of the letters themselves which, judiciously selected, bring Johnes to life, revealing the huge motivation of the man, his achievements, his follies, his tragedies — Hafod was burned down in March 1807 and its 'brightest charm', his only child and daughter Mariamne, died in 1811 — and his warm, generous, humane disposition. Dr Colyer's rich footnoting of the letters displays a wide knowledge of contemporary art, culture and politics, so that the contents, whether relating to his translations of the history of the French chroniclers Froissart, Joinville and Monstrelet, his allusions to contemporary political events at home and in France, militia affairs, new methods in agricultural science and the like, can be fully appreciated. The illustrations, too, embellish the volume.

His many-sided activities which emerge in the correspondence — his work as an agricultural pioneer and planter of trees, his devotion to militia duties, his collection of Dutch, French and Italian paintings, his purchase of manuscripts and books for his library, his true 'pride and joy' — are carefully weighed up by Dr Colyer in the introduction. For the agricultural historian there is an important assessment of Johnes' achievement as a 'spirited improver', in which mission he relied heavily for advice upon his Scottish 'master', James Anderson. We are left in no doubt as to his successes in arable farming, in grassland improvement, in cattle fattening (his feeding house in association with the latter is described by Dr Colyer as a 'remarkable innovatory achievement'), in sheep farming and in planting trees, particularly larch. Dairy farming, however, was a failure. Likewise, his urging upon his tenantry the benefit of growing turnips seemingly met with a poor response. His schemes, too, to import by sea to Cardiganshire burnt lime from Glamorgan coastal areas, and to construct a railway from Glamorgan to Cardiganshire to facilitate the import of coal, culm

and lime turned out to be impractical; yet, as Dr Colyer argues, they bore testimony to his wish to raise the farming standards of his impoverished district. We also glean valuable information from the letters concerning land prices, rent levels, leasing arrangements, unrest among the labouring poor in the 1790s, and poverty-driven emigration of the Cardiganshire poor to north America in 1801.

Trefor M Owen's *The Customs and Traditions of Wales* is a welcome follow-up to his highly acclaimed earlier study on *Welsh Folk Customs* (Llandysul, 1959). As a 'pocket guide' it is a brief but nonetheless masterful survey of the old customs and traditions of the semi-subsistent, face-to-face Welsh peasant communities, customs and traditions which persisted well into the nineteenth century. A variety of photographs and eye-witness accounts add to the attraction of the volume. The author neatly arranges the customs into four basic categories: those centred on the hearth and home, farming, community life, and the parish church. One of the compelling aspects of the discussion is Trefor Owen's emphasizing the fact that many customs were a veritable legitimizing of begging and a communally sanctioned means of raising funds in an impoverished society — customs like the *cwnw bach* and the *pastai*.

Of great value, too, is the author's examination of the ways in which the growth of nonconformity and industrialization undermined or changed these folk traditions during the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The overwhelming popularity of nonconformity by the middle of the nineteenth century allowed it to create its own distinctive counter-culture based on the chapel choirs, *eisteddfodau* and literary meetings; urbanization for its part naturally undermined many old practices which had relevance and made sense in the rural world. The author is careful to remind us that of the religious denominations it was not just Methodism that opposed the old customs; in the passage of time Baptists and Congregationalists as, too, certain clergy of the Church of England, set their faces against 'unacceptable' customs.

One additional important agency, however, in weaning the peasantry of the countryside away from the traditional customs and superstitions was the advance of popular learning over the later decades of the nineteenth century, a factor Trefor Owen does not sufficiently consider. Thus Edward Laws remarked of south Pembrokeshire in 1888 how 'fetch candles' and 'fetch funerals' were 'bits of living folklore faithfully believed in by many' but that 'Board Schools go on day by day demolishing such old world fancies'. Part of the same process was the growing sense of embarrassment felt on the part of the newly enlightened generation

in the rural areas at participation in such customs as the dance and frolic of the maypole.

DAVID W HOWELL

STEPHEN CAUNCE, *Amongst Farm Horses. The Horselads of East Yorkshire*, Alan Sutton, Stroud, 1991. xii + 243pp. 45 plates. £18.95.

Gradually over the last twenty years local studies have produced a complex, and regionally various, picture of the nineteenth-century farm worker. Gone, one hopes for ever, is the characterization of a 'dominant' type of labourer, as male, landless, and employed by the week or even the day which is derived largely from late nineteenth-century and southern accounts of the countryside, but especially the reports of James Wilson Fox on the farm labourer in 1900 and 1905. Beginning with Dunbabin's essays in *Rural Discontent in Nineteenth Century Britain* and Ian Carter's work on Aberdeenshire, these studies, notably the excellent Lowland Scottish work associated with T M Devine and Alistair Mutch's work on the English north-west, have presented the historian of the labourer with material which suggests that farm service or even versions of peasant labour were far from marginal even in the early twentieth century. Even more recently Adrian Hall's excellent account of the 'worker-peasants' of Lincolnshire brings this category dangerously near the heartland of English capitalist agriculture.

Stephen Caunce's book is a very important addition to this literature. The East Riding of Yorkshire and, to a lesser extent, parts of Lincolnshire and north-east Nottinghamshire, were the heartland of the horselads — young men, aged from their early 'teens to their mid-twenties who hired onto the great hill farms of the Wolds to work the farm's horses. They hired usually for twelve, although sometimes six months, and lived 'in' either in the farmhouse or more usually with the foreman. This system was not ancient or residual but a product of agricultural improvement in the eighteenth century. These were not classic 'farm servants', the sons of social equals, learning a trade and waiting on their own farms, rather they were wage labourers at a particular point in the life cycle. When they married they became labourers, still hiring for longer periods than in many areas of the south, but in other respects very similar. However, the farm lads were not simply labourers in the southern sense either. Firstly, they lived in and hired by the year. This created a quite different culture of work and of play. Secondly, and growing from this, they worked horses. In most of England, even other parts of the north like Northumberland, horse work was the prerogative of age and the

mark of skills arduously acquired. In the horselad's land the process was reversed — a source of constant confusion to southern observers.

The work culture of the horselads is the central feature of Caunce's book and it is this approach which gives it its tremendous interest and strength. We are taken carefully through the horselads' working year and working life which gives a central (and right) place to the actual experiences of those who worked the land. The power of much of this material comes from Caunce's exemplary use of oral history. As he says 'the views on which this book are based are those of the farm workers on their own lives'. As is so often the case this means not only that the material is 'richer', although it is that, but that the actual focus of the study is altered. Certainly, the historian's wages and hours, and perhaps even a version of productivity are to be found in these pages, yet it is clear that these were only a small part of what working the land meant to those who actually did it. Here the focus is on the skills of work, the quality of horses, how good or bad the food was, and how fair the foreman.

The 'farm servant system' as Caunce calls it was, he argues, remarkably resilient, adapting to a range of changes though the nineteenth century and proving largely satisfactory to master and to man. Wages and conditions were decided in the ritual conflicts of the annual hiring and, although Caunce finds no evidence of combinations of the kind described by Carter and others for Scotland and Dunbabin for the north of England, it is clear informal organizations and sanctions existed for both sides. Even the depression years seem to have done little to have changed the system. However, the inter-war years, falling prices, reduced wages and pressure to employ fewer workers coupled with gradual mechanization, especially the tractor, undermined the horselads' world. Finally, government regulation of wages made the hiring fair irrelevant, although it survived the wages board by a decade. Perhaps as important as these outside changes though were changes in the lads themselves: they were, as Caunce says, 'feeling that they were out of step with the twentieth century...they were starting to regret the isolation and lack of any independent social life'.

Overall Caunce presents a fine account which adds to our knowledge of 'real' nineteenth-century farm work. Perhaps now we can look forward to other volumes on the labourer and above all on the women who worked the land of the East Riding, which can go some way to a history of the nineteenth-century rural poor which has a northern focus.

ALUN HOWKINS

P L CURRAN, ed, *Towards a History of Agricultural Science in Ireland*, The Agricultural Science Association, The Irish Farm Centre, Dublin, 1992. 286pp. IR £15.

This edited volume has been produced to commemorate the golden jubilee of the Agricultural Science Association (ASA) and has a total of nineteen contributors. The two most substantial sections of the book deal with the 'Emergence of a technological agriculture' from 1592 (the year of the foundation of Trinity College, Dublin) until the accession of Ireland to the EC in 1972 and 'Agriculture in the new state, 1922-1972' respectively written by P L Curran and M Neenan. Later chapters devote specific attention to the origins and development of the ASA. This was founded in 1941 with the objectives of promoting the advancement of agricultural science and technology in Ireland, and also as acting as a professional body for agricultural scientists. The lack of official recognition for Irish agricultural science is a recurrent theme in the book. In 1850 the value of agricultural scholarships was lower than for those in medicine, law or engineering whilst a century later the ASA had to campaign vigorously — and not altogether successfully — for equality of treatment for its members in government service, in comparison with other professions. The book concludes with a plea for better recognition for the professional focus of agricultural science, but the reasons for this apparent lack of status are not very fully explored.

The early historical sections touch upon some important issues and controversies in the development of a scientific and technological agriculture in Ireland which deserve more extensive treatment than they are given in this book. The latter part of the work deals with the activities of the ASA and recent trends in Irish agriculture. This includes a contribution from John McCullen, dealing with the period since 1972, entitled 'From rising sun to dark clouds' and a commentary by Prof S J Sheehy on the 'Future of Irish agriculture after the MacSharry Reforms' (originally published in the *Irish Banking Review*). The variety of contributors makes for some unevenness of treatment of the subject matter, and the reader would also be considerably assisted by the provision of an index.

As is to be expected, one of the themes which runs through the book is the status of the family farm in Ireland. Indeed, in 1991 the president of the ASA initiated the 'Family Farm of the Year Awards' with EC support. Earlier, we are reminded (p 102) that it was part of de Valera's policy in the 1932 election campaign to 'keep as many people on the land as could live thereon in frugal comfort' whilst David Thompson asserts (p 245) that, in 1992, 'An Irish countryside without family farms is

inconceivable'. Yet as P L Curran recognizes in his introduction, for some time 80 per cent of farm output in Ireland has been produced by about 20 per cent of the total farmers and that 'farmers and agricultural scientists are victims of their own joint success'.

This book does not profess to be a definitive history of agricultural science in Ireland. One of the problems in producing a commemorative work of this kind is to achieve a balance between the need to chronicle the internal history of an institution — the ASA — and to have a worthy record of the endeavours and achievements of the individuals associated with it, while placing this record within a wider context. The general reader will, I suspect, conclude that the volume is more successful in the former, than in the latter, objective.

NICHOLAS GODDARD

SIGNE ISAGER and JENS ERIK SKYDSGAARD, *Ancient Greek Agriculture: An Introduction*, Routledge, 1992. x+234pp. 9 figs; 36 plates. £40.

Isager and Skydsgaard's book is divided like Caesar's Gaul into three parts. The first, taking up half the volume, deals with the mechanics of agriculture itself, the second with the state and agriculture, and the third with the gods and agriculture. The authors' subject is 'Greek agriculture'. This term is defined strictly to mean the agriculture practised on the Greek mainland, Aegean Islands, and fringe of Asia Minor during the archaic and classical periods. The approach to the subject is sternly minimalist: Hellenistic and Roman sources are firmly treated as secondary and frequently inapplicable, and a variety of other commentators are taken to task for overgeneralizing from such material. Throughout the book there is a sensitivity as to what may be counted as primary evidence and of the varying value of these primary sources. However, the authors' judgement can be challenged on occasions; is it right to call the Aristophanes of Lysias a 'thrifty person'? The use of poetic sources as evidence also requires further discussion.

While this cautious approach is generally sound, it does lead to some problems. At the end of chapter 4 we are told that no feature of Greek agriculture can be regarded as a norm, and the final conclusion of the book bluntly states that there is no firm conclusion to be drawn from the work.

The first section, after a brief geographical description of Greece, deals in turn with agricultural implements, buildings, arable, and finally livestock farming. Here we see both the hardness of the authors' minimalism — they are unsure that the spade was used as an agricultural implement in their period (there is no word for spade in Greek) —

and a surprising lapse from it in their *a priori* (albeit probably correct) assumption that certain buildings in the countryside are farmhouses. This section of the book contains many useful photographs and line-drawings which help illustrate the authors' points, though the reason for the choice of some, such as that of an oinochoe showing copulating donkeys, remains obscure. The section ends with a short chapter on agrarian systems. The criticism of various theoretical models of farming here will be of greater interest to the general agricultural historian than the more detailed discussions of the technicalities which precede it. Unfortunately, the chapter is very short and while the book is intended to be an introductory volume, a longer discussion of these issues would have helped to set the authors' perception of ancient Greek agriculture in a wider perspective.

The remaining two sections of the book are less successful than the first in helping to draw a general picture of Greek agriculture as the methodology adopted by the authors and our extant sources invariably curtail what can be deduced. Despite their statement that they intend to look at agriculture in a wider social context, they disappoint in this by sticking very closely to the agricultural world. There is no discussion of social factors which may have encouraged certain forms of agricultural production nor of how techniques of agricultural production may have helped shape the form of a Greek state. Nevertheless, there are interesting discussions of the legal aspects of the ownership of land and taxation on agricultural produce at Athens, Sparta, and in Crete. The third section on the gods' role in agriculture is perhaps more controversial as Isager and Skydsgaard seek to distinguish land allocated to the gods from other forms of public land. Unsurprisingly, evidence from Delos features highly in this section, but once again there must be a question as to how much we can generalize from this. The brief overall conclusion downplays the role that agriculture played in generating wealth in the Greek world and looks to trade as a neglected factor here. This chapter could have been greatly expanded and the relationship between agricultural production and trade explored.

To sum up: this book provides a useful introduction to the primary sources available for the study of ancient Greek agriculture as defined by Isager and Skydsgaard. However, given the narrowness of its vision, it will need to be read with other books such as Osbourne's *Classical Landscape with Figures* if it is to give the reader an idea of the role of agriculture in the wider Greek world.

A T FEAR

MAURO AMBROSOLI, *Scienziati, Contadini e Proprietari: Botanica e Agricoltura nell'Europa Occidentale, 1350-1850*, Giulio Einaudi Editore, Torino, 1992. xix + 468pp. 27 plates. Lit 85,000.

This is a difficult book about a great historical problem: how did the botanical, biological and agronomic knowledge that sustained the English 'agricultural revolution' develop, and how was that knowledge formulated and transmitted? More broadly, how did late medieval and early modern agricultural innovation occur? Ambrosoli's answer is complex, many stranded, and in the end somewhat elusive: new knowledge emerged from a combination of peasant empiricism, enlightened experimentation by wealthy landlords, and the fledgling European science of botany. Innovation was not a linear or even incremental process; it was shaped as much by market structures and *ancien régime* institutions like the tithe (whose rigid enforcement in seventeenth-century France, Ambrosoli argues, delayed the spread of nitrogen-fixing crops outside isolated pockets), as by the botanists' ability to identify plants and so to reproduce and propagate them successfully.

Ambrosoli's cue is the adoption and diffusion of fodder crops, particularly medick or lucerne (gen *Medicago*) and clover (gen *Trifolium*). This choice is not of course arbitrary; it is based on a traditional view of the early modern 'agricultural revolution' as consisting in the widespread adoption of new crops. But a choice of this kind was essential for identifying the postulated links between agricultural theory and practice, and botanical science. The book's narrative and analytical thread is thus the rediscovery and description of gen *Medicago* by the great Italian agronomists of the Renaissance in the texts of Cato, Palladius, and the elder Pliny, and the transmission of this discovery north of the Alps, first to northern France, and then to seventeenth-century England.

The first two chapters set the scene, as we follow the editorial fortunes of the last of the classical agriculturalists, Palladius, author of an *Opus Agriculturae*, and of Pier de' Crescenzi, Bolognese lawyer turned agronomist whose *Liber Cultus Ruris* (which title Ambrosoli prefers to the more common *Opus Ruralium Commodorum*) dominated the Italian and European publishing markets until the mid-sixteenth century. The solution to the fourteenth-century agrarian crisis, we are told, was found in the rediscovery and deployment of Classical agricultural lore within a society that had lost all memory of it. This loss was reflected in the scriptorial and phonetic transformation of the term *medica*, medick (*Medica sativa*) into *melica*, the Tuscan term for sorghum (*Surghum vulgare*). The discovery and correction of this error, which was still exerting botan-

ists far into the seventeenth century, makes for one of the most fascinating themes of the book.

Ambrosoli's broader claim here is that the response to declining marginal returns to land by de' Crescenzi and other Renaissance agronomists marked the 'beginnings of an uninterrupted relation of dependence between Ancient and Modern and between North and South' (p 42). He finds evidence of this dependence in the manuscripts and printed texts themselves, in the penmarks and annotations that readers in Florence and Louvain, Venice, Tours and London make to their copies of Palladius and de' Crescenzi.

I must confess to a sense of disbelief that such humble marginalia are made to bear so great an interpretive weight. Nowhere is it clearly explained what these marks are supposed to mean, and why. Why should we assume that they denote critical reception rather than, say, mere recognition of what the readers already know, or believe to know? If the latter, these (mostly anonymous) marks are of marginal historical significance; if the former, we have no grounds for believing (as Ambrosoli fearlessly does) that those critical readers actually practised what they learned in their books. Scribbles, like lions, do not speak for themselves.

Chapter 3 dwells on the rediscovery of *erba medica* in sixteenth-century Italy as *erba spagna* and on the agricultural treatises of three Lombards (the heart of Italian agriculture having moved north), Agostino Gallo, Nicolò Tartaglia and Camillo Tarello. Although Gallo took over from de' Crescenzi as Italy's most popular agronomist, he had little impact abroad. By then the rest of Europe had begun to produce its own, 'national' authors, who were kept busy translating classical lore and terminology into a comprehensible regional idiom and developing new, systematic botanical systems. Chapters 4 to 6 trace the regionalization of agricultural lore in early modern France and England, always with an eye to contemporary debates on fertilization, fodder crops and stimulating productivity. The final chapter addresses the English agricultural 'revolution' proper, the innovations brought by Huguenot immigrants from France and Flanders, and Jethro Tull's experimentation. Discussion here of the technical and cultural problems involved in establishing an international seed market in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is of particular interest.

The conclusion, lucid and self-revealing, provides the overarching interpretation and should in fact be read as the book's introduction. For Ambrosoli, pre-industrial agrarian 'modernization' combines two fundamental processes: the transmission from southern to northern Europe of agricultural practices and plants first discovered by the ancients, and

a dramatic simplification of the biological and cultural pool under the impact of market competition and 'profit maximization'. The parallels with contemporary debates on north-south exploitation and the control by agro-business of plant genes are both obvious and explicit.

The interpretation seems hard to accept not so much because of the spurious analogy it establishes with present-day agriculture — this sort of parallel can be quite fruitful if it helps raise questions rather than being forced to solve them — but because the two phenomena it subsumes rely on *two*, quite different models of pre-capitalist agriculture and agricultural innovation: on the one hand, we have a bundle of practical and scientific knowledge embodied in something called 'Mediterranean agriculture', whose basic tenets are transferred wholesale to 'Northern Europe' by (exploitative?) intellectuals and landlords; on the other hand, we find an ecologically, technologically and culturally segmented (hence varied and 'pluralistic') 'pre-industrial' world, in which peasants do not 'maximize' and wait for enlightened landlords to hand down new knowledge or best practice from on high.

Neither model stands up to scrutiny. Ambrosoli's valiant attempts to connect individual readers' doodles and the history of botany with world historical processes (e.g., the rise of the French bourgeoisie, fifteenth to seventeenth centuries (p 89)) are little more than leaps of faith. He is unable to demonstrate that what was read and applied by a few literate landlords became widely-applied best practice. He quotes Robert Allen's recent work with approval, yet accepts the 'Fundamentalist' view that large landholding was of essence for innovation. Most serious of all is England's failure to comply with his theory: for in the end, despite considerable intellectual effort and input to promote Mediterranean medick, the English opted for the native clover, which fixes nitrogen less efficiently but does so far more rapidly than medick.

The book's value is thus in the many important questions it stimulates and the different strands of research it draws together, rather than in the answers it provides: about the character of agricultural innovation and the role of scientific knowledge in the agricultural 'transition'; about the many challenges (epistemological, institutional, and natural) to the early modern quest to control nature; and about the vast pool of local, contextual knowledge and biological resources that increasing commercialization destroyed, and which it should be the historian's task to uncover.

S R EPSTEIN

PETER MCPHEE, *The Politics of Rural Life. Political Mobilization in the French Countryside 1846-1852*, OUP, 1992. ix + 310pp. £40.

The study of the countryside in the French Revolution of 1848 has attracted a host of talented historians, who have shattered the myth that a reactionary peasantry scuppered the short-lived Second Republic. As McPhee comments in his introduction, 'there can be few examples anywhere in the world of a rural population and political mobilization about which more has been written'. Yet, rather than deploy his personal research on the Roussillon to publish another, detailed, local monograph, he has successfully opted to construct a grand synthesis. His first objective, to provide 'a cohesive history of rural politics', from the crisis of the mid-1840s to the Napoleonic coup that killed the Republic, is brilliantly executed. Drawing upon his own fieldwork, as well as that of Agulhon, Vigier and many others, not to mention reference to the peasantry of Russia and south-east Asia, he offers an unrivalled, magisterial view. Despite his constant reminders of 'the specificities of regional structure and behaviour' his account is clear and comprehensible throughout. Its accessibility is enhanced by a fine set of maps, marred only by an incorrect caption for the physical geography of France; it will surely become the standard text on the subject.

The book is, however, much more than a compilation of all that has been written; it also contains a critical reappraisal of the material. McPhee is a committed historian who relishes a combative encounter. He takes issue with writers like Clout and Price for suggesting that France remained underdeveloped until the arrival of the railways; on the contrary, in an excellent opening chapter entitled 'Rural France in the 1840s', he demonstrates that agricultural progress and specialization were already underway. Modernization theorists' 'implicit assumption that cities were the progressive core conquering a recalcitrant rural periphery' arouses his particular ire and Eugen Weber, whose *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France* has dazzled so many scholars, is submitted to an especially withering onslaught. This latter-day Weber thesis suggested that rural politicization could not really begin until the turn of the twentieth century, when changes in transport, the expansion of education and mass conscription had raised horizons and transformed consciousness. McPhee, by contrast, dismisses the notion that peasant activities during the ill-fated Second Republic were 'pre-political', pressing his case with a gripping chapter on the post-revolutionary 'Battle for the countryside'.

In place of his opponents' arguments, McPhee offers fresh insights of his own. He continues to

draw inspiration from the currently unfashionable Marxian tradition yet, while patterns of land-ownership, rural settlement and economic relations with the outside world bulk large, he allows ample place for the role of ideas, political culture and popular custom: 'Political choice in 1849 was thus the manifestation of a complex interplay of social structures and relations of production informed by perceptions moulded by previous experiences and memories'. The autonomous and active role of countryfolk, but not exclusively peasants, thus constitutes the essence of his reinterpretation. Perhaps he overplays his hand in refusing to acknowledge the role of urban intermediaries and the trickling down of ideology. Moreover, while he is undoubtedly right to suggest that there was more to rural political opinion than the disappointing, democratic electoral returns of 1848 — a conservative Constituent Assembly and Louis Napoleon for president — the sophistication of the predominantly peasant electorate can be exaggerated. Still, McPhee concludes superbly with 'The Second Republic in rural perspective', evaluating the longer term significance of the mid-century crisis in France in both economic and political terms. This is indeed an important and stimulating book, which deserves a place on the shelves of all interested scholars, even at the cost of an overdraft.

MALCOLM CROOK

DOMINIC LIEVEN, *The Aristocracy in Europe, 1815–1914*. Macmillan, 1992. xxv + 308pp. £10.99. In this book a specialist in Russian politics — himself a descendant of one of the princely Russian families whose estates figure in the text — has produced easily the best, the most informative, and the most stimulating comparative history of modern European aristocracies that we have. It is true that breadth is sacrificed for depth. The aristocracies anatomized are those of Russia, Germany, and England (Lieven has familiar England/Britain problems, and much of the time really means England, while some of the time he is unconsciously talking about Britain), chosen on geopolitical grounds as the nineteenth-century superpowers. Other nobilities or aristocracies are excluded, although the Habsburgs have somehow contrived to steal the front cover with a splendid Viennese court ball. This selectivity makes comprehensive comparison possible: of wealth and its sources in agricultural land, forests, minerals, and urban property; of economic roles in agriculture and industry; of education, morals, culture, and careers; and of roles in government, politics, and the armed forces. In a work of this kind the method has to be that of synthesis;

while the English material will contain few surprises for most readers, the German, and especially the Russian, data are much less familiar and it is most valuable to have information from these sources made easily available to an English readership. Juxtaposing these three elite groups and their differing experiences of the general industrializing and urbanizing movements of the century puts nationalist theses, whether of cultural discouragement of economic efficiency or of the persistence of 'feudal' power, firmly in their place: that of myths sustained by aristocratic scapegoats. For the agricultural sector on its own, however, the comparison is not specially illuminating. The agricultural histories of the aristocratic estate sectors of the three countries are succinctly summarized, but very understandably the explanation of the differences between them remains conventional. Prussian Junkers, with no more than small to medium-sized estates on an English or Russian scale, buckled to from the 1820s and 1830s to become efficient, modernizing, landlords or capitalist farmers, aided by the presence of a significant minority of middle-class tenants and incoming landowners, and by the extremely favourable emancipation terms which gave them large territorial gains. Russian noble estates remained backward before emancipation, constrained by traditional institutions and techniques, and after emancipation found efforts to modernize and commercialize their domains frustrated by lack of capital, dearth of potential tenants, and, paradoxically, by shortage of wage labour created by the reluctance of former serfs to work except at scratching their own holdings. In the difficult trading conditions after the 1870s the Prussians were kept afloat by high tariff protection, which in defiance of textbook economics encouraged them to become even more efficient and scientific in their agriculture, while tariffs were irrelevant to the Russians, who became and remained major grain exporters. Meanwhile, English agriculture remained the European pace-setter until the 1870s (here some acknowledgement of the Scottish contribution would not be amiss), and then underperformed, partly because it had no protection, but chiefly because it was shackled by the burden of having to support the incubus of an idle and superfluous aristocracy. The story has been told before, but particularly when this English version is told in a German and Russian context one does wonder why the 'unproductive' superstructure of English landowning should have had a specially damaging effect on the performance of agriculture, when there was a roughly similar superstructure in both Germany and Russia. Lieven does not claim to have an answer, but it is characteristic

of the qualities of his book that it stimulates questions on this, and many other, big problems.

F M L THOMPSON

N I VAVILOV, *Origin and Geography of Cultivated Plants*, trans Doris Löve, CUP, 1992. xxxi + 498 pp. £75.

There can be few domains of knowledge that have been so dominated by a single scholar as was the study of the origin of cultivated plants by Nicolai Ivanovich Vavilov. After graduating from the Moscow Academy of Agricultural Sciences, he studied in England, principally with William Bateson at the John Innes Institute, and made many scientific friends, including Darwin's son Francis, C D Darlington and C B S Haldane. He maintained scientific contact with British colleagues after his return to Russia, and it was his unyielding defence of the principles of Darwinian evolutionary biology — when he was publicly attacked by Lysenko and others in the late 1930s — that precipitated his arrest in 1940, his trial (which only lasted a few minutes) and the resulting death sentence, his imprisonment, and his death by starvation in January 1943, at the age of 55. Vavilov was a man of immense creative energy who in his relatively short professional career effectively founded the modern science of plant breeding, and, through his worldwide studies of the distribution and evolution of cultivated plants, transformed our thinking about the origins of agriculture.

Despite his close contacts with Western scientists and his extensive travels in Asia, Africa and the Americas during the 1920s and early 1930s, most of Vavilov's numerous publications remained unknown to — or at least unread by — his colleagues in the West. It was only posthumously that his scientific achievements came to exert a profound influence on students of early agriculture outside the Soviet Union.

The publication in the USA in 1951 in *Chronica Botanica* of a selection of Vavilov's writings translated into English made the results of his lifetime's work on the centres of origin of cultivated plants available for the first time to many Western scholars interested in the beginnings of agriculture. His theoretical and practical research on plant breeding, including the world's greatest collection of cultivated plants which he assembled while director of the Institute of Plant Industry in Leningrad, had been widely recognized in the West before his death — indeed, he was elected a Foreign Member of the Royal Society in 1942 — but the wider impact of his ideas on botanists, geographers, anthropologists and archaeologists studying the origins of agriculture was deferred until after 1945.

The first version of Vavilov's world map of centres of origin to be published outside the Soviet Union appeared in 1945 in the first edition of Darlington's and Janaki Ammal's *Chromosome Atlas of Cultivated Plants*. This map — which was to exert such a compelling influence on later interpretations of agricultural origins on a world scale (e.g., C O Sauer, 1952; I H Burkill, 1953; J R Harlan, 1971; J G Hawkes, 1983) — delineated ten main centres of origin of cultivated plants, which Vavilov himself, as well as most of the Western scholars influenced by his grand conceptual scheme, regarded as the homelands of earliest agriculture.

Although the influence of Vavilov's concept of centres of origin has been pervasive and persistent in the West since 1950, it has been based on a partial awareness only of the magnitude and range of his writings. Following his posthumous rehabilitation in post-Stalinist Russia, Vavilov's immense scientific achievements have been recognized, the Institute of Plant Industry now bears his name, and the centenary of his birth in 1987 was marked by the publication in the Soviet Union of several volumes of his collected works. It is from that event that the present collection of his papers on the *Origin and Geography of Cultivated Plants* stems. It makes available for the first time, in a single volume, twenty-four of Vavilov's papers, most of which have not previously been published in English.

The papers are arranged chronologically and span all but the earliest years of Vavilov's professional career. They include all his major contributions to the study of the origin and geography of cultivated plants, from 1926 when his seminal book, *Studies on the Origin of Cultivated Plants*, was published in Leningrad, to 1940 and the last paper that appeared during his lifetime: a retrospective view of the subject from Darwin and De Candolle, in which he refers to the work of many other scholars and presents a final summary of his own conclusions ('The theory of the origin of cultivated plants after Darwin'). The remaining papers include several on the rôle of particular geographical regions, e.g., two on the Americas and two on eastern Asia, and there is even one on the origin of domesticated animals. The translator summarizes Vavilov's career in a brief foreword, and his and his colleagues' scientific work is outlined in an informative preface.

The book is well compiled and edited (although two of the papers lack publication dates), and its publication will at last reveal to Western scholars who do not read Russian the extraordinary breadth and depth of Vavilov's knowledge of cultivated plants. He was a giant of twentieth-century biology with an unmatched world view of his subject,

cruelly cut down in his prime. Among his papers confiscated in 1941 and destroyed by officers of the NKVD was a manuscript entitled *History of World Farming (The World's Agricultural Resources and Their Use)* which he wrote in prison. We can only

wonder what more this prodigiously gifted and hard-working man might have given to the world had he lived longer, and be grateful that he did achieve so much.

DAVID R HARRIS

Shorter Notices

SUSANNA GUY, comp, *English Local Studies Handbook*, University of Exeter Press, Exeter, 1992. xiv + 343 pp. £11.95.

The compiler of this handbook is a practising local studies librarian, who was moved to compose by the difficulty encountered in trying to find out where to go for information about particular localities. This familiar problem is often best remedied by the expedient of faxing or telephoning the record office, library headquarters or academic library in the area concerned, and the compiler, Susanna Guy, stresses in her introduction that the entries in the handbook are deliberately brief and that enquirers should continue to seek expert help and guidance from local studies librarians and information officers.

That the book fills a lacuna is evident, and its main virtue is that it brings together within a single cover the names and addresses of local studies libraries, societies, journals and record offices. The layout is clear and simple, commencing with a section on national societies and journals covering local history topics, and is followed by an alphabetical listing of counties, each preceded by a pre-1974 and post-1974 boundary map. Together with cross-referencing and the maps, the user is led quite easily from new to old areas. Within each county section there are five subdivisions dealing with, respectively, local studies libraries and collections, local record offices, local history journals, and museums with local studies collections. Occasionally the holdings of a particular institution are described and the size of some of the collections is given; it is a pity that both could not have been more consistently provided. A perhaps more telling criticism is the omission in the section on local studies libraries of many universities. It is true that a number of academic libraries do not contain discrete local collections, but the majority are available to the general public on a reference basis and they do have considerable local history items in stock. Some university libraries have been included, but where are Sussex, Kent or Surrey, all of which hold extensive local collections? Where is Keele which has a substantial separate local collection, an important local archive and a large collection of local photographs?

Such criticisms apart, this guide must overall be

counted a worthwhile addition to the subject literature and a second edition should be able to rectify such anomalies. In the meantime it would be as well to remember that fax and that telephone.

MARTIN PHILLIPS

BERNARD JENNINGS, ed, *Pennine Valley: A History of Upper Calderdale*, Smith Settle, Otley, 1992. x + 224 pp. Illus. £9.95.

In his preface to this attractive book by the Local History Group of Hebden Bridge WEA, the editor, Professor Bernard Jennings claims the work to be a comprehensive account of the social and economic history of upper Calderdale. The claim is not misplaced as the chapters unfold and reveal the changing tapestry of development in the area from the earliest traces of human activity to the present day. The research for the book is based largely on primary sources, ranges widely and yet still manages to include a wealth of detail. In its breadth and depth, however, lies the book's weakness. It is the work of many contributors with specific interests and the narrative, which generally flows well, occasionally changes pace, style and direction with a resultant unevenness. Further, most of the work, apart from the nineteenth century, concentrates on the locality with little reference to external influences. Jennings, however, is aware of this flaw. He promises that it will be rectified shortly in a forthcoming book on Yorkshire which will place this work in its wider context.

These modest deficiencies apart, the book still represents an excellent achievement. It is a work which will be both of interest to those in the locality and of value to historians researching similar areas elsewhere. The research is well supported with photographs, maps, drawings and tables though there is the occasional error including a totally confusing table where headings are misplaced. Footnoting is adequate though Jennings, as in some of his other publications, follows a frustrating and frequently unhelpful style of putting in a reference but no title and not providing the date for articles. However, these are relatively minor details and Smith Settle, the publishers, have once again produced a high quality book at a competitive

price of £9.95. Given the book's detail, time span and presentation, it is very good value for money.

CHRISTINE HALLAS

SHEILA HARDY, *The Diary of a Suffolk Farmer's Wife, 1854-69. A Woman of Her Time*, Macmillan, 1992. xiii + 205 pp. £12.99.

The present interest in the role of women in agriculture makes the publication of this book a potentially exciting event. Elizabeth Cotton was the wife of a tenant farmer occupying a 400-acre mixed arable-dairy holding several miles outside Ipswich. The two volumes of her diary span the period from 1854, when Elizabeth was thirty-four years old, until the death of her husband and her move from the farm in 1869. The years are of particular interest to the agricultural historian for several reasons. First, the diary covers the period of the so called 'Golden Age' of agriculture, a period of general prosperity and improved social status for the tenant farmer. Secondly, the diary was written at a time when the farmer's wife was believed by many contemporaries to have been decreasingly involved in agricultural matters. The disclosure of a source which deals with both issues is important.

Unfortunately, in spite of the rather misleading title, the book is neither a diary in its entirety nor an abridgement. Instead, Sheila Hardy has used numerous short extracts, taken out of context and with no chronological continuity, from the diary. To augment this, Ms Hardy has used a good variety of sources such as other contemporary diaries — including another unpublished, privately owned diary of George Ranson — local newspapers, and Victorian novels. These are linked with text to illustrate this thematic commentary on the world of Elizabeth Cotton. Subjects explored include family and domestic life, the education of the Cotton children, the social and religious involvement of Elizabeth, outside events which received notice in the diary, and travel — the only matter on which the diary was extensively quoted. Efforts to interpret the thoughts and motives of Elizabeth Cotton are often decidedly personal and, consequently, dubious.

For the agricultural historian the book is of limited use. Ms Hardy appears to be largely unconcerned with agriculture. Consequently, very few of the excerpts relate to farming matters. This makes the book almost useless as a source for exploring the function of this woman within the agricultural establishment. There are only tantalizing glimpses — of the relationship between tenant and owner, of the problems of livestock disease, of Elizabeth's involvement with the farm labourers, of visits by Elizabeth with her husband to agricultural

shows around the region — included which illustrate Elizabeth's comments and concerns with the farm. It is possible that more references are not included in the book because they do not exist. If this is so, it would tend to confirm the declining involvement of the farmer's wife. Without the entire diary, however, it is impossible to know. The thematic organization of the book is more useful as an indication of the socio-economic status of the Cotton family during the 'Golden' years. Ms Hardy not only considers the life of the family as revealed in the diary, but she also brings a wide range of other, comparative sources into the study. Because this element of agrarian history is more tangential to agriculture *per se*, it is less limited by the author's omissions. Overall, however, the book will be a disappointment to those expecting the 'diary' of the title.

BETHANIE AFTON

DENIS WOOD, *The Power of Maps*, Routledge, 1992. viii + 248 pp. £12.99.

'Is any myth among cartographers more cherished than that of the map's dispassionate neutrality?' asks Denis Wood. The question is posed rhetorically. The book is a seamless, entertaining, idiosyncratic exposure of cartography's many myths, not least that of dispassionate neutrality. Mapping does not just produce maps but is fundamental to the process of bringing order to the world. Cartography is primarily a form of political discourse concerned with the acquisition and maintenance of power. As an activity, it can no more be neutral than are the purposes it serves, which are not neutral in the slightest.

Such is the book's drift. The argument is illustrated by passing flotsam and jetsam of cartographic venality, and, from time to time, by something more substantial: the stand-off between the northern-hemisphere, developed-world exponents of Mercator and the advocates of Peter's, the projection of the underdog; the hidden agenda of the North Carolina State Highways map; military paranoia and the limitations of Landsat; and, rather perplexingly, the representation of hills in cartographic history and among children of different ages (childhood exposure to *The Little Red Caboose* apparently reinforcing an attachment to pictures rather than contour plans).

This book should be prescribed, as an antidote, to those students who are obliged to follow undergraduate courses which (still) present cartography as a ritual induction into the unfathomable mystery of an unchanging set of craft practices. They ought to enjoy it.

JOHN R WALTON