

Book Reviews

RONALD HUTTON, *The Stations of the Sun. A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*, OUP, 1996.

xx + 542 pp. Illus. £19.99.

Ronald Hutton has become well known in the last few years for his often controversial treatments of folk lore and traditional pastimes and customs in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period. At one level this new book is a continuation of that work bringing some aspects of those accounts up to the twentieth century. However, it also, as Hutton says in his preface, builds on his earlier work in *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* and *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, in some cases using material, especially from the latter 'wholesale' (his description). If that is one genealogy there are others. He himself places the work within accounts of 'calendar customs' but (correctly) points out that since the work done for the Folk-Lore Society in 1936–40 no serious study has looked at this material – although there are innumerable, more or less awful, popular versions. I would add, in respect not in mischief, the great eighteenth- and nineteenth-century 'books of days', most notably Hone's as even earlier ancestors of this fine work.

To describe the book's contents is deceptively simple. It is an account of the 'calendar customs' of the British Isles, albeit with a slight English bias from the earliest recorded references until their demise, if that point has been reached. In that sense it is very simple, and in that way *Stations of the Sun* will probably avoid some of the controversy which has surrounded his earlier books. Yet some, especially the more traditional folklorists, and especially practitioners of folk custom and ritual, will find its general drive unsettling. The core to this is in the subtitle of the book 'A history of the Ritual Year in Britain'. History is, by its nature, almost inimical to tradition – it charts things over time finding change as often as continuity. The central argument through his meticulous accounts of the calendar customs of these islands is of their constant change and, their often recent origin – or at least revival. In this he follows much recent folk-lore scholarship which has stressed the constant invention and re-invention within many customs – an inventiveness matched only by those defending the antiquity of some customs. What is important here is not each individual account, stressing for instance the seventeenth-century origins of many Whit Festivals; the nineteenth-century origins of May Day or the eighteenth-century creation of the Haxey Hood, rather it is the cumulative effect of

these examples, one on another, until little of medieval let alone pagan origin is left.

What Hutton argues is not that there are no continuities observable in customary practice – indeed he goes out of his way in his conclusions to stress that there are – rather that these continuities are expressed through changing forms over time. These changing forms have certain common characteristics which can be observed in the long term and grouped together. In these he stresses two great periods of the 'proliferation' of calendar customs, the late Middle Ages and the eighteenth century. The former was based on elite patronage through the church and the civitas, the latter based on a more plebeian moment and related to the rise of 'begging' customs, where older forms were often taken by the poor, modified, and used to 'earn' money for the wealthy and great. Between these there were periods when communal calendar customs went into decline, or were under attack, and many observances moved into the private sphere. This is especially true of the privatization of celebration in the last 150 years.

Much of this makes good sense, and the wealth of material Hutton uses from primary sources and from a prodigious reading of secondary writing, gives it strong support. Yet, that is not what I have taken from this book. His conclusions, as he himself says, are more personal reflections on his material than the conventional bullet points of current academic discourse, and so I allow myself a loose rein. First, and this is a compliment, this will stand beside Brand, Hone and Chambers on my shelf, and when I want a way into customs, I will go to it with them. It has the added advantage of being up-to-date and having read lots of things they could not! Second, it is a testimony to the sheer inventiveness and adaptability of human kind. When a couple of years ago Linda Merricks and I wrote that the plough-play might not have its origins in a Celtic fertility cult but in the (literal) horse play of young farm servants at the end of the eighteenth century, we received a number of letters. None was complimentary. All insisted we were 'destroying' an ancient ritual and its significance. What none of those who wrote to us seemed to see was that we believed that inventiveness and change within a custom was more important than any dreary and meaningless continuity. A living custom grows and changes, and Hutton's book is a celebration of that.

ALUN HOWKINS

ALAN CROSSLEY, ed, *The Victoria History of the Counties of England. A History of the County of Oxford, XIII, Bampton Hundred*, part one, OUP for the Institute of Historical Research, 1996. xxiv + 234 pp. Maps; illus. £70.

This volume covers ten places in southwestern Oxfordshire comprised within the ancient hundred and *parochia* of Bampton, a small town lying about twelve miles west of Oxford and close to the Thames. It is the only urban settlement in the area, nearly all of which lies on low-lying, and floodable alluvium in the south along the Thames, rising slightly onto Oxford clays, partly overlain with gravels to the north, where it nearly touches Witney. The region has always been predominantly agricultural, with quite good soils, but has suffered from isolation caused by its relatively poor communications with Oxford, where the great bend of the Thames around the Wytham hills impedes direct routes. As a result Witney has expanded at Bampton's expense, and Bampton market, already established by 1086, declined throughout the Middle Ages, with its market house described as ruinous in 1669. The population of Bampton and its adjacent township of Weald was largely engaged in farming, crafts and retail trade, and remained remarkably stable until the 1960s; being only 1003 in 1801 and 1104 in 1921: but by 1991 it had risen to 2459, partly due to an influx of suburban commuters. Bampton was originally an important royal manor and a very large parish, comprising six of the places covered in this volume. These were the small and largely depopulated townships of Chimney, Lower Haddon, Lew and Shifford, and the larger township of Aston and Cote, comprising two settlements which shared a three-field common arable system from 1239, and probably earlier. The remaining villages in this volume are Ducklington, Standlake, and Northmoor (a detached part of Chadlington Hundred) and the shrunken settlement of Yelford.

From an agricultural history viewpoint the region is interesting because of the long survival of its open-field arable, much of which continued into the mid-nineteenth century. Remoteness and backwardness are possible explanations, but the excellent maps of the field systems which this volume includes, indicate that a judicious balance of partial enclosure (usually of meadows and pasture) and re-organization of the field systems into six or more fields, implying less fallow and more complex crop rotations, may have been an important contributory cause. For instance at Aston and Cote, where enclosure was delayed till 1855, the old three-course rotation was changed to a four-course one between 1650 and 1678, and the field system was re-organized. New crops like sainfoin and hops had

been introduced by the early eighteenth century, and farming in the parish was dominated by a number of wealthy yeomen. At Ducklington, on the river Windrush just south of Witney, the old open fields had been re-organized into five well before enclosure in 1839, and at Standlake the old two-course rotation had been expanded to four courses before 1636, when the rotation was (1) wheat, maslin or rye, (2) pulses, (3) barley, and (4) fallow. Thus the fallow area had been halved and pulses made more predominant, as befitted a region where livestock production was notable.

In contrast to the larger villages, the smaller settlements seem to have shrunk, mostly in the post Black Death period, c 1350–1450, and to have been early enclosed. At Yelford where a copy of a map of 1625 shows the whole parish enclosed, this probably occurred before 1400; and similarly at Lower Haddon where there were only three inhabitants c 1490. The township of Chimney, near the Thames, was all enclosed by 1789, but had had three open-fields in 1681, while Shifford was privately enclosed by the Harcourt family c 1757. A short review cannot do justice to all that is of interest in this well produced volume which maintains the high scholarly standard of the *VCH*. There are detailed discussions of population, occupations and domestic architecture as well as manorial descents, local government and religion. The numerous illustrations, based on photographs and old drawings as well as the excellent maps are specially to be commended.

MICHAEL HAVINDEN

MARK PAGE, ed, *The Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester 1301–2*, Hampshire Record Series, XIV, 1996. xxviii + 470 pp. £15.

This volume is the first publication arising from the Winchester Pipe Roll project. A complete translation of the Pipe Roll for 1301–2 is accompanied by a useful introduction, a reliable index, and microfiche copies of the original. At its inception, the project aimed to make the Pipe Rolls more accessible to specialist and non-specialist alike and, to judge by this publication, Mark Page and his colleagues are to be warmly applauded for having more than achieved this.

In a wide-ranging introduction Page describes the Pipe Roll before proceeding to examine its illustration of aspects of the bishopric's estate and its administrative machinery. This is followed by a discussion of the income and expenditure of the estate for the year, including brief analyses of the main sources of revenue and the regionality of demesne produce. The main text, a translation of the Pipe Roll and not a transcription, is clear and, as the editor notes, for the most part, literal.

This means that ambiguities are, generally speaking, avoided. Where the meaning is open to dispute, the editor has followed his translation with the Latin in round brackets; this is also important where a literal translation would be unwieldy but where the chosen translation can only serve as a substitute for the fuller meaning (for instance, *companagium*, that element of the payment in kind made to harvest workers and literally translatable as 'that which goes with bread', a catch-all phrase for milk, meat, and fish, has been translated throughout as 'relish'). Clarity is further served by the inclusion of a glossary, where the editor can expand upon such words whilst leaving the text uncluttered. Although there is clearly a delicate balance to be achieved between making a translation accessible and maintaining its accuracy, the editor has managed it here, especially by providing sufficient information to allow the specialist to double-check his version.

The volume follows the precedent of other recent editions of medieval estate records in providing microfiche copies of the actual document. As well as allowing the reader to test the translation against the Latin of the document, the microfiche are also valuable as a means of making medieval documents less daunting to those unfamiliar with material from the period. That said, as with microfiche in general, it is not always easy to find the way around the microfiche in order to locate the original and compare it with the text. Closer labelling of membranes would certainly be of help here, especially for the non-specialist, but this is more a quibble than a criticism; the microfiche and the detailed and well-structured index are the icing on a rich cake.

For those who do not work directly upon Winchester material, part of the joy of this volume will be in being able to approach the work of historians such as Postan and Titow with an eminently affordable and usable example of one of their most important archives to hand; although most of the research of these historians has involved the exploitation of long series of such material, the publication of this single roll will offer future researchers a sense of the wealth of the source and should encourage them to demand new questions of it. An early start has been made by Page who suggests, for example, that merchet or marriage fine payments, which often detail where the marriage took place, may illuminate female marriage patterns and migration. In fact, in addition to the mass of material on estate management contained in the rolls, the fines and pequisites sections of the receipts will probably justify a good deal of close analysis and could shed further light on the condition and experience of the Winchester tenantry. This edition

of the 1301-2 Pipe Roll can take its place beside previously published editions of early thirteenth-century Winchester Pipe Rolls; the early fourteenth-century roll, with its detailed entries, will provide an illuminating contrast to those earlier ones and, consequently, one of its many worths will be as an exemplar of the development of accounting practice over the thirteenth century.

PHILIPP SCHOFIELD

WILLIAM CHESTER JORDAN, *The Great Famine. Northern Europe in the Early Fourteenth Century*, Princeton University Press, 1996. 317 pp. 3 maps. £25.

This book is the first full length study of an episode which certainly deserves such extended treatment, as it must rank as the most disastrous European famine for which we have detailed records. The famine began in 1315, and a series of wet and cold summers which damaged cereal crops were followed by outbreaks of disease among animals, which did not end until 1322. The famine has loomed large in the thinking of historians of the medieval economy, because it fell near to the critical point when the expansion in population and production of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries ended, and the decline of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries began. Indeed it has a claim to have been the pivot in the economic and social history of the whole period 1000-1500. In the view of Postan's school the Great Famine was the culmination of the medieval crisis and the ultimate Malthusian check, demonstrating the weakness of the agrarian economy, and the debilitated and vulnerable state of the population. To others it might be seen as an exogenous shock, a dreadful accident which, like the Black Death, helped to change the course of history through the unpredictable forces of nature.

Jordan's new study embraces the whole of northern Europe, and makes use of historical literature from all of the countries affected, from the British Isles through the Low Countries and northern France, to Germany, Scandinavia and Poland. He provides a wide ranging synthesis on the causes, course and effects of the crop failures, which is not based on deep analyses of primary sources, but surveys a formidable array of published work, some of it in local journals, and in many languages. It will interest specialists who will not be conversant with all of the literature, and is accessibly written so that it should appeal to students and general readers.

In addition to information hitherto unavailable in English, the book contains some novel ideas and new emphases in interpretation. Firstly, Jordan argues for the 'long chronology' of the famine, and

so will help to remove the 'famine of 1315-17' from our thinking and replace it with seven lean years from 1315 to 1322. Secondly, he accepts that the chief result of the bad weather was to damage the cereal crops on which the population depended, but he also notes the poor wine harvests of those years in northern France and Germany, and the difficulties in hay making, as well as the cattle disease which was first highlighted by Kershaw. A scarcity of salt disrupted dairying and the curing of meat, so that people were unable to obtain adequate quantities of cheese and bacon as well as bread and pottage. Thirdly, as well as documenting the sufferings of the mass of the population, Jordan devotes a chapter to the effects of the famine on the landlords, and shows how some, notably in Germany, were driven into debt. And finally, he has explored the response of governments to the food crises. The price fixing, bans on grain exports, and encouragement for imports are entirely predictable, but less obvious measures were also adopted, such as controls on the expansion of deer parks in France.

Jordan discusses riots, and although he seems unaware of Thompson's work on the 'moral economy' of the crowd, and the debate on modern food riots, he provides information which sheds valuable new light on the subject. In England a great upsurge in crime, especially small-scale theft, was recorded in the famine years, but very little concerted mass action. Jordan however tells us of a demonstration in Magdeburg, and provides details of disturbances in Douai in 1322 which seem to share characteristics with an eighteenth-century food riot: women led crowds who opened granaries and searched for hoarded grain in merchants' houses. There was a rather mysterious episode in England also, in 1316 (not noticed by Jordan) when grain was taken from an Italian ship at Sandwich. If the idea was current in 1315-22 that crowds could intervene to bring more corn on to the market, why does it seem to have happened so rarely? If we follow the logic of Thompson's argument, the authorities could have been deemed to be defending the consumer against profiteers in the fourteenth century in a way that they were not four centuries later, so that popular action was not necessary. If this was the case, the effectiveness of market regulation, and the degree of popular trust of those in authority, was much greater than is usually supposed.

Jordan might be expected, having chosen to write a book about the famine, to argue for its devastating effects and great importance. In fact he tends to back away from making too sensational claims. For example, in assessing mortality he is rather sceptical of some of the higher estimates, and points out that the oft-quoted death toll of 3000 at

Ypres could well have included many temporary immigrants, and should not be taken as indicative of a very high mortality among the townspeople. He also takes a rather optimistic view of the recovery after 1322. He reflects the controversy on the long-term significance of the famine, but does not come down heavily on one side or the other. Surely the miseries of the period should not be underestimated? After all, if the relatively conservative figure of 10 per cent mortality is accepted, that means that a half-million English people died, and the majority of local studies of the period 1322-48 suggest that demographic and agrarian troubles persisted after the immediate effects of the famine had passed. Jordan, rather surprisingly in view of his earlier work on credit, could have devoted more space to the social disruption caused by debt, petty crime and signs of a breakdown in normal neighbourly and familial relations. The famine was perhaps more important than its historian is prepared to admit. But he has done the subject great service by extending the English-speaking world's knowledge of the subject, and raising new issues for debate.

CHRISTOPHER DYER

RICHARD BRITNELL and JOHN HATCHER, eds, *Progress and Problems in Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Edward Miller*, CUP, 1996. xv + 317 pp. £35. Agricultural historians will probably know Edward Miller's work best from his monograph, *The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely: The Social History of an Ecclesiastical Estate from the Tenth Century to the Early Fourteenth Century* (1951), his survey of *Medieval England: Rural Society and Economic Change* (1978) written jointly with John Hatcher, and his editorship of (and contributions to) the *Agrarian History of England and Wales vol III: 1348-1500*. The fourteen essays collected together in this volume do justice to the full breadth of his work and interests, covering the social and economic history of rural life, towns, trade and finance in the period between the early twelfth century and the mid-sixteenth century. All are newly published pieces of detailed research by established experts in their fields. A comprehensive bibliography of Edward Miller's published work is also provided. The book has no general index or bibliography, although the essays are arranged in roughly chronological order, and most have self-evident titles.

Six of the essays are strongly relevant to those interested in rural history. Edmund King's essay on 'Economic development in the early twelfth century' is concerned largely with how lords managed their estates, using the sparse documentary evidence of lords' income from rural and urban property, fairs and tolls, to provide an outline of the economy

at the period. In 'Peasant deer poachers in the medieval forest,' Jean Birrell uses records of the forest eyre to illustrate peasant hunting practices and to examine what peasant poachers did with the venison once it had been illegally acquired. The resulting study has implications beyond the history of hunting: for instance, accounts of how peasants acquired the meat in the first place (by deliberate hunting or by chancing upon deer, dead or alive, in the forest), of peasants sharing the meat within their local community, and of the differences between peasant and aristocratic hunting practices all have wider social implications. Christopher Dyer in 'Taxation and communities in late medieval England' undertakes a much needed investigation of the details of tax assessment and collection in the period from the 1320s to the 1520s. He asks some questions which have too often been glossed over by those who have used the tax returns as source material. In what sense did the collection of taxation on a community basis strengthen the ties within that community, or alternatively cause social tensions? Did wealthy villagers help poorer villagers by paying more of tax quota, or did they exploit their position of power and shift payments onto their poorer neighbours? Dyer's exploration of these questions allows us both to extend our knowledge of medieval social relations and to interpret the taxation returns themselves in a more sensitive way. David Farmer's essay on 'The *famuli* in the later Middle Ages' deals with another under-investigated subject, the *famuli* or agricultural servants hired by manorial lords to work on demesne land. Following on from Postan's work on the earlier period, Farmer looks at the numbers of these workers, the types of work they undertook, and the nature of the wages paid, in the period from roughly 1300 to 1420. While it perhaps regrettable that these data are not related to the existing literature on the prosecution of agricultural servants under the Statute of Labourers and on service more generally, this essay nevertheless represents an important contribution to our knowledge of hired labour in this period. John Hatcher's 'The great slump in the mid-fifteenth century' reassesses the evidence of economic depression in the fifteenth century examining all the major sectors of the economy in the light of recent research on the subject. He draws the important conclusion that there was indeed a severe depression in the years between approximately 1440 and 1470, and that previously work on the fifteenth-century depression has been confused by a failure to distinguish different sub-periods within the century. The only (not insubstantial) section of the population who were unscathed, and may even have profited from the depression, were smallholders and labourers, who benefited from the ready

availability of land, low rents and prices and high wages. However as Hatcher points out, while the economic trends favoured these people, the potential for them to rise up the social scale was at the same time limited by precisely the same trends: 'the period has more flavour of comfortable bucolic sufficiency than of rampant rising prosperity' (p 262). The only essay in the book of disappointing quality is Ambrose Raftis's 'Peasants and the collapse of the manorial economy on some Ramsey Abbey estates,' in which he investigates the context of 'the collapse of some Ramsey manorial economies around 1400' (p 191) or what is usually understood as the end of serfdom. The essay includes some interesting ideas, and is based on original research, but its shortcomings mean the value of the arguments presented are hard to assess. It reads like a rough draft and is difficult to follow at times; it contains no document references, and very few references to the extensive existing literature on the subject. We are given no information about the location, wider economies or background on the three manors discussed.

By concentrating on the essays with rural relevance this review has neglected other important contributions to this volume, which includes the work of Ian Blanchard, Richard Britnell, Pamela Nightingale, Edmund Fryde, Wendy Childs, Anthony Tuck, George Holmes and Jenny Kermode. Together these essays make a significant contribution to the field, and while readers unfamiliar with the debates and methods of medieval social and economic history may find some the essays in this volume rather hard going, it is certainly a book that no serious student or researcher in the field can afford to ignore.

JANE WHITTLE

MICHAEL J BRADDICK, *The Nerves of State: Taxation and the Financing of the English State, 1558-1714*, Manchester University Press: New Frontiers in History, 1996. xi + 244 pp. 11 tabs; 6 figs. £12.99.

By drawing both upon his earlier monograph on *Parliamentary Taxation* and on his pioneering attempt to rethink the relationship of the state and social change (see *Social History*, 1991), Braddick provides a first-rate analysis of the replacement of the demesne state by the tax state in early modern England. The guiding concept here is drawn from Schumpeter's seminal (1954) essay on 'The crisis of the tax state', and Braddick develops it to illustrate the varying economic and political costs of seventeenth-century attempts to overcome the difficulties associated with earlier parliamentary taxes. Central to his account is the 'dramatic fall' in the yield of the subsidy, principally caused by the increasing

inaccuracy of assessments: 'if this repeated voluntary evaluation of the wealth of the nation is seen as a political test of commitment, we can fairly say that the late Tudor and Stuart state failed' (p 94). It was the mid-seventeenth-century crisis which saw the most substantial increases in the tax burden in a relatively under-taxed nation: in Cheshire the burden of taxation in the 1660s (including the hearth tax) was nineteen times as great as it had been in the 1620s. Indirect taxation, especially the excise, was overwhelmingly responsible for this development. Although in its earliest stages the employment of excise men as salaried revenue agents caused considerable suspicion, the long-term success of the excises was 'a bureaucratic achievement beyond the capacity of most European states' (p 101). Overall, therefore, the transformation of finances thus changed the nature of the authority of the state which 'may have been mobilising consent more effectively, not just securing resources through political and administrative reform' (p 186).

This analysis is both clear and accessible, moving sure-footedly through the complexities of the early modern fiscal system, and providing scholars and students alike with a much needed synthesis of a literature which to a very large extent still relies on the work of F C Dietz. Braddick also helpfully provides an appendix of thirty-nine selected documents, skilfully chosen to illustrate contemporary concern with the difficulty of transforming the tax base of the nation. Along the way he emphasizes the limitations of using exchequer expenditure as an index of the activities of the early modern state: 'although there was clearly a fiscal military state there was also a state with other purposes whose activities are not revealed by an analysis of exchequer spending' (p 34). Braddick is thus fully conscious of the extent to which his account omits such local taxation as that co-ordinated by the Elizabethan poor law which 'imposed considerable costs on the localities but which was no charge at all to the exchequer' (p 22). In a book teeming with insight perhaps the most refreshing approach lies in the analysis of the legal test cases of the early seventeenth century. Braddick firmly locates himself in the post-revisionist camp in the engagement over the existence of the constitutional 'mode of opposition' to the Caroline state: 'these cases tested the legality of particular powers rather than the legitimacy of the regime but such questions may have been implicit for some observers' (p 144). His elegant, and self-consciously schematic, discussion of tax resistance is similarly nuanced, especially in its conclusion that 'tax rioting was not necessarily more damaging to the long term prospects of a particular levy than legal challenge' (p 174).

Perhaps the only significant drawback of this fine

study is its rather peculiar chronology. Given the burgeoning literature on war, taxation and rebellion in early Tudor England, it is unfortunate that Braddick should have chosen to begin his analysis in 1558, thus precluding comparisons over the whole early modern period. Nonetheless, it is clear that *The Nerves of State* will be indispensable for all students of Elizabethan and Stuart governance for some considerable time to come.

STEVE HINDLE

M J BRADDICK, *Parliamentary Taxation in Seventeenth-Century England*, Royal Historical Society, Studies in History, 70, 1994. xii + 353 pp. £35.00.

Braddick's book is the first modern attempt to survey the development of taxation in England and Wales in the early modern period. There are a number of taxes to consider: the Fifteenth, the Subsidy, the Assessment, the Excise and the Hearth and Poll Taxes. The Ship Tax, as a prerogative tax, is excluded. This has the benefit of making an already long book no longer, but in an account of the development of taxation systems, the omission is probably a mistake.

The historical visibility of each of these taxes rests largely on the quality and quantity of the records they left. Economic historians have been consumers of taxation records where they give lists of names (the Subsidy, the Hearth Tax) but they have generally remained ignorant of the processes which produced them. This work is now the standard account of the processes of assessment, collection and payment. By the way, Braddick shows how directly assessed taxes were less significant contributors to taxation incomes than might be thought: he focuses attention on the Fifteenth rather than the Subsidy and points out how little revenue was generated by the Hearth Tax compared to the Land Tax.

At one level Braddick may be read as offering an administrative history of the processes of assessment, collection and accounting and the ways in which each of the three developed over the seventeenth century. But overall, Braddick is preoccupied with two models. The first is the switch from demesne to tax state first outlined by Schumpeter. The second is the notion of mediation and brokering between locality and centre developed by Dr Clive Holmes in his study of *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire* (1980). To have written the book around the second would have been ideal: to try and encompass both brings problems. Because these ideas span central and local government, Braddick does too, not always integrating the two terribly well. Buried within the book are case studies of Cheshire and Norfolk, but information is also gath-

ered from wherever it may be found, especially from within the Exchequer Equity pleadings. The drift over time was to remove the possibilities for local mediation or intervention from the administration of taxation. The gentry were progressively sidelined by the appointment of salaried officials or, for periods, farmers. (These steps also had the advantage of bypassing the Exchequer.) But the other side of this was the abandonment of direct taxes on possessions (the characteristic form of taxation in the 'long sixteenth century') in favour of indirect taxes on economic activity and taxes on lands.

Braddick's concern is to identify the removal of mediatory individuals as an important element in the success of the new taxation regime. This is doubtless correct. From a sixteenth-century standpoint I would add that part of the reason for the failure of the subsidy was in the character of what it taxed – goods – and the very high percentage rate at which it taxed them. Cutting the gentry out of the process of assessment was but one of the steps which might have been taken to make it work. Why, given the problems of mobilizing the subsidy commissioners, was the subsidy never farmed? And, perhaps most interestingly, why was it impossible to switch to a taxation system based on rates on lands in 1610 but possible after 1660?

The area which falls outside Braddick's book but which needs further consideration is the question of the economic consequences of taxation. As his figures show (they are conveniently summarized on pp 274–5), the burden of taxation post 1660 was extremely heavy compared to that pre-1660, and yet we have not built this truth into our discussions of seventeenth-century agricultural change. Houghton's comments on royalist indebtedness serving to prompt agricultural improvement are oft-cited, but surely taxation was a greater and more long-lived stimulus? Braddick offers no analysis along these lines. This is not to complain, for the book is a novel and welcome addition to the very limited literature on early modern taxation systems and state formation. Those not committed to these questions will find the book a hard slog (the material occasionally overwhelms the direction of Braddick's prose), but all early modernists should read at least the first and last chapters.

R W HOYLE

DAVID E VASSBERG, *The Village and the Outside World in Golden Age Castile: Mobility and Migration in Everyday Rural Life*, CUP, 1996. xvii + 253 pp. no price given.

It is now more than a decade since David Vassberg confirmed his reputation as a leading authority on Spanish agricultural history with a detailed and

informative study of early modern Castilian property ownership *Land and Society in Golden Age Castile* (1984). While this splendid account has in general withstood the tests of time, notwithstanding a few minor rectifications by a younger generation of Spanish scholars, Vassberg himself has indulged in a fair amount of soul searching. Not least, as he informs us in the introduction to this tidily-written monograph, he is now less than happy with his previously-held position on the vexed question of the interrelationship between the village and the wider world. His stated objective in this companion volume to *Land and Society*, is to dispell once and for all the persistent myth, common among historians of pre-industrial Europe – himself hitherto included – of 'the immobile village' whose inhabitants rarely ventured beyond their own territory. Maybe, Vassberg asserts, some of this stereotyping reflects the influence of Marxist ideology which portrays peasants as hopelessly reactionary. In addition, historians have manifestly failed to keep abreast with important developments in the social sciences. Anthropologists and economists, he informs us, have long since defined peasants as rural people integrated into the structures of the state and surrounding society, and partially engaged in the marketplace. If only writers on medieval Europe had paid greater attention to R H Hilton's *The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages* (1975), such outmoded ideas might long since have disappeared! Put succinctly, Vassberg's thesis is that the early modern village community, far from being static, was surprisingly dynamic, continually transformed by inward and outward migration, as well as by changes taking place within its confines. Hence, the notion of stable rural community at this time is seriously flawed. The rural inhabitants of early-modern Spain were no exception to the rule. Far from being 'glued to his piece of land', in the words of Manuel Fernández Álvarez (*La sociedad española en el Siglo de Oro*, Madrid, 1989), the Castilian peasant displayed great ingenuity and flexibility enjoying a substantial degree of geographical mobility. Vassberg, who gently berates Spanish historians for being overly concerned with impersonal economic forces, institutions and social structures, chooses to concentrate on showing what he terms the *human* element. Writing with considerable elegance and showing a keen eye for detail, he serves up a rich feast of the everyday lives of hundreds of ordinary rural people who made up the vast bulk of the Castilian population. His multi-disciplinary approach not only displays a remarkable familiarity with the minutest piece of information contained in thousands of notarial records but also demonstrates the author's profound understanding of the secondary literature, not least the latest

findings of Spain's new breed of historical demographers. Through the experiences of those inveterate literary wanderers Don Quixote and Lazarillo de Tormes, in addition to those of the more mundane vine growers of Zamora, the shoe makers of Valladolid or the migrant workers of Extremadura, notorious for their gambling, thieving and violent behaviour, Vassberg examines the multifarious forms of contact between villagers and the outside world from the fifteenth century to the first half of the seventeenth century. For sure, one important characteristic of Hispanic society in both the Old World and the Americas was a deep sense of loyalty to the community Outsiders, dubbed *forasteros* (foreigners) by the indigenous population, invariably suffered stiffer fines than local inhabitants for breaking local ordinances. Homeless vagrants were perennially viewed with alarm, while inter-village squabbles over such matters as stubble grazing remained forever commonplace. Yet, despite its customs of local solidarity and of hostility towards outsiders, clearly set out by Vassberg in his first chapter, the rest of his book offers abundant evidence of a myriad of significant relationships between the village and the outside world. These take the form of producers, carters and muleteers transporting goods of every imaginable kind to a host of local and distant markets, short- and long-distance migration in and out of the village, contacts with a variety of travellers and assorted 'aliens' (especially *moriscos* and gypsies), and relations with the military, the Court and the judicial system. In disproving the concept of village immobility, Vassberg reinforces the thesis of the demographer David Sven Reher (*Town and Country in Pre-Industrial Spain: Cuenca, 1550-1870*, 1990) that Golden-Age Castile should be characterized in terms of 'the Culture of Mobility'. I am happy to predict that David Vassberg's highly readable and carefully illustrated reinterpretation will finally set aside the cliché of early modern villages as stagnant pools of humanity isolated from the mainstream of Castilian society.

JOSEPH HARRISON

GUY DE LA BEDOYERE, ed, *The Writings of John Evelyn*, Boydell Press, 1995. 435 pp. £39.50.

John Evelyn had multifarious interests, extending far beyond agriculture and horticulture, and his effervescent energies, wide reading, and wide circle of friends encouraged his pen to flow. His literary style did not flow so smoothly, and, as this editor shows, he did not bother much about giving accurate references. He seems often to have cited authorities at second hand, and so earned himself a not altogether well-deserved reputation for learning.

Still, agrarian historians will be grateful for this

volume of Evelyn's writings, giving them the chance to own copies of two of his influential works in their field of interest, *Sylva* and *Kalendarium Hortense*.

Sylva encouraged the planting and better management of woodlands, and, appearing at exactly the right moment after decades of neglect, it was enormously influential. In 1690 Evelyn claimed that it had resulted in the propagation of 'many millions of useful timber-trees throughout this nation'. While this may sound exaggerated, the fact remains that 1000 copies of *Sylva* were published in 1664, a second edition followed in 1669, and a third in 1679. The *Kalendarium Hortense*, or *Gard'ners Almanac* was a set of month-by-month instructions on gardening tasks, published in 1664, which proved equally, if not more popular, and had reached its tenth edition by 1706.

Guy de la Bédoyère sets these works briefly in context, but his main purpose is to make a very mixed collection of Evelyn's writings more readily available, so another seven treatises are printed as well, including a belated (in 1659) *Apologie for the Royal Party*, and *Fumifugium* (1661), fulminating against London's smoky air. Regrettably for the agricultural historian, the editor chooses to omit *Pomona*, which was annexed to the first edition of *Sylva*, and sheds a brilliant light on contemporary care to improve fruit growing and the quality of cider.

Evelyn's work is attracting increasing interest at present, perhaps in part because of the publicity given to the purchase of the Evelyn archive by the British Library (see Guy de la Bédoyère's article in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 8 September, 1995). *Acetaria*, on salads, and a book of Evelyn's food recipes (*John Evelyn, Cook*, ed, Christopher Driver, 1997) have been published by Prospect Books. Both *Sylva* and *Kalendarium Hortense* were part of a much larger work on horticulture, *Elysium Britannicum*, which Evelyn never published, and of which part has been lost. In 1977 the surviving part was being prepared for publication. Will it now appear?

JOAN THIRSK

MARGARET SPUFFORD, *Poverty Portrayed: Gregory King and Eccleshall in Staffordshire in the 1690s*; *Staffordshire Studies*, vol 7, 1995, Dept of History, University of Keele. iv + 150 pp. £11.99.

Volume seven of *Staffordshire Studies* is enterprisingly devoted to a single late seventeenth-century theme: the parish of Eccleshall. It comprises a long piece by Margaret Spufford about the ordinary people of that large pastoral parish, complemented by a full print-out of James Went's database covering some 2000 names of heads of households. The latter was compiled from a family reconstitution of the parish

registers, and a range of listings, tax returns and rate rolls from the 1690s, together with information culled from Bishop Lloyd's survey of 1693-7. Lloyd was bishop of Lichfield, resided at the bishop's seat in Eccleshall and was lord of the manor. His survey detailed the virtues and vices of the middling and poorer sorts in the parish. The database will provide a vital starting point for anyone wishing to investigate Eccleshall at the level of family and holding, and is a fitting tribute to the labours of an adult education class begun by the Spuffords over thirty years ago.

Margaret Spufford's introduction is an expansion of her 1993 Earl Lecture at Keele University and runs to some 70 pages of delightfully eclectic thoughts on a whole range of topics linked to her views of late seventeenth-century Eccleshall. Her enthusiasms for van Heemskerck's contemporary paintings of ordinary Englishmen and women in vernacular settings, based on Dr H T Mount's work, provide some fine illustrations. Her researches on Gregory King's Staffordshire activities and local knowledge of Eccleshall, his possible links to the Compton census transcription at Stafford, and to Bishop Lloyd, illuminate links between Staffordshire raw material and King's pioneering national statistics. Later delightful digressions into music, literacy, and the oral tradition, into schooling, horn books, and women teachers, draw heavily on her earlier researches into chapbooks and dissenting communities.

However, the core of the work is an analysis of the ordinary folk of Eccleshall in the later seventeenth century. The groundwork for this is a detailed consideration of the Hearth Tax returns for 1673, together with a sample of 200 probate inventories covering the period 1660-1700. Professor Spufford's conclusion that Eccleshall's pasture and woodland community was amongst the poorest in England is based on the high percentage (83 per cent) of one-hearth households in the parish, but she is unable to cross-check this with poor law and charity records which have not survived. The issue is a complex one, particularly as the proportion of exempt households - a rather more mundane 53 per cent - is based on only part of the parish and excludes some of the poorest waste settlements. It is also difficult to evaluate when there are no references to the original documents consulted. Useful comparisons with different types of parish nationally support the general outline of the case, but there are no local comparisons apart from Needwood, even though figures are available for another large Staffordshire parish much more closely integrated into the growing prosperity of the West Midlands: Walsall.

When this groundwork has been laid discussion

moves on to the different occupational groups in Eccleshall by cleverly integrating findings from inventories and listings with Bishop Lloyd's comments. The result is a delightful patchwork which makes good use of Professor Spufford's wider expertise. Some of the quilt is highly coloured with tales of pedlars settling in barns and setting up as dealers in skins, living off the natural world and turning it to commercial profit. Alehouse keepers supported music and country games, but also sexual licence and gaming, and so came into Bishop Lloyd's disfavour in the early years of the Society for the Reformation of Manners which is conjectured as an important influence on the bishop's note-keeping. Some of the more successful craftsmen and traders can be shown to have sent their sons to university, and to have provided settlements and dowries for their children, but a majority of the inventory-makers left extremely small sums by national standards. One of the most interesting sections is that following female occupations (pp 63-6) where Bishop Lloyd's remarks make it possible to contextualize the household and working arrangement of working women, and which highlights the role of women as unsung purveyors of basic educational skills.

Overall, this piece is excellent demonstration of the scholarly use of a fascinating but difficult source to bring to life the realities of economic and social life in rural Midland England of the time. However, this reader found himself pining for both a fuller structural background to the landholding, landscape and economy of Eccleshall and its surrounding *pays*, but also some sense of the dynamic of the society. When had the poor squatters come to fill the woods and heaths with their shacks and convert barns to tenements, and where had they come from? Were they settlers carving holdings from an under-used stretch of countryside, or were they competing with other parishioners for the ever-diminishing resources of the common lands? Some of this might be available to a reader who had to hand the Spuffords' earlier study of the parish (Keele, 1963) but some more detailed exposition, particularly of the teeming township of Croxton would have enriched the piece immensely.

JOHN BROAD

MARK BRAYSHAY, ed, *Topographical Writers in South-West England*, University of Exeter Press, 1996. xiv + 200 pp. 17 illus. £12.95.

This attractive little volume comprises seven chapters by different authors and a most useful list of historical works on the topography of the south-west counties, defined as Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset. Most of the chapters are based on papers delivered at the annual symposium

of Exeter University's Centre for Southwestern Historical Studies in 1993. The chapters are as follows: 'Introduction: the development of topographical writing in the South-West' by Mark Brayshay; 'John Leland in the West Country' by John Chandler; 'Some early topographers of Devon and Cornwall' by Joyce Youings; 'Somerset topographical writing, 1600-1900' by Robert Dunning; 'Early topographers, antiquarians and travellers in Dorset' by Joseph Bettey; 'From romanticism to archaeology; Richard Colt Hoare, Samuel Lysons and antiquity' by Malcolm Todd; 'The scientific gaze: agricultural improvers and the topography of south-west England' by Sarah Wilmor; and 'Aids to research: a list of historical works on the topography of the south-west Counties' by Ian Maxted and Mark Brayshay. This valuable list is sub-divided into four sections: (1) The works of major county historians; (2) Accounts of travel and agricultural surveys; (3) Bibliographies and guides to research; and (4) General catalogues and listings. It will be a boon to researchers.

The scope of the volume is quite broad, and although there is a little over-lapping, the authors are all acknowledged authorities on their subjects and regions, and taken together they present a comprehensive and detailed picture of the topographical descriptions of south-west England from about 1539 (Leland's first tour) to the late nineteenth century. The agricultural content is of course variable. Leland was primarily concerned with inspecting monastic libraries, and Chandler does not dwell much on Leland's agricultural comments, but he does emphasize that Leland was a conscientious researcher who often tried to verify, and if necessary correct, the information he received. Joyce Youings discusses Richard Carew's admirable *Survey of Cornwall* (1602) and notes the work of Thomas Westcote and Tristram Risdon, both of whom commented on Devon farming in the early seventeenth century. Quite a number of Somerset and Dorset topographers are discussed by Dunning and Bettey amongst whom Thomas Gerard wrote a discerning 'Particular Description' of Somerset in 1633, and a similar work on Dorset in the 1620s. There he commented on the newly-drained water meadows in the Frome valley 'manie of which of late Yeares have beene by Industry soe made of barren Bogges'. The role of Richard Colt Hoare and Samuel Lysons as precursors of modern archaeology is perceptively argued by Malcolm Todd, and his speculation that the upheaval caused by enclosures in the late eighteenth century stimulated the desire to record and understand the ancient landscape deserves further research.

For the agricultural historian Sarah Wilmor's full and detailed discussion of the work of the agricul-

tural writers of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will probably be the most useful part of the volume. Early writers like Fraser (1794) and Vancouver (1808) on Devon; Fraser (1794) and Worgan (1811) on Cornwall; Billingsly (1794 and 1797) on Somerset; and Claridge (1793) and Stevenson (1812) on Dorset are assessed in relation to later writers in the nineteenth century, providing a valuable introduction to a wide range of topographers. She points out that agricultural improvement was not their only interest. Writers like Pusey believed that agricultural improvement could be combined with the need to arrange the landscape carefully so that it would form a pleasing prospect. This volume deserves to be on the shelf of all those who are interested in the history of southwestern England, and its moderate price is a further recommendation.

MICHAEL HAVINDEN

DORIAN GERHOLD, *Road Transport before the Railways: Russell's London Flying Waggon*, CUP, 1993. xvii + 316 pp. 24 tables; 5 figures; 6 maps; 19 plates. £35.

The centrepiece of Dorian Gerhold's important study of the waggon trade is the Russell business and its uniquely detailed records, covering their activities from 1816 to the mid-1830s. It is of much wider significance, since these are set with great skill into a wide-ranging analysis of West Country carrying and the links of the regional economy and its products with London over the period from the later seventeenth century to the arrival of the railway and beyond. No more important monograph on pre-modern transport history has yet appeared, and the intimate relationship of the transport business with agriculture, the source of much of its demand, its fuel, and its prime-movers is a central theme of its analysis.

Provided with detailed records of costings and the structure of revenue receipts, this book is able to correct many assumptions about the nature of road carrying, and to sustain the intuitions of earlier studies with hard evidence. These are too numerous to recount here in detail, but cost structures are among the most important of its findings. Gerhold demonstrates the very high degree of inflexibility in these, with direct costs accounting for a very large proportion of total, with many overheads, like inns, provided from outside. In consequence, horse and provender costs predominated, absorbing at least half of the total, with the variable element of feed the principal component: Russell's hard worked horses on the London route ate 14 pecks of oats, 3.7 of beans, and 1.5 cwt of hay per head per week in 1818, as against 8 pecks of oats peck of beans and the same quantity of hay fed to the

best kept farm horses. Heavy road work required very heavy feeding, and correspondingly magnified the demands placed on the farm supplier.

The other side of the account, pricing policy, is equally interesting, and showed clearly that the ruling principle was 'what the market would bear', varied somewhat within the tight constraints of cost structures by competitive pressures, locality, and the nature of goods carried. Carriage rates tapered relatively little by distance, as would be expected with the structure of costs dominated by the variable element of 'fuel'. Local carriage, with lower load factors and economies to scale, charged a substantially greater rate per ton mile, of the order of 70 per cent in the carriage of butter, clearly indicating both the limited impact of easy entry from the farm carrier on prices, and the implicit revenue flow to the smallholders and others who provided local carriage on a part-time basis. The other great distinction lay in that between the 'trade' and the 'Gents' price, which could place a premium of up to 50 per cent on the latter, a sound country principle.

Russell and his partners failed in the testing circumstances of the mid-1830s, when increased competition and falling load factors were compounded by disagreements, leading to the firm's dissolution in 1837, happily, for the author, in circumstances of sufficient acrimony to enter Chancery. It was effectively continued by successors, while retaining the valuable name, before bankruptcy erased the core firm as a regional carrier in 1852, after final dislocation by the GWR and the declining West Country economy. As an essay in transport and regional history this is a book of outstanding interest and importance, and one providing many insights into the wider rural economy of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

J A CHARTRES

MALCOLM & FRED A HEYWOOD and BERNARD JENNINGS, *A History of Todmorden*, Otley, 1996. viii + 258 pp. Illus: Hbk £16.95; Pbk £12.75.

The basis of this publication, the preface informs the reader, is a collection of 'left overs' which could not be fitted into the earlier volume *Pennine Valley: A History of Upper Calderdale* which was published in 1992. However, this book is certainly more than a usual offering of left overs, it is a densely-packed work offering the reader a comprehensive view of the history of Todmorden from the earliest times to the present. Once again Bernard Jennings has had oversight of the enterprise and the book will rightfully take its place with others such as ... *Nidderdale* and ... *Swaledale*. Typical of the best of these local publications, the book is generally well written with research of a high quality. However,

also typically, only a limited broader context is provided with virtually no historiography, and there is a shortage of quality analysis of the material. Essentially the reader is presented with the material and is left to analyse and draw conclusions. An example of this is the listing of information on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century inventories. Little is made of the material which could have provided a fascinating analysis of farming and industry at that date. This study does include a little more national context surrounding local events than some of the earlier publications, for example, there is a brief but detailed discussion of price inflation. There are also some useful sections which have been subject to some interesting analysis and conclusions on the turnpike system and on the 1851 educational and religious censuses.

The strength of the study lies in the material on the industrializing process, and particularly the development of the cotton mills in the area. The Fieldens were one of the major families in the district and, as might be expected, fascinating insights are given on many aspects of industrialization. This is particularly true in relation to the implementation of the 1834 Poor Law Act and the relationship between the Anti-Poor Law Movement and Chartism. Given the Fielden involvement it is perhaps not surprising that the community was radical in its outlook and strongly resisted the imposition of external authority. For several decades after 1834 there was great difficulty in persuading respectable members of the community to serve as Guardians and it was not until 1879 that the Todmorden Union workhouse was eventually built.

The acute problems of the depressions of 1838-43 and 1862-64 are carefully constructed and the fraught but symbiotic relationships between employers and workers on the one hand and the supply and demand of cotton on the other, is succinctly presented.

There are some notable imbalances in the study. The changing patterns of agriculture, while given reasonable attention pre-1800, are given short shrift after that date. In the section on co-operation, while there are obviously sources available, friendly societies and related clubs are given only the briefest of mention.

Some of the value of the work lies in its recognition that many of its readers are not specialists and, therefore, explanations for obscure terms and events are frequently offered. As with earlier publications, although endnotes are usefully provided, the annoying system of not providing brief title and date is still retained. Further, full reference of the sources does not appear in a bibliography, the reader has to scour the endnotes to discover such information.

The style is flowing though it is somewhat variable, perhaps due to the different contributors and types of sources, and occasionally it sinks to a rather irritating familiarity: '... the late Mr Harry Stansfield had a wonderful collection' The book is well presented with maps, photographs and paintings, though the latter tend to be rather garish and do not really enhance the work. The approach of dealing with the topic chronologically generally works well though there are some shortcomings. Probably due to the chronological structure, there is a tendency to compartmentalize events, for example the sections on government and religion are presented separately with very little indication of any connection between the two topics.

There is no doubt, however, that the advantages and wealth of information provided in the book on the subject of Todmorden far outweigh the disadvantages listed above. This book is an invaluable tool both for scholars researching topics covered in the study and for people with a more general interest in the history of the locality. It is a commendable achievement and is strongly recommended.

CHRISTINE HALLAS

NEGLEY HARTE and ROLAND QUINAULT, eds, *Land and Society in Britain, 1700-1914: Essays in Honour of F M L Thompson*, Manchester University Press, 1996. xvi + 255 pp. Hbk £45.00.

A *festschrift* for F M L Thompson was almost bound to be an eclectic volume, and readers will not be disappointed. *Land and Society in Britain* includes contributions on Professor Thompson's well known interests, aristocrats and gentlemen, but broadens the spectrum to include servants and agricultural labourers. The essays range from agricultural tools to taxation, from farming lessons learned abroad to death duties paid at home, and from golf playing to aeroplane flying. Horses, one of Michael Thompson's other interests, feature only in their declining usefulness, but we learn how trains, cars and aeroplanes replaced them as means of transport and objects of sporting interest. And, unusually for a *festschrift*, one contributor, W D Rubinstein, uses his contribution to take Thompson to task over his views on the transfer of business wealth into land-ownership during the nineteenth century. Since Thompson could hardly respond, given the nature of the book, we must look out for his reply in another place.

In a volume of this nature, where the contributors seem to have been left more or less to decide their own parameters, the essays inevitably vary in subject matter and quality. Penelope Corfield, in a polished piece discussing the concept of a gentleman, moves easily across three centuries and a broad swathe of

literature. E J T Collins writes informatively about edge tool making in the Birmingham and Sheffield areas – although he claims also to have done field-work in Turkey to enhance his knowledge of the subject. The relationship between land and politics is discussed in P F Clarke's essay on the impact of the third Reform Act on agricultural labourers in Suffolk, Martin Daunt's study of Liberal thinking behind the introduction of death duties in 1894 and, in more light-hearted vein, Roland Quinault's discussion of the complex relationships forged among Edwardian politicians on the golf course. Less satisfactory is John Chartres' contribution on the Servants Tax, which depends almost entirely on a single document in the Public Record Office and even then is described as reaching only preliminary conclusions, and David Spring's short essay on the activities of two Tory politicians over three years prior to World War I which he admits is partly derived from previously published work.

Despite these reservations the range of essays is surely appropriate to the recipient, as are the very pleasant appreciations by Corfield and Quinault. There are some extraordinary examples, which must have elicited from Michael Thompson – himself very able at choosing apt examples to illustrate his carefully crafted text – a round of what Corfield calls his 'long, infectious, whooping and rumbling laugh'. To select just two: Quinault raises the mind-boggling vision of Lloyd George and Winston Churchill playing a foursome at Criccieth with, respectively, the village draper and village cobbler as their partners; while David Cannadine paints a delightful picture of the exotic Mrs Victor Bruce who, bedecked always in a string of pearls, drove to the Arctic Circle and back, won the Ladies' Cup in the Monte Carlo Rally, and in 1929 established a new world record for greatest non-stop run by a single-handed driver.

A few points jar. The picture of Michael Thompson omits half his face but includes the once ubiquitous but now abandoned pipe. Negley Harte appears to have been editor *in absentia*, at least after the title page, and John Chartres, as a former editor of the *Agricultural History Review* should know that Lowther is (or at least was) in Westmorland. Yet to end on a downbeat note would be unfair: this is a collection of essays which are a credit to the historian they suitably honour.

J V BECKETT

ELSPETH MONCRIEFF with STEPHEN and IONA JOSEPH, *Farm Animal Portraits*, Antique Collectors' Club, 1996. 304 pp., 326 colour illus, 111 black and white. £35.00.

Livestock portraits – often showing enormously fat cattle, sheep, and pigs – have become very fashion-

able in recent years. A naive painting of *A Fat Hog*, painted in 1842 by an obscure artist, T Glasscock, sold for £33,000 in 1988, a world record for paintings of this type. It offers little in the way of artistic skill or originality: but it is undeniably charming and amusing, a document of an important strand of British social history. Lovers of such paintings will find this book delightful: there are over 400 good quality illustrations, most of them in full colour. Prints are covered as well as paintings, and Elspeth Moncrieff generally includes the inscriptions to these, which make fascinating reading, listing the exact measurements of the beasts along with details of their pedigrees and owners. The book has been written in association with Stephen and Iona Joseph, art dealers who have played a leading role in fostering and satisfying the taste for livestock portraits over the last twenty-five years. Alongside the naive paintings are works by some of the great names of British art, George Stubbs, James Ward, Thomas Bewick, or Edwin Landseer, but Elspeth Moncrieff's sympathies lie with the less sophisticated painters, who, she claims (somewhat unconvincingly) can tell us more about the nineteenth-century farm than many of the academic artists.

The paintings and prints illustrated date from the mid-eighteenth to the late-nineteenth century, a period when developments in agriculture aroused local and national pride, and farmers and landowners were keen to have their improved breeds exhibited and recorded for posterity. Many of the illustrations in this book demonstrate the advances in breeding made by Robert Bakewell and his successors; others, however, show animals that were bred, and fattened, more as fairground curiosities than as proof of the progress of agriculture. An example of the latter was the Lincolnshire Ox (painted by George Stubbs) which was exhibited at the Lyceum on the Strand along with a rhinoceros and three ostriches in the 1790s. There were big profits to be made: on one day in 1802 the Durham Ox, exhibited in London, raised £97 in admission fees, and 2000 copies of the print, after a painting by John Boulbee, were apparently sold in its first year. Elspeth Moncrieff shows that there were also major financial rewards for the artists, who could make a good living from animal portraiture.

The first three chapters are devoted to an overview of the historical circumstances which gave rise to these paintings, followed by biographical accounts of those artists whose lives are documented. In the second part, chapters are devoted in turn to developments in cattle, sheep, pig, heavy horse and poultry breeding, with the illustrations providing 'a unique record of the now rare or extinct animals which once grazed these lands'

(p 13). The chapters on heavy horses and poultry (particularly the former, which is mostly illustrations) seem to be something of an afterthought, since there is little discussion of them in the earlier part of the book.

For the agricultural historian, there are both benefits and dangers in the study of livestock portraiture. The visual evidence is essential to any understanding of breeding developments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; but it would be unwise to assume that these paintings are totally reliable indications of the actual appearance of the beasts they represent. Artists might be asked by their patrons to exaggerate proportions, or else artistic tradition and effective picture-making might gain the upper hand over scientific accuracy. In addition, as Elspeth Moncrieff acknowledges, many of the artists were simply too incompetent to produce an objective likeness. Probably the most useful images, from the historian's point of view, are the series of engravings and models made by George Garrard between 1795 and 1810, James Ward's unfinished commission from Boydell for depictions of all the breeds of domestic livestock in the British Isles in the same period, and the portraits made by William Shiels for David Low, Professor of Agriculture at Edinburgh University, in the 1840s. Elspeth Moncrieff discusses and illustrates these, but tends to dismiss such informative depictions as 'accurate but dull': her preference for the naive, the charming and the idiosyncratic means that both illustrations and text are slanted towards monstrosities and curiosities, rather than the images that might be sought out by the historian of agriculture.

Of course, the history of these exaggerated images is fascinating in itself, and raises many questions about attitudes to art and to animals in the period under review. This book, however, is one which collects information rather than analysing it in any depth. It seems to have been designed for dipping into, rather than reading right through. Material contained in one chapter is repeated in another without cross-referencing (the Durham Ox is just one of the animals which keeps popping up as if it had not been mentioned already). Illustrations are inserted in a rather haphazard manner, suggesting that the author had a large number of pictures to include and was not always able to do justice to them in the text. There is no overall argument or conclusion, the book ending almost in mid-sentence with the changes in turkey breeding in the 1960s. Recent searching books on British art, by authors such as John Barrell and Stephen Deuchar, are cited in the bibliography but have apparently made little impact on the author's approach. However, it would be ungenerous to criticize the book too

much from academic perspectives. Both in her text and in her illustrations, Elspeth Moncrieff has gathered together useful material from a wide range of sources. In the end, her book is a celebration of a distinctive genre in British painting, written for the enthusiast and the collector, and as such it fulfils its aims admirably.

CHRISTIANA PAYNE

T R GOURVISH and R G WILSON, *The British Brewing Industry, 1830-1980*, CUP, 1994. xxv + 690 pp. 94 tables; 10 figures; 83 plates. £60.

With the publication of this outstanding volume, brewing has acquired a fitting companion to the classic (1959) study by Peter Mathias of the years to 1830, making in all over 1200 pages. Consistently readable and firmly analytical, Terry Gourvish and Richard Wilson have provided a benchmark modern industrial history that significantly alters perceptions of UK brewing history, raises many new issues for follow-up local, regional, and case-study research, and provides a much-needed unitary vision of its development to replace the existing patchwork of dated monographs and business histories of varying quality.

Each author took primary responsibility for one part of the book, which is divided at 1914, and each covers the regulatory context, production, consumption, and elusive issues of taste, structure, location, and performance, distribution, and provides an analysis of management issues of unusual depth and interest. Necessarily, with around 70 per cent of UK barley consumed by the brewers in 1878, creating employment for nearly 100,000 persons, it is the first part of the book that most directly touches upon agriculture; increasingly, from the 1880s, other materials fed our brewing stocks, and imports invaded the redoubt of the British farmer. Barley remained the critical crop for light-land arable farming and withstood international competition more successfully than wheat before 1914, and English hops, highly concentrated into Kent, paralleled this experience to around 1880, before imports combined with home harvest failures and changing tastes to reduce their market share, and acreages had reduced by 1909 to less than half their peak level. Hops were purchased almost wholly through factors, still based on the Southwark market for much of the pre-1914 period, and while most breweries outside London and the largest cities integrated malting with brewing, many also purchased from agents, and the bulk of supplies continued to be made on traditional floors.

The focus of this study is brewing, and with the distancing of the industry nationally from its traditional small-scale processing of the product of

domestic agriculture, farming too disappears from its coverage, appearing only in the industry's propaganda. The countryside recurred as an element in advertising from Guinness's use of golf and cricket in its first national press campaign in 1929; beyond the Second World War brewing was a massive user of horses for urban cartage; and landownership appeared in the proprietors of the Tadcaster Tower Brewery, known as 'Nobs' because of its genteel board, and in the land purchases of the more successful members of the beerocracy, but for the bulk of the period covered here, brewing was increasingly a scientific biotechnology and property business. The narrowly agricultural historian will therefore find relatively little of this book of direct concern.

That said, its principal findings are exciting and challenging to existing orthodoxy. The impact of the Beer Act of 1830 is shown here to have been more limited than once thought, inducing less structural change than anticipated; the growth of the tied house began in mid-century, and cannot be related directly to its repeal; and the quest for property is shown to have been generally damaging to the brewers' fortunes after 1900. Post-1914, new perspectives are provided on conservative management, technical changes, and the growth in branding and advertising, before the hectic structural changes that began in the mid-1950s, and the onset of the processes creating the modern industry. All are set in the wider context of analysis of UK economic performance, and evaluation of managerial strategies, providing a breadth of vision and analysis that establishes this as a book of major significance.

Until very recently, except for its raw material base, British brewing has enjoyed a high degree of insulation from world markets; as the 'Postscript' makes clear, this is changing, while leaving a high degree of local and regional diversity in brews and pubs, and the industry will remain an enticing object for continuing historical analysis. It is to be hoped that its future historians match up to the exacting standards set by the present authors.

J A CHARTRES

IAN ROSS ROBERTSON, *The Tenant League of Prince Edward Island 1864-1867: Leasehold Tenure in the New World*, University of Toronto Press, 1996. xxi + 397 pp. 7 tables; 10 maps; 23 illus. Pbk £18.50.

A great deal of research has gone into the making of this carefully-presented book. Its starting point is the predominance of leasehold tenure in Prince Edward Island (which lies off Nova Scotia in the Gulf of St Lawrence), in contrast to freehold tenure which was the rule over part of the Island and, of course, the greater part of North America.

The farmers of Prince Edward Island who were not proprietors of the land they worked paid rent to large landowners, numbers of them absentees like Sir Samuel Cunard, owner of the largest estate on the island. The author draws some parallels and contrasts with contemporary Scotland and Ireland. The major differences were that in P E I leasehold tenure was combined with representative institutions based on broad male franchise, while recent experience of pioneering was associated with New World expectations of freeholder status.

The Tenant League, founded in 1864, led the movement to overturn the leasehold system, which had been imposed almost a century before. Its strategy involved refusal to pay rent and provision of support for those who defied the landlords. Numerous incidents followed, some of them violent, and tenants countered assertions of landlords' rights by offering to purchase their holdings. The dimensions of the problem are interesting: over the whole island a little more than 39 per cent of the land occupiers of 1861 were freeholders (owning some 35 per cent of the land), and nearly 53 per cent were tenants; squatters accounted for the remainder of the 11,241 occupiers. No doubt the Leaguers' hostility towards their landlords was inflamed by the large number of neighbouring freeholders, two to every three tenants and squatters. There is uncertainty over the numbers of those supporting the League but no doubt about the large number of incidents which flared up when attempts were made to collect rents and arrears.

The importation of troops brought about the collapse of the League as a formal organization but by no means ended the demand for freehold tenure. When the troops withdrew in 1867 fresh outbursts of resistance occurred. In the meanwhile, however, the League's objective was being achieved: the government purchased the nearly 213,000 acres owned by Cunard, and a number of smaller estates, totalling nearly 27,500 acres, had been sold to their occupiers. The Tenant League did not revive after the withdrawal of the troops because by then conversion to freehold was developing rapidly. By 1871 the acreage occupied by freeholders had risen to nearly 68 per cent, an increase of over 20 percentage points as compared with the 1861 figures. Contrary to the view of earlier historians, the author believes that the League was crucial in bringing about this dramatic change, and it subsequently remained a force in the politics of the island.

This is a highly detailed study, and in its close examination of the role of individual characters and incidents of resistance is really a large-scale local history, which the illustrations help bring to life. On its own merits this is an interesting story, and

the author always has in view its relevance to events elsewhere, and particularly to the broader history of Canada.

G E MINGAY

MICHAEL TURNER, *After the Famine: Irish Agriculture, 1850-1914*. CUP, 1996. xv + 313 pp. £35.

This is a labour of love, clad in a jacket showing a roofless, deserted, croft on Achill Island, Co Mayo, described in a tautologous rush of pride as 'the maternal birthplace of the author's mother'. Does this mean simply the birthplace of the author's mother, or is it a reference to a special kind of birthplace? No matter; as she looked back on her abandoned home the author's mother is unlikely to have foreseen that she in turn would give birth to an agricultural historian. This is also an important agricultural history, a statistical account of Irish agriculture which in places is as tough going as scratching a living on Achill Island must have been. Ireland has one of the best sets of agricultural statistics in the world, collected annually from 1847, antedating the British series by nearly twenty years and long remaining superior to them in quality and range of information. Not the least value of this book is that Turner reproduces in an Appendix the annual figures from 1847 to 1914 of the national totals for the main categories of crops and livestock; although these figures are available elsewhere, for instance in Mitchell's *European Historical Statistics*, it is useful to have another source. The Irish statistics have long been used by historians and geographers, and indeed one of the features of this book is the gentle but firm criticism which Turner hands out to earlier, and recent, users such as Mokyr, Ó Gráda, Solar, Solow, or Vaughan, and indeed his earlier self. No previous work, however, has made such systematic, thorough, and dedicated use of the series, and it is chiefly as a fruit of his thoroughness in handling the entire time series and avoiding the pitfalls of measuring trends from peaks to troughs or vice versa that he is able to point out the errors of his predecessors in the field.

A new orthodoxy has been emerging in nineteenth-century Irish agrarian history, that the Land War of the end of the 1870s and early 1880s came after three decades of growing agricultural prosperity when tenants had been gaining at the expense of the landlords, and was in effect an attempt by them, incited by unscrupulous agitators, to ensure that rents remained a permanently lower proportion of total agricultural income, standing the received view pretty much on its head. Turner is just about in time to nip this in the bud. In his first essay on Irish agricultural output and productivity, in 1991, he swept aside the three decades of post-Famine prosperity and in their place installed three decades

from the early 1850s to the late 1870s of almost unchanged total output, if measured in current prices, or of falling output measured in constant prices, with a sharp fall in real farming profits which reinstated a clear economic justification for the Land War. Such is the versatility of statistics, however, that the newly calculated series in this book, with modified assumptions about product prices and marketed proportions, offer a much less emphatic picture. The revised estimates, backed by detailed explanations of the estimating procedures and thorough discussion of the grounds for each choice and each guess, are definitely to be preferred. What they show is increasing prosperity, but a moderate 30 per cent growth in output rather than the 70 per cent claimed by some revisionists, a virtually flat trend in real output, and a slight rise in the farmers' share, as the 30-year background to the Land War. The economic environment has now become one of rising expectations in the 1870s which were rudely dashed by the disastrous year 1879, the falling prices of that and the next few years, and the failure of landlords to reduce rents fast and far enough to suit the tenants' wishes. This is plausible, but unconvincing as a complete explanation of the willingness of Irish farmers to resort to the violence of the Land War.

Wisely, the economic explanation of essentially political behaviour has not been made a central concern. The book is about the exploitation of statistics, not the exploitation of tenants. The continuous annual output series, expressed in current prices, constant prices, starch equivalents, and calories, are the major achievement. One of the curiosities of technical jargon is that the fluctuations in the real value, or volume, of total output measured by constant prices are referred to as the 'constant volume index', but the wide year to year variations between 1850 and 1880 and the broad stability thereafter until real growth got under way in the early 1900s are unmistakable. The large oscillations of the decades before 1880 were to a great extent the product of the dramatic shift from arable crops to livestock products which characterized the adjustment to the disasters of the Famine and the opportunities of the British market. Irish agriculture led the way in this shift towards livestock, ahead of Britain and the way ahead of anywhere else in Europe; there is a sense, however, since Ireland and Britain were parts of a single UK market, in which the Irish region might be regarded as simply that part of the UK agricultural economy best suited to livestock production. The arable sector continued to dwindle in importance after 1880, but inevitably at a much slower rate since it had already shrunk to less than a quarter of total output, by value. The limited scope for further relative expansion of the

livestock sector may have been one reason why the performance of Irish agriculture, which Turner argues was the best in Europe in the third quarter of the century, fell behind that of Denmark and the Netherlands between 1880 and 1914 (while remaining much better than that of Britain); though it should be remembered that Denmark's high showing was not achieved by any switch from arable to livestock, since her agriculture made productivity gains in both sectors.

At this point social and tenurial arguments are invoked, the thesis being that the essential difference between Denmark and Ireland was that Danish farmers were owner-occupiers and the Irish were tenants. Only when the magic of ownership spurred on the Irish farmer – 3 per cent of holdings were owner-occupied in 1870, 46 per cent by 1908, over 60 per cent by 1914 – did his performance improve significantly. This is plausible, and there are figures of output per head of the agricultural workforce showing a sharp rise from the early 1900s to support it. From the landlords' point of view, however, the three F's of 1881 gave their tenants a species of virtual ownership, or dual ownership, of their holdings, since they became irremovable and their rents became unalterable except downwards, and yet this tenurial change apparently had little effect on economic performance. Moreover, the period when Ireland was said to be in the van in Europe, the third quarter of the century, was also the period when Irish tenant farmers were least secure. Again, a further set of figures indicates that real agricultural output per head in Ireland actually fell between the early 1850s and the late 1870s. It is all a trifle confusing, and tends to feed the old prejudice that statistics can be made to prove anything.

There is much else in this book besides output measurements. Labour productivity, and the labour inputs into different crops and livestock products, are taken to new levels of sophistication, although it has proved impossible to put a reliable value on the labour input of farmers and members of their families, which is a particular drawback in the Irish context of small farms and little hired labour. The size of holdings, and changes in their distribution over time, are indeed meticulously analysed in the early part of the book, in which the headlong collapse in the number of minute holdings of less than one acre is highlighted as the most dramatic consequence of the Famine. From the early 1850s to 1914 the stability of the pattern of the distribution of holdings between different sizes is its most striking feature, with more than 60 per cent of the holdings throughout the period lying between 1 and 30 acres. Curiously, Turner omits to tell us how significant holdings of different sizes were to the national economy in terms of their contri-

butions to farming activity, although he provides the data from which rough estimates can be made. These show that the holdings of 1 to 30 acres occupied 23 to 25 per cent of the land area of Ireland, holdings of 30 to 100 acres some 34 to 36 per cent of the area, and holdings of over 100 acres 42 to 43 per cent, with little change over time. The typical Irish farm, indeed, in terms of the area occupied, was over 50 acres, making it perhaps closer to British than to other western European models. Somewhat confusingly in analysing the number of holdings in different size groups Turner slips into calling this 'an analysis of the larger landownership groups' (p 87), since it has earlier been established that in 1870 only 3 per cent of holdings were owner-occupied (rising to 46 per cent by 1908) (p 72). He has been let down by his proof reader over the random transposition of the headings for the four graphs (pp 19-20) setting out changes in the acreages of crops, 1847-1914. But this can hardly explain the statement (p 21) that 'in 1861 there were 195.5 acres of potatoes per head of population, but by 1881 this had fallen to 165 acres per head and thence to 160, 143 and 135 acres per head in 1891, 1901 and 1911'. Homer has indeed nodded and sorely misplaced his decimal points. With potato yields veering between two and four tons an acre, such figures would put consumption at somewhere between 270 and nearly 800 tons per head per year, quantities, even allowing that more than half the crop was eaten by the pigs, far beyond even the legendary capacity of the Irish stomach. As all of us become more reliant on calculators and computers there is something to be said for periodic rough visual checks, rather as shop assistants in Russia still check their cash registers against an abacus. No one is likely to be seriously misled by the potato blight, and Turner's heroic engagement with a monumental mass of statistics will be widely appreciated as a big step towards a more precise and accurate assessment of what happened in Irish agriculture after the Famine.

F M L THOMPSON

ANDREW HUMPHRIES, *Seeds of Change: 100 Years* [sic] *Contribution to Rural Economy, Society and the Environment*, Newton Rigg College, 1996. vi + 131 pp. nps.

In 1908 the report of the Reay Committee on Agricultural Education in England and Wales recognized that agricultural education as it existed at the time was failing to provide for the needs of the less well off farmers and the farm workers, who might not need and certainly could not afford the courses then offered by the universities and colleges. Reay therefore suggested that each county council should set up a farm institute to provide the appropriate

training. Newton Rigg, in Cumbria, of which this book is the centenary history, claims to be the first of these.

Agricultural education first arrived in Cumberland in the form of Aspatria College, an initiative of local farmers and landowners which opened in 1874. Its courses and fees were specifically aimed at the sons of small farmers, and it achieved national recognition after the remarkable Dr Henry J Webb, writer of agricultural textbooks and record-breaking tricyclist, became principal in 1886. Humphries provides, in chapter 3, the only modern account of the rise and (in 1914) demise of Aspatria. From the 1890s the county councils of Cumberland and Westmorland were also involved in the provision of agricultural lectures at various centres, and travelling dairy schools. Shortly after they had agreed on the desirability of establishing a fixed dairy school and farm as a joint venture, the Newton Rigg estate on the borders of the two counties became available. It was acquired, and in 1896 enrolled its first students. Thus it was in being when the Reay Committee met, and its example, and the evidence given by its staff, were undoubtedly influential in the committee's eventual recommendation that counties should establish farm institutes as local centres of practical education and advisory work.

Most of the first three-quarters of the book is concerned with telling the story of the establishment of Newton Rigg and its development up to the end of the Second World War. There were problems of small student numbers and cash shortages, and one of the principals had to be, in effect, sacked, but the place survived. Andrew Humphries has delved extensively in its annual reports, in county council minutes, and in the archives of the local newspapers, (all sometimes rather idiosyncratically referenced) to produce a detailed account of its origin and growth, set against the agricultural and educational background, and well illustrated with photographs from what is clearly an impressive college collection. It should be noted, however, that some points escaped the proof-reader: surely yarrow would have been a safer component of the Clifton Park seeds mixture than yew (p 40)?

The Newton Rigg story after 1945 was in some ways typical of the farm institute sector: the separation from the advisory services, the expansion in teaching, both intra- and extra-mural, matched by the physical expansion in the buildings, for example. But not all farm institutes did as much research, or as much pioneering radio and television work, or had principals of the prominence of Jim Hall.

Typical, too, was the process of diversification after the heady days of agricultural expansion in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s came to an end. Newton Rigg

College, like other former farm institutes, is now an independent corporate body, with a range of subjects extending from farming and forestry to nursery nursing and floristry, at anything from first degree to National Certificate level. The university and college sectors have gone through the same kind of process since 1980. Perhaps the most interesting point to remember is that the changes appear to have just happened, without any great process of official thought. Few developments in agricultural education in supposedly *laissez-faire* Victorian England came about without at least one and sometimes several committees taking evidence and deliberating upon their significance. Equally, post-war developments in agricultural education were carefully considered by the Luxmoore Committee in 1943, and further changes by the Bosanquet Committee in 1964. But the post-1980 changes, the most dramatic of all, have been brought about by market forces, without any official evidence-taking or deliberation on the national interest. There are differing views on the desirability of the process. Should Newton Rigg's GNVQ courses on health and social care, and hospitality and catering, be seen as educational sensitivity to local demand in a rural area with significant retirement and tourism interests, or are they evidence of an institution faced with the decline of its major client industry, desperately scratching around for anything that will put bottoms on seats in times of tight funding? Should Newton Rigg and places like it be engaged in education in an academic atmosphere or training in a commercial environment? Is this book, indeed, a justifiable celebration of well-merited institutional pride, or a rather sophisticated exercise in business image creation? Perhaps we need a new Reay Committee to think about it.

PAUL BRASSLEY

MICHAEL WINTER, *Rural Politics: Policies for Agriculture, Forestry and the Environment*, Routledge, 1996. xiv + 341 pp. £47.50 (hbk); £15.99 (pbk).

There are good economic and social arguments, involving strategic considerations, the balance of payments, and the maintenance of rural communities, *inter alia*, for supporting farm incomes; many of them would apply with equal force to small shopkeepers and the coal and steel industries, yet while agriculture is supported these other industries are not. Most of the arguments for farm income support currently advanced might also have been put forward between 1875 and the 1930s, but agriculture then was left at the mercy of world markets. At different periods, against much the same economic and social background, some governments have decided in favour of support for

the agricultural industry while others have decided against: farm income support is not an economic but a political issue. In which case one might expect that when a large proportion of the labour force was involved in farming, and the country was largely run by landowners, farm incomes would be supported. Equally, when farmers and farm workers form less than 2 per cent of the labour force and large landowners are a small minority in the Cabinet, one might expect farming to be left to its own devices. In practice, of course, the outcome has been exactly the reverse. The resolution of these paradoxes rests on the political power of the farming lobby; but if it is now so powerful, how can we account for the rise of the farm animal welfare and environmental lobbies over the last twenty years?

Professor Winter attempts to unravel these complexities. His book's claim to be noticed in this *Review* rests principally upon four of its twelve chapters, in which he has set his analysis of rural politics in its historical context. He does this, he explains, from necessity as well as inclination: 'My aim is to show how contemporary debates are shaped by forces deeply rooted in political, cultural, social and economic history' (p 2). For example, he argues, how can the influential legislation of the late 1940s be understood in isolation from pre-war developments and debates?

The first of the three parts into which the book is divided provides a concise and intelligible introduction to the -isms (formalism, élitism, marxism, pluralism and corporatism) used by various policy analysts, together with an account of the institutional framework within which policy now evolves. In the second part, the two chapters dealing with the history of agricultural politics before 1973 are pivoted round the Second World War. The first covers the shift of the agricultural policy debate from landlords in Westminster to the National Farmers Union, ministers and civil servants in Whitehall. Winter follows Cooper's work on inter-war Conservative politics in identifying Walter Elliot's years at the Ministry of Agriculture between 1932 and 1936 as 'a turning point in the relations between the state and the government' (p 99). From then onwards the corporatist model, he argues, provides the best explanation of the evolution of agricultural policy. In logical fashion, therefore, the following chapter deals with the dominant post-war role of the NFU in policy formulation and implementation. This dominance was largely founded, in Winter's view, on the NFU's monopoly of representation, although he mentions, in the following chapter on agricultural policy in Europe, the supporting pressures from the agrochemical and machinery industries. It is tantalizing to find that this alternative aspect of corporatism, once briefly recognized (on p 166), is not explored further.

The other facets of rural politics covered here are the environment and forestry. Again, current issues are set in their historical background, with a chapter tracing the origins of environmental concerns back to the nineteenth century and sometimes earlier, and part of one on forestry policy exploring its development before the establishment of the Forestry Commission in 1919. Clearly these are *national* concerns, and the surprising omission from this book, given its title, the controversial nature of rural housing, the impact of rural recreation, the curious history of the relationship between the planning system and agriculture, and even Winter's own experience as a long-standing member of his own parish council, is any mention of *local* politics in the countryside. This book is about the politics of survival of British agriculture, the disappearance of which, confidently predicted at various points in time between the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 and the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy in 1992, and *pace* BSE, has yet to occur.

PAUL BRASSLEY

ELIZABETH STANBROOK, *Dartmoor Forest Farms: A Social History from Enclosure to Abandonment*, Devon Books, 1994. 129 pp. Illus. £8.95.

Writing about the dwelling place where a nineteenth-century stone waller lived, Elizabeth Stanbrook expresses the hope that 'John Bishop's house will not be allowed to fall into total decay but will continue to be maintained so that future generations can see where one of Dartmoor's best known dry-stone wall builders lived'. This structure, and similar ruins, may survive through the deliberate intervention of arrested decay, but what of the stories of the people associated with them? Will these survive? Are the stories known? In this book Stanbrook has drawn on an extensive range of sources to reconstruct the histories of nine farmsteads that were created within the Forest of Dartmoor during the last three hundred years and of the people who lived in them.

The content of Stanbrook's book is well-researched and original. Evidence has been gathered from a wide range of sources: lease books, parish registers, private papers, farm and tenancy documents, newspapers, court rolls, census returns, company files, Duchy of Cornwall records, minute books, tenancy documents, wills, sale catalogues, and land tax assessments. The eighteenth to the early twentieth century was a period of great change with the arrival of 'improvers' and their attempts to tame and enclose vast tracts of moorland. As the Duchy of Cornwall is the major landowner, written records abound, but they are not easily accessible to the public.

Above all, the author's use of oral history enables the reader to acquire a sense of place and offers an insight into the day-to-day lives of the people involved. She provides stories of native people and of incomers from Ireland, Middlesex, Gloucestershire and Dorset, and explores themes such as the nature of agricultural improvement, waxing and waning interests and ambitions, the complexities of leases, sub-leases and short tenancies, bankruptcies, neighbour disputes, battles against the odds, daily routines and the lives of children.

Precise details of agricultural history range from the date (27 May 1877) when Scottish Black Face sheep were introduced to Dartmoor to the derivation of place-names such as Rails from timber poles on upright granite pillars erected to prevent livestock from wandering off enclosed land on to the open moor. The chapter on Huntingdon Warren – one of the last rabbit warrens on Dartmoor – is particularly informative.

The bibliography, index and references are comprehensive. Defects include the poor quality of the paper, the lack of a conclusion or personal overview, and the failure to capture the physical remoteness of the farmsteads. The one map that is provided merely shows approximate locations; large-scale maps of each farmstead would have been useful. Nevertheless, this is a sympathetic and scholarly account.

JOHN WEIR