

Book Reviews

L T EVANS, *Crop Evolution, Adaptation and Yield*, CUP, 1996. x + 500 pp. Pbk £22.95.

Since its publication in hardback in 1993, Lloyd Evans's book has gained many plaudits, reinforcing the author's established reputation as one of the leading plant physiologists of the present day. Its republication in paperback gives agricultural historians the opportunity to acquire a volume which is both an authoritative guide to the methods and concerns of contemporary plant science, and a comprehensive overview of the history of food crops since the neolithic.

Evans's confessed motivation is an urge to encourage dialogue between the two cultures within biology, 'of *Drosophila* and *Arabidopsis* on the one hand, and of wheat and soybeans on the other'. The past, present and future of our food crops, he argues, deserve at least the attention and status accorded areas of pure research. The central focus of Evans's book is yield and its development. An introductory chapter provides an overview of the whole field. One section contrasts the reversal of the Malthusian metric (the means of subsistence has increased consistently faster than population) with the persistent fear that Malthusian pessimism is about to be vindicated. Another provides a brief and up-to-date survey of current thinking about the origins of agriculture. The book then opens out into a succession of thematic chapters. These provide substantial and wide-ranging surveys of yield and world food supply, the domestication of crop plants, adaptation and yield ecology including plant diffusion, physiological aspects of crop improvement, the trends and limits of yield increase, inputs and the efficiency of crop resource use, and the future of yield. A bibliography running to almost 2000 items rounds off the volume.

Though rigorous in its presentation of the work of crop scientists, the book does not make excessive demands on the non-scientist. In return for a moderate investment of effort, the non-scientific reader is rewarded with a magisterial and highly readable interpretative survey of great value as a means of contextualizing individual research activity, whether contemporary or historical, within the extensive but probably unfamiliar research area of plant science. For those needing to know more about, say, the CO₂ exchange rate and its implications, or the concept of the harvest index, Evans supplies enlightenment. This book should find a place on the shelves of all agricultural historians interested in yield improvement and its causes.

JOHN R WALTON

DELLA HOOKE, ed, *Pre-Conquest Charter-Bounds of Devon and Cornwall*, Boydell Press, 1994. viii + 239 pp. 9 pls; 38 maps. £29.50

Well-nigh two thousand pre-Conquest land-grant charters survive – documents recording the ownership of, or rights over, estates in Anglo-Saxon England. Very many incorporate a detailed description of the boundaries of the land in question which, given a degree of scholarly detective work, presents the possibility of reconstructing a graphic picture of the ancient landscape.

They begin and end with Latin sentences which roundly declare who granted what to whom and in what circumstances – formulae which incidentally serve to establish an authoritative quasi-legal air. But when it comes to the practical matter of saying exactly what comprised this land, the boundaries are set down in meticulous detail, often in a smaller, meaner hand, and always in the plain Anglo-Saxon prose of those who knew and worked the land. No one should be mistaken: '... then down to that hawthorn tree' – immaterial for the time being whether 'that hawthorn tree' would still exist a century later.

Attracting old-fashioned antiquary and scientific field-worker alike, the Anglo-Saxon land-grant charter offers a rambler's view of the locality in question. Many of us, at one time or another, have attempted to trace these boundary-lines over what we considered a piece of familiar terrain – and failed. Easier said than done! The significant hawthorn tree is long gone and wolves no longer haunt that particular hollow. Notoriously difficult to read on the page – and even more difficult to follow on the ground – they require not only philological and historical expertise, but also a rare eye for topography. All these Dr Hooke clearly has.

In this volume she presents a detailed study of all the topographical information to be gathered from the four dozen or so charters (31 in Devon, 22 in Cornwall) which contain such boundary clauses. Their survival and distribution is relatively sparse compared with, say the number from Worcestershire (the subject of the author's first *essay* of this kind); and there is only one significant cluster: around Crediton.

Our view of the Anglo-Saxon world tends to be coloured by our ancestors' dramatic poetry or arcane theology. Such material as Dr Hooke provides permits us a genuine entrée into the day-to-day landscape they inhabited: a world of now-gone pig-sties and pear-trees, but also banks, ditches, woods and roads, many of which remain and can be identified with recognizable features in the

present-day scene. One by one, each boundary-clause is translated and elucidated and the results entered on a neat, uncluttered sketch-map (though the route might have been easier to follow if the system of numbering adopted for the narrative had been shown on the maps also). The fact that elements of individual estates can sometimes be found to correspond wholly or in part to early nineteenth-century parish bounds suggests a significant continuity of early land-division systems through the medieval period and into the early modern pre-enclosure landscape.

Since this is clearly going to be a standard work of reference for the foreseeable future, it is a pity that these boundary clauses should have been divorced from their original context. The decision to omit the Latin tops and tails gives an unreal sense of both the appearance and intent of these documents. Although the editor abstracts significant particulars as to date, grantors and suchlike, we must turn back to nineteenth-century editions for contextual material which might well prove significant to future enquirers.

The instinct to furnish a full scholarly edition was clearly present: indicated by the inclusion of manumission records with no discernible landscape interest, and the fact that original text is printed in a particularly conservative form. There is no obvious advantage in retaining palaeographical niceties such as the dotted *y* or *7* graphs, now rarely used even by philologists. Use of the *wyn* graph is especially problematic inasmuch as it can result in confusion between *w* and *p*. Indeed, the Anglo-Saxon scribes themselves made mistakes. Thus *wold-risoc* for *poldrisoc*, 'briery dell' in Tinnell, ignored here but commented upon by W B Sanders in the Ordnance Survey's *Facsimiles of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, II, 1881.

However, the author's objective – in which she is wholly successful – was to consider only what was of immediate geographical interest. In dealing with issues of specific locality, largely ignored by editors with institutional or philological interests, she has made a very substantial contribution to the sum of our understanding of the region. In some other respects she is less secure. For example: Crediton was not in fact well-known in the pre-Conquest period as the birth-place of St Boniface (merely a late medieval assumption); we do not know that the Danes destroyed Exeter Cathedral library in 1003 (an inference at most); on p 17 King Alfred's will is quoted in such a way as to give the impression that his Cornish estates were all bequeathed to Edward the Elder (actually divided between Edward and Æthelstan).

One or two entries could have done with some blue-pencilling. Guide-book information about a

granite mansion which we are told was designed by Lutyens for Mr J C Drewe and built between 1911 and 1930 is undeniably interesting but adds little to the study in hand. (Considerable use is made of Hoskin's popular but now dated county survey.) By the same token the relevance of some of the plates is none too obvious. Cross reference in the captions might have helped. Indeed, certain plates might prove misleading to untutored eyes, inasmuch as very little of the scenery, buildings or stock will resemble what the Saxon saw.

The translations seem accurate, though naturally with such difficult material, it is inevitable that there should be disagreements as to interpretation of detail. Discussion of some alternatives would have been useful. It might have been interesting to see why *walu* (in Ayshford) should be rendered 'foot' of the dyke rather than 'ridge', or why *odencole* (in South Hams) need be 'lime-kiln' rather than 'threshing-floor'. There is usually a wider semantic field than the simple one-for-one equation most of us would like to assume. For example *hwit* is not necessarily 'white' but 'shining', nor *beorg* necessarily a barrow (Northill). Some possibilities are simply ignored. For example, there is no attempt to explain *sulh* ('plough') *ford* (in Crediton); while *Bigulfes burh* (between Wiggaton and Ottery) and *Grendeles pyt* (Crediton) are calling out for etymological comment, if not literary gloss. Even so, a prosaic warning: we cannot presume that all topographic names were directly 'meaningful' throughout this period. Certainly British names such as Creedy or Nymet must already have seemed as arbitrary as their Anglo-Saxon counterparts now often appear to us. It should not go unmentioned that the author's introduction readily acknowledges that 'correct solutions are probably almost impossible to attain'.

The English Place-Name Society's volumes on Devon, now sixty years old, are relied upon to supply the general toponymic framework, although since the 1920s and 1930s etymological interpretation has advanced in one important respect: place-name specialists no longer so readily suppose a personal name must be involved. It is now more likely to be believed that *malleberge* in the South Hams derived from the plant-name *meargealla* 'gentian', rather than from one Mærla. In general more reference might be made to A H Smith's *English Place-Name Elements*, English Place-Name Society, XXV-XXVI, 1956; (only part 2 is mentioned in the bibliography).

The sole index supplied is merely an *index locorum*. In addition there is the beginnings of a glossary of topographical and land-use terms, and of plants and animals referred to in the charters. But without page references this tantalising list is of limited use.

It is not possible to seek, for example, the frequency or even location of a 'cow-yard' (**buorth*) or 'pigsty' (*hlōse*). And it could well be enlarged, to point to examples: *æl-broc* 'eel-stream' (Meavy), *swin-haga* 'swine-fence' (South Hams), or *pyrian* 'pear-tree' and *team-pol* 'breeding-pool' (Topsham).

It is vocabulary such as this which brings the former landscape alive. Of course, the area covered by this volume is probably the most varied in the entire country, and the surviving documents most meagre. But it is disappointing that out of all this remarkable detail in respect of individual estates, no general narrative synthesis or thesis can yet emerge. We still have no picture of the Anglo-Saxon landscape as a whole. It is possible that in due course, supplemented with additional data from adjoining regions, the glossary of terms we are given could allow a number of diagnostic and very vivid, albeit partial, glimpses into the Anglo-Saxon world. As yet these possibilities remain undeveloped. What we have here is essentially a handbook for field-workers. As such, it will be constant source of reference; and it is to be hoped that we might expect further volumes in the series.

M J SWANTON

CARLA RAHN PHILLIPS and WILLIAM D PHILLIPS, JR, *Spain's Golden Fleece: Wool Production and the Wool Trade from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, Johns Hopkins UP, 1997. xviii + 441 pp. Illus. £41.50.

Despite the prominence which historians have given to the gold and silver which poured into Spain from her American colonies in the sixteenth and later centuries, the authors argue that the production and trade in fine quality Merino wool generated more foreign and domestic income than any other component of the Spanish economy in the three centuries after 1450. This is the first full-length and detailed study of Spanish wool production and trade in English or Spanish, and it questions many of the long-held views about the alleged backwardness of the Spanish rural economy. The result of many years work in the archives, the book is divided into three parts.

Part I, called 'Sharing a meager land' is an overview of the main trends in wool production between 1450 and 1836. This begins with a description of the ecology of Spain which stresses how much of the land was, and still is, unsuited to crop and intensive livestock production, but comprises upland pasture of only moderate quality. From this arose the traditional transhumant sheep husbandry, in which the sheep spent the summer months on the high mountain plateaus of northern Spain around Segovia and Burgos, and migrated in the autumn to the lower, but still upland, pastures of

Extremadura and La Mancha, some 300 or 400 miles to the south-west for the winter, returning again to the northern pastures in the spring. In between the sheep were sheared and their wool was washed in hundreds of special shearing sheds and washing centres scattered through central Spain. Several million sheep were involved in these annual migrations, which sometimes extended for as much as 500 miles, and the organisation of these huge treks makes a fascinating story. The period 1450 to 1580 was the golden age of Spanish wool production, as it was of the country's imperial power, and it was followed by a period of depression and disorganization lasting from about 1580 to 1680. The sharp crisis between 1580 and 1713 – the period of the wars against France, and of the Spanish succession – was followed by a considerable revival after 1713 under the new Bourbon monarchy. The authors estimate that the production of washed wool rose continuously from about 10 million pounds in 1492 to about 28 million pounds in 1762, before falling sharply during the Napoleonic invasion of Spain. This growth was however masked by violent fluctuations in wool exports, which rose from five to 14 million pounds between 1492 and 1550, before falling steadily to about 3.5 million pounds in 1717. They then rose sharply to a new peak of 15 million pounds in 1770, before subsiding again to five million pounds in 1822. All this is clearly shown in a useful graph, based on detailed appendices of production, exports, prices, flock sizes, etc, which is one of the most valuable parts of the book.

Part II, called 'Wool production', gives a detailed analysis of the cycle of transhumant production and the processes of shearing and washing the wool, and the lives of the shepherds, shearers, washers and wool transporters. This is then followed in Part III, 'Marketing and the wool trade', by a discussion of the role of marketing, transporting, and the domestic manufacturing of wool. Interestingly the authors argue that, contrary to widely held beliefs, the Spanish domestic clothing industry was far from insignificant, and in fact, in most years purchased far more of the wool than was exported. Although this is probably true, their estimates of total production and internal consumption are far less robust than the export figures, for which taxation returns survive. It is also true that it was the highest quality wool which went for export, Spanish Merino wool being the best wool available on the international market. The main export trade – about three-quarters in most years – was from the northern ports of Bilbao, San Sebastian and Santander to the woollen industries of Belgium and the Netherlands, most of the remainder going from the south-eastern ports of Murcia and Alicante

to Livorno in Tuscany. After the revolt of the Netherlands in 1568, this Italian trade became more important, but was also limited by the decline of the Italian woollen industry in the seventeenth century. Although foreign merchants, especially Flemish, Dutch and Italian, played an increasingly important part in the wool export trade, Spanish merchants, especially those of Burgos initially, and later of Madrid, always played a prominent part in the trade. The received view of the Spanish woollen trade, based on Julius Klein's study of the Mesta (1920) the organization of flockowners who maintained the transhumant trackways, was that the maintenance of transhumance damaged Spanish agricultural production, by restricting the amount of land available for cropping. The authors, however, contest this view, and argue that much of the land traversed by the transhumant flocks was unsuitable for crop production, and that transhumant wool production was the best use of Spain's limited land resources.

This is a splendidly detailed study of an aspect of Spanish agrarian history which is of much more than purely Spanish interest, for much of the economic growth which took place in Europe in the early modern period revolved around the Italian and Flemish woollen industries, both of which were crucially dependent on Spanish wool. This well-illustrated book is an important contribution to European as well as Spanish economic history.

MICHAEL HAVINDEN

PETER WYATT and ROBIN STANES, eds, *Uffculme: A Peculiar Parish. A Devon Town from Tudor Times*, Uffculme Archive Group, 1997. xv + 323 pp. 14 figs; 22 plates. £12.

Uffculme has a unique place in Devon's history, not because it is particularly beautiful or important, but because of a fortunate historical accident. In about 1543 it was transferred from the diocese of Exeter to that of Salisbury, and thus became a peculiar jurisdiction, with the result that its 541 wills and 266 probate inventories (between 1528 and 1843) were lodged in Wiltshire and so escaped the bomb which in 1942 destroyed virtually all of Devon's probate records. Thus Peter Wyatt, Robin Stanes and their collaborators have been able to reconstruct the life and economy of Uffculme with a wealth of detail which could not be equalled for any other community in Devon. This book, and its companion volume (*The Uffculme Wills and Inventories*, Devon Record Society new series, 40, 1997) are the result of ten years' devoted work by a local history class of Exeter University's Department of Continuing and Adult Education, and it is a formidable achievement.

Situated in the Culm valley in east Devon on the old road from Exeter to Wellington, Uffculme is in a hilly, pastoral region of early enclosure, except for its commons on the Blackdown hills. Its agriculture was traditional based on small farms, which were mainly devoted to livestock, though small acreages of corn were grown probably for local consumption. Most of the farms seem to have been in the 20 to 50 acre size range judging by the numbers of livestock kept. In the period 1575 to 1601 the average farmer kept 6 to 7 cows and 23 sheep. By 1688 to 1731 this had barely increased (7 cows and 27 sheep), showing a stable agricultural economy. The population however grew much more rapidly than the national trends, from some 830 people in 1570 to some 2200 by 1713. This was the result of a prosperous woollen cloth industry making the prestigious Devon serges. A short review can only touch on the wealth of detail in this admirable book, which should be studied by all those interested in the history of the south-west.

MICHAEL HAVINDEN

SUSAN NEAVE and STEPHEN ELLIS, eds, *An Historical Atlas of East Yorkshire*, University of Hull Press, 1996. xi + 160 pp. £17.50.

A benign virus is happily rampaging up and down the eastern side of England. Since *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk* appeared in 1988, similar volumes have been published for County Durham (1992), Norfolk (1993), Lincolnshire (1993), and now East Yorkshire (in fact, the historic East Riding). Other atlases are known to be in preparation, and one confidently expects the virus to break out soon in the west and south of the country. Dedicated to Alan Harris who died in 1995, this attractive and stimulating atlas of the East Riding contains 60 distribution maps which generally follow the pattern of having a map on the right-hand side of each opening and a short explanatory text opposite. The text is supplemented by occasional illustrations, graphs and bar-charts, and at the back are notes, bibliography, index and a key-map of the county's parishes and townships. The twenty-three contributors comprise an archivist, museum curator, two members of an archaeological unit, three other specialists and fourteen academics drawn from five universities (mainly from the University of Hull which also provided the two general editors).

The atlas covers a span of 10,000 years but is primarily concerned with the history of the East Riding from the eleventh to the twentieth centuries. As the editors claim, it brings together 'a wealth of recent research' by historians, archaeologists and geographers and, as such, it cannot fail to be an immensely useful, interdisciplinary work of reference for all those interested in local and regional

studies. More importantly, because it summarizes many current debates and problems of interpretation, it will raise new questions and help to give shape and direction to future research. Although such productions are open to the criticism that administrative counties are artificial straight-jackets unsuitable for some subjects (for example, pre-historic cultures, communications and trade), one rejoices that several maps in this atlas have been made directly comparable with those of the adjacent Lincolnshire atlas. It is also noteworthy that, in a largely rural area, considerable attention has been paid to towns, large and small. Not only is the topographical growth of the great port of Hull traced from the thirteenth century, but also its contacts with the wider world (whaling in the Arctic, and fishing off Iceland and in the Barents Sea).

The maps of this atlas are grouped under nine major headings which range from archaeology and settlement to religious allegiance and, most original of all, episodes of local unrest. A final section offers a most useful cartographic summary of the administrative history of the county. While most of the subjects mapped, and sources used, are those which might be expected and which invite comparison across county boundaries, a few are certainly unique to the East Riding. Good examples are the Arras Culture of the Iron Age, the square-ditched barrows which sometimes contain the remains of wheeled vehicles, and the perpetual erosion and deposition of Spurn Point, Yorkshire's own wobbly Land's End. One is perhaps surprised that no attention was paid to the Anglo-Saxon and Danish periods, to the spatial extent of parliamentary enclosure, or to the growth of coastal resorts like Bridlington and Hornsea. But, as the editors rightly say, in such an enterprise much depends on the availability of contributors (as well as of basic sources yielding information which can be mapped).

Most of the individual maps are elegantly and clearly drawn, often in two colours and with readily understandable conventions. They raise a host of interesting problems which need to be pondered. In particular we may wonder how far we are seeing the influence of soils and geography, how far social and economic forces, and how far the influence of individuals. Sometimes we may also query the basic sources and their completeness or reliability. To this reviewer the only unsatisfying maps are one dealing with agricultural land-use in the mid-nineteenth century which is visually off-putting, two illustrating nonconformity which strangely overlap and use different symbols, and one illustrating the changing distribution of reptiles, which seems out of place in an historical atlas.

These are minor criticisms, for there is something in this volume for every kind of historian. Those interested in the general character of the county will note the high numbers of townships, chapels of ease, ecclesiastical peculiars, deserted settlements, Methodist chapels and National schools. Those looking for finer detail will be fascinated to learn that Sir Tatton Sykes II of Sledmere, between 1863 and 1913, built seven new churches and restored eight others; that the Druids Friendly Society were particularly strong in Holderness; and that Butlin's holiday camp at Filey had its own railway station until 1977. Let us hope that more historical atlases of individual counties appear in the next decade, and that the gaps between them are rapidly closed. Not only are they successful commercially and influential at all levels of education, but they stimulate us all into thinking more critically about historical distributions – both within and across administrative boundaries.

DAVID DYMOND

JOHN BROAD and RICHARD HOYLE, eds, *Bernwood: The Life and Afterlife of a Forest*. University of Central Lancashire, Preston, 1997. xvi + 126 pp. 8 plates, 4 in colour, 9 tables, 9 maps, 2 figures. £9.95, including p and p.

The former forest of Bernwood comprised the south-west Buckinghamshire villages of Boarstall, Brill and Oakley. To historians of agriculture and settlement, Boarstall is remarkable for its medieval map, dated to 1444–46 and well reproduced here. Archaeologists know Brill for a medieval pottery industry whose wares had a wide sale over the southern midlands. The present-day landscape includes woods to the west of Oakley, on the county boundary, but otherwise bears few obvious reminders of the former forest. Air photographs of the 1960s reproduced in the book show the undulating hedged lands to the north-west of the foot of the Chiltern scarp, a scene more recently modified by amalgamation of fields and by changes in villages brought within reach of London by the nearby M40 motorway. The most obvious clues to a former economy are the clay-pits of Brill, still clear from the air.

Written sources cover the history of the royal forest from pre-Conquest origins to the disafforestation of 1632. In the first chapter, Isobel Harvey outlines these, and hence the purpose, administration and economy of the forest. She assesses how far Brill could be described as a medieval urban centre for the district. In the succeeding two chapters, Richard Hoyle examines evidence for the landscape of the forest, successively over the Middle Ages and in the 80 years before disafforestation, when landownership and forest administration were

in the hands of the Dynham family: their term is illustrated by three colour reproductions of maps of 1590–91. John Broad surveys the events and immediate consequences of the end of the royal forest, and the pattern of smallholder poverty seen amongst the descendants of those who received exiguous compensation for lost rights. The set of essays is completed by Rachel Thomas, who examines ecological aspects of forest management, from wood pasture to intensive coppicing.

The editors have been successful in showing the tensions found in the management of a traditional hunting forest and in the retreat from that tradition. The conflict between stock-keeping and the management of woodland, between the medieval hunting interest and the agriculture of the woodland fringes, and between commoner and encloser in the post-medieval centuries, are amply illustrated, as is the evolution not just of these relationships but of the landscape itself. There were of course break-points in this evolution; one was the acquisition of Bernwood by the Dynhams in the 1540s, but far more significant was disafforestation almost a century later. The latter was followed by rapid enclosure, for coppice, grazing or arable, over the middle decades of the seventeenth century. By comparison, the changes over the following three centuries were less radical: parliamentary enclosure was barely an issue, being briefly referred to for Oakley, and many field boundaries are still recognisably those of the sixteenth century or even reflect earlier woodland divisions.

There are however questions which have been prompted by research into the economy of other forests and of their forest-fringe industries which could have been more directly approached here. Assessment of the nature and extent of coppicing in Bernwood is made no easier by the scattering of references, which are the harder to assemble due to the absence of an index. In fact the best digest of wood production is in Rachel Thomas's final chapter. The issue particular to this district is how far the vigour of coppicing was linked with that of the industries of Brill, whose medieval potteries and later brickyards must be expected to have been significant buyers of fuel. Was the dwindling activity of the Brill potters, who appear to have failed to follow the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century fashion for small vessels, transmitted to woodland management? Was this decline of pottery production balanced by brick-making, or was there an interval before late-sixteenth and seventeenth century fashions in building brought prosperity to the brick trade and made for the survival of managed woodlands?

DAVID CROSSLEY

MARYANNE KOWALESKI, *Local Markets and Regional Trade in Medieval Exeter*, CUP, 1995. xvi + 442 pp. 7 figs. £60.

Although the focus of *Local Markets and Regional Trade* is on the city of Exeter, the book is so utterly comprehensive that it contains almost as much for agrarian as for urban historians. For example, a chapter on the occupational structure of Exeter in the late fourteenth century – the period on which the book is focused – may be read as an essay on processing the products of the land within the area from which the city drew its supplies. About 60 per cent of recorded heads of household were engaged in handling such products. Some eleven or so male bakers provided bread; a number of cooks heated up meat pasties and chicken legs, to be eaten on street corners or carried away to bedsits just as today; a large number of innkeepers kept up establishments at which visitors to the city, many of them traders, lodged with their horses and which were therefore great consumers of oats and of beans and peas made into horsebread. Among the products of pastoral farming, wool (or perhaps yarn) was brought to the city in large quantities to give livelihoods to many poor households and to capitalistic clothiers who may already be discerned in late fourteenth-century Exeter; there was also a very active market in meat and hides.

Another chapter which touches a good deal on the countryside is entitled 'Internal trade and the hinterland', dealing with networks of trade in all commodities except those which arrived by sea (covered in a separate chapter). Because of the ubiquity of credit in medieval commerce and because of the excellence of the records from Exeter's mayor's court and its satellites – and given a great deal of sophisticated record linkage and patience on the author's part – a remarkable picture has been drawn up of the city's hinterland, undoubtedly the best reconstruction of its kind which has yet been carried out for any medieval provincial town. Or perhaps one should say hinterlands, because one of the most important and novel findings of this book is that a town's sphere of influence was made up of many partially overlapping areas, each for a specific commodity and each with a particular configuration of its own influenced by physical geography and the pattern of farming regions. For example, butchers who came to Exeter in order to sell cattle for meat tended to be graziers from the Exe valley itself, wide by Devon standards and with lush marshland as well as improved grazing grounds, or from the valleys of its tributaries, the Creedy and the Culm. That two of the places from which butchers still operated in the late fourteenth century were called Cowley and Cowick – both names with respectable pedigrees – testifies to the

fact that these patterns of supply were already established when Exeter was an Anglo-Saxon *burh*. A by-product of the large urban demand for meat was an active trade in hides. Some buyers came from small towns quite close to Exeter but others travelled over longer distances from Dartmoor border towns. The latter group would have had their own tanning industries generated by the pastoral economy of the Moor and it is interesting to see their tanners coming to Exeter because of the abundance of hides on the market there, by-products of slaughter of cattle for urban meat consumption. Even for one type of animal, therefore, there were two hinterlands, one for suppliers of meat, the other for buyers of hides. Fish was brought into Exeter for sale, by land and by the coasting trade, from coastlines and estuaries to south and east, but more remarkable was the hinterland for buyers at this significant redistributive centre in the fish trade. Some came from small inland towns in Devon, but there were also buyers from towns in eastern Somerset and Dorset. Both of these counties have their own fish-full coastlines and one may suggest that their fish-traders were lured to Exeter partly by the cheap prices there and also by their perception of the profits to be had in selling fish on, to markets in the land-locked counties to the east. For the fish trade there were, again, two different hinterlands, one for sellers, the other for buyers. Maryanne Kowaleski's researchers will put a stop, once and for all, to our practice (and I am guilty here) of drawing circles (or, even worse, hexagons) around medieval towns.

These brief comments on topics of agricultural interest in Maryanne Kowaleski's book do not do full justice to its structure, nor to the methodological innovations which it contains, nor to the wealth of topics covered. The progressive structure is logical and easy to follow: from Exeter's regional setting to the governance, economy and occupational structure of the city, then to the sea-borne trade, with an important section on overland redistribution of imports, and finally to overland trade in local commodities. Methodological innovations include a highly sophisticated manipulation of surnames, once called 'nominal record linkage' but now 'prosopographical analysis' or (better) 'collective biography'. Names in a murage roll of 1377 are linked to names in cases heard before the city's courts, in local customs accounts for the port of Exeter (names of ship-owners and importers) and in a host of other sources of local and national provenance; but this is not all, for the method is also extended outwards so that names in records (where they exist) of small towns and rural manors in the surrounds are linked to names in the records

of city and port to give those remarkable insights into hinterland mentioned above.

Along the way many and diverse important issues are tackled, including urban decline in the later Middle Ages (with Exeter not badly affected), the reliability of the 1377 poll tax (a favourable verdict in the case of Exeter's record which may be compared with the murage roll of the same year), the previously under-rated extent of coastal trade and the establishment of local markets (with a now complete list of Devon's markets and fairs). In short, the acclaim already given to this book results from the fact that it has a very great deal to offer to historians of every kind and persuasion.

HAROLD FOX

DEL SWEENEY, ed, *Agriculture in the Middle Ages: Technology, Practice and Representation*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995. xiii + 371 pp. 70 illus. £46.50 hbk; £17.95 pbk.

The thirteen articles in this book originated as papers at two different conferences, one on land and labour and the other on the image of the *rusticus*. It is hardly surprising, then, that the scope of this volume is remarkably eclectic. The reader is offered an enticing choice of subject matter, time, place and methodological approach, from England to Arabia, the fifth to the fifteenth centuries, and from agricultural production to artistic representation of pigs. A steady introduction and thoughtful afterword attempt valiantly to forge some coherence into the volume.

Yet coherence is elusive under such conditions, a problem exacerbated by the uneven length and, very occasionally, quality of the essays. The themes of these essays are too wide and varied for this volume to be regarded as a textbook, although individually they adopt a broad and accessible approach wherever possible. This stylistic accessibility creates a considerable strength out of the volume's inherent weakness, and ensures that some clear, forceful and stimulating ideas emerge from such varied perspectives. The treat for the English agricultural historian is Bruce Campbell's fine survey of the crisis of the early fourteenth century, crammed with enough common sense and clarity to make undergraduates (who perennially grapple with this subject) rejoice. Interestingly, it contains Campbell's clearest statement to date on the nature of this crisis. He argues that the English economy probably did not possess serious structural or technological weakness, but that its markets were severely disrupted by war and taxation which in turn induced environmental degradation and ecological decline. This essay deserves to be read widely.

MARK BAILEY

PHILIP T. HOFFMAN, *Growth in a Traditional Society. The French Countryside, 1450-1815*, Princeton UP, 1996. xv + 362 pp. £30.

For this reviewer, Philip Hoffman's book started well, contesting robustly the conventional view of French agriculture as a thoroughly stagnant sector of the economy throughout the early modern period. French historians generally agree that their peasants were sunk in the torpor of hidebound routines until some time after 1750. Yet historians of the same period in England cannot but look incredulously on such wholesale condemnation, when they collect so much evidence of farming innovations brought to England by French and Flemish immigrants, cultivating hops, woad, rapeseed, sainfoin, lucerne, improved vegetables and fruit, and keeping poultry more intensively. The black picture of the French scene is, in fact, seen through English eyes, viewing the need to feed a rapidly growing industrial population with cereals and meat, and excluding all those products that did not count towards that effort.

From a different standpoint, from that of the farmer who had to make a living in changing economic conditions, cereals and meat did not always yield the most satisfactory living. He could do better by mixing his cereals and meat with other produce. Diversification had notable merits in certain phases of the early modern period, even in England, and still more in a large country like France which, until the eighteenth century, had no adequate internal transport system to carry its produce far afield. The author of this book does not come round to commending diversification, and that is a disappointment, but some of his evidence collected in local archives may, in the end, feed into that better understanding of the French agrarian economy. His suggestion that the cheese producers of the Massif Central made substantial progress in the eighteenth century is credible in the light of a similar development, starting somewhat earlier, in England. The successful growth of productivity in the Paris basin and in arable Normandy in certain periods in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whenever war or heavy taxation did not wreak havoc, will come as no surprise to English historians watching the stimulus of the London market on some of its nearest farming regions; and they will readily accept the suggestion that urban manure greatly enhanced productivity. More generally, the suspicions of the author that regions of more intense cultivation, notably Flanders, would have furnished even better illustrations of growth match well with English experience. In short, English readers will regret the author's failure to use more lessons from the English experience to frame his work.

The problem on which the author concentrates

most of his 200 pages of argument do not for the most part concern the details of local farming routines, however. He first despatches the notion that French peasant farmers pursued only subsistence, showing satisfactorily how they were drawn into the commercial world at many points, through renting land, offering their own labour, or buying it in, and securing credit. He takes pains to demonstrate the rationality of landlords charging higher rents for small farms than large. Then he turns to his prime task of measuring growth nationally, while using local evidence. But since the search for what he calls total factor productivity, or TFP, is an unattainable goal by the direct method, he deems it reflected in the rental value of land. Other evidence is adduced where possible on wages (though they are urban wages) and grain yields, but as doubts arise about the validity of his calculations, he dismisses them ever more cheerfully as the narrative proceeds. Not all readers will swallow the algebraic equations, but they may accept his wholly plausible conclusion that positive growth can, indeed, be found in France during the early modern period; traditional society was not immobile, small farms were not by their nature unproductive, and different regions successfully fostered specialities. Vineyards, dairy produce, and sainfoin receive mention (though not in the index) alongside grain and meat, but not lucerne, rapeseed, woad, mulberries, vegetables or fruit.

In a final summary, Hoffman is inclined to place more emphasis on national events and political influences, war, taxation, and revolution, in obstructing agricultural performance, than conservative peasants, but he knows too that the wide world of regional differences has to be further explored. 'It is folly,' he confesses, 'to generalize about an entire country in early modern Europe', 'the regional and temporal variations were paramount.' Historians who have built up their agricultural structures from below will welcome this honest conclusion. The time is ripe to judge French agricultural performance not by cereal yields alone, but by all the produce from the land, regionally differentiated. It is an exciting challenge that could open a new debate, in which Hoffman, but not perhaps TFP, may be cited hereafter.

JOAN THIRSK

ANNE TARVER, *Church Court Records: An Introduction for Family and Local Historians*, Phillimore, 1995. 143 pp. Illus. £12.95.

The records of the church courts have been a dark corner in the archivists' cupboard for as long as the cupboard has been installed. It was the 'revolution' in English Reformation studies, a feature of the 1960s and 1970s, which first placed the door ajar

when historians such as Ronald Marchant and Ralph Houlbrooke began to peer nervously inside, but their forays into the unknown covered only comparatively short time spans and specific parts of the country. Despite more recent work by Jim Sharpe and Martin Ingram much still remains to be done, particularly in so far as these records relate to the medieval period and the last years of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. With regard to broadening the awareness of church court records beyond this tight-knit group of professional historians even less has been achieved. This is why this book breaks fresh ground and is a welcome addition to the very limited literature on this important, but neglected, area of study.

Anne Tarver begins by highlighting exactly why these records have slipped the net of history and are, in her view, 'virtually unexplored'. Not only do they frequently repose in unexpected places with less than adequate indexing facilities, they are also often difficult to read and contain a high proportion of frustratingly abbreviated Latin. Most challenging of all, perhaps, church court records are underpinned by the complexities of canon law, a basically medieval legal code unfamiliar to most people in the twentieth century. Thus there are considerable obstacles to overcome if this 'dark corner' is to be illuminated, yet this is the demanding task which the author has set herself. Aimed at family and local historians, essentially non-professionals who might be encountering these records for the first time, the book is an attempt to make the jurisdiction of the church comprehensible and to underline the tremendous potential that these records have in all sorts of historical research.

After a description of the 'process of law' – introducing proctors and apparitors, citations and interrogatories – the book goes on to examine the five key areas of church court activity. The most voluminous of these was 'office business', comprising a range of cases broadly defined as 'criminal' in the context of canon law: failure to attend church, abusing the clergy and, most important of all, sexual crime in the form of incontinence and fornication before marriage. Alongside of this the courts were also dealing with 'instance business' comprising cases involving probate, matrimonial affairs, tithe, and defamation. Within this broad spectrum a huge amount of data relevant to local and family history is thrown up. Not just the bizarre and unusual such as 'jactitation of marriage', in other words falsely claiming to be married or contracted to marry, but also the mainline, such as the importance in 'a gossip-laden society' of maintaining one's 'good name' and reputation through prosecutions for defamation. Of all the varied types of record intro-

duced it is the depositions which are arguably the most valuable, because not only do they provide vital information about the deponent (age, occupation and degree of literacy), they also tell us, often in intimate and graphic detail, of the cases under review. How, for example, Andrew Dunton beat his wife 'so that her arms sometimes were black and blew... and it was common for him to threaten and damn and curse her soe as to make the said Mary quake and tremble'. These insights into the lives of quite ordinary people are not replicated in other sources.

The author opens up this unseen world to the reader in a manner which is well informed and which successfully conveys her very considerable enthusiasm for the subject. For her interpretation she relies heavily on Richard Burn's *Ecclesiastical Law*, a standard text, and most of her examples are drawn from the cause papers of the Consistory Court of Lichfield and Coventry in the eighteenth century with which she is most familiar. The book is therefore rather more limited in terms of time and space than its title implies and the use almost exclusively of fairly late documentary examples (mostly in English) might be seen as giving a misleading picture to the general reader as to the accessibility of these records. Certainly the points concerning difficult palaeography and abbreviated Latin, noted in the Introduction, were not followed through in the text.

One of the main strengths of this book is the numerous documentary examples used to illustrate the themes explored and though the verbatim transcriptions of these are generally accurate the mode of reproduction of the documents themselves is not so satisfactory. They appear to have been copied by a process of electronic scanning and though this is more economical than conventional photography it is by no means as effective, especially in view of the fact that many of the examples have been reduced considerably in size to meet the publisher's page format. Indeed, many of the original documents (for example, those on pp 36, 47 and 66) are so small and so fuzzy as to make them almost totally illegible and in these circumstances it is debatable whether or not it was worth reproducing them at all.

It would have been good, perhaps, if the book could have moved beyond the merely descriptive and suggested ways in which these records could be put to use. Clearly for family historians the information likely to be derived about individuals is their major attraction; but for local historians there are more subtle techniques of quantitative analysis which might yield useful conclusions about the changing nature of communities in the past. These could have been briefly explained and set

out in an additional chapter on 'Using Church Court Records'. But to be over critical of a book which has done so much to break fresh ground would be churlish. Despite the reservation about the quality of the documentary reproductions, Phillimore have done a good job in putting together a book which is both comprehensive and authoritative. Anne Tarver has placed church court records within the grasp of the rank-and-file local historian. As she says, 'These documents may appear intimidating, but with a little patience, knowledge and practice they can reveal information available from no other source'. It is to be hoped that her challenge will be taken up and that the archivists' dark cupboard finally sees the full light of day.

DAVID MARCOMBE

ALEXANDER FENTON, *The Northern Isles: Orkney and Shetland*, Tuckwell Press, 1997 [first published by John Donald, 1978]. Pp. x+721. Pbk. £20. As Fenton remarks, 'the world was wide for these little islands' (p. 460). Norse influence lasted directly for half a millennium after the ninth century, and persisted indirectly thereafter. From 1500, Hanse traders and Dutch fishermen made their mark, but the neighbouring Scots exerted the most pervasive modern influence. Given their geographical position, it is unsurprising that Orkney names connected with turnip cultivation originate in north-east Scotland, while the sea-language of fishermen contains some 430 Norse terms in Shetland but only twenty in Orkney. Though essentially a farming area long influenced by its southern neighbour, between 1840 and 1870 Orkney underwent an agricultural transformation that saw draining, liming and enclosure accompanied by owner occupation and direct tenancy. By contrast, Shetland's revolution concerned fish, specifically King Herring. Change here was dramatic and the effect highly concentrated: from curing 1100 barrels and occupying 50 boats in 1874 to 300117 barrels and 932 vessels just ten years later. By this time, 98 per cent of the Shetland's exports consisted of herring produce. Orkney remained unspecialized, and even by the 1930s, 80 per cent of fishermen there were part-timers, otherwise occupied as farmers.

Merchant lairds did much to 'improve' land use, housing, equipment and social organisation, but they were not always popular. Archer Fortescue was dubbed 'the Devil of the Hills' for his attempts to square off runrig, herd cattle and exact fines for those that trespassed, whilst kelp-burning to satisfy the demands of crown glass manufacturers was believed to prevent women bearing children and cause bad crops, and riots ensued. Equally, however, it provided work for women and older people. External demands secured markets far afield for a

succession of locally important exports – Shetland ponies to work in coal mines, lobsters and gannets for London high tables, straw hats, woollen products, even – on one occasion – peats shipped to Australia. It was outside companies, too, that developed the fisheries, while the Hudson's Bay Company and whalers heading for Greenland and the Davis Straits stopped by to employ young men in considerable numbers between 1740 and 1920. While this outlet caused a measure of selective emigration, it also affected the land, as returning men outbid local farmers for rents. Incomers attracted by the herring were largely seasonal, with over 20,000 staying on Unst in 1882, although permanent immigrants from Banff to Lerwick were notable by their surnames, speech and endogamous family links.

Whatever they may have exploited or exported, some smaller islands lacked diverse resources. A ditty immortalizing 'the little island of Sanday, where the coos shit fire' (p. 208) testifies to reliance on dried cattle dung for fuel. Meanwhile, the main support of the Foula folk consisted of sea-fowl plucked from the cliffs at considerable risk to human life. Others, though plentifully endowed, were slow to innovate: if, on Fair Isle, 'the feeding was so good and the sheep so fat that they fell down of their own accord on being chased around the rock' (p. 456), equally no reaper came there until 1950, and this remained unused 'until it could be tied behind a Ferguson tractor that was got in 1961' (p. 347). The combine harvester first reached Papa Westray in 1973. In former times, scurvy had prevailed owing to a near exclusive dependence on fish, while, 'in 1762, a complaint was made that the burning of seaweed for kelp had left the limpet-bearing rocks unprotected by ware-blades, so that the limpets fell off in the heat of the sun and the poor were deprived of their sustenance' (p. 542).

This fragile living was underpinned by a blend of communality and ingenuity. Hill land was considered common property (even when it was not), sheep ran together and were worked together. Similarly, neighbours helped one another with peat cutting and the harvest. Although attendant customs are alluded to, the author concludes that discussing working practices and organization was 'more than enough for one book' (p. 623). Detail is certainly not eschewed, the range of different names for, say, fish at different stages of growth reflecting the necessary level of interest taken in such an essential means of both subsistence and commerce; likewise with the eighteen pages on sheep identification marks. In lands largely treeless, driftwood from shipwrecks made good doors, beds and fireplace surrounds; cockleshells were burned to make lime for whitewashing; every part of a slaughtered animal

was used, its flesh eaten, salted, the hide made into shoes, clothing and ropes, the fat used as lamp oil, the carcass as manure.

Such was the way with any peasant community, but Fenton's skill is to document precisely local influences and variations, not just between islands, but between Orkney and Shetland, Scotland and the Nordic countries. The use of language as an historical resource enables him to pinpoint 'what is indigenous and what is intrusive' (p. 624) with magisterial accuracy. Supported by photographs, diagrams and extensive references, this reprint is already a classic of European ethnology, remaining unsurpassed as a comprehensive resource. Oil is excluded from the saga, yet its impact has changed life massively, rendering this record if anything still more valuable.

ANDREW BLAIKIE

M E TURNER, J V BECKETT, and B AFTON, *Agricultural Rent in England, 1690-1914*, CUP, 1997. Pp. xix + 356. £45.

Old stagers may well experience feelings of apprehension mingling with those of pleasurable anticipation on opening what could turn out to be the definitive account of the course of rental history, in case it exposes grave flaws and glaring inconsistencies in the story they have been telling one another over the years. Rest assured, there is no need to panic, it is a very well mannered book which politely confirms rather than upsets the generally received wisdom on what happened to agricultural rents between 1690 and 1914. This is done by assembling a dataset in one of the most meticulous, methodical, fastidious, and altogether impeccable operations of historical data collection and processing ever attempted by agricultural historians. Rigid criteria were adopted to determine what rental data would be allowed into the count, whether from private estate records, institutional records, or (in practice this meant information given to the 1894 Royal Commission on Agriculture) official records: the figures had to be for rack rents, there had to be a fairly long run (30 years or more), there had to be a reliable indication of the acreage to which the rent figure related, preferably there had to be a side by side record of the rent actually received and of the agreed rent, and within a proviso that reasonably representative geographical coverage was attained there was a preference for collecting figures from large estates because that maximised the total acreage covered by the exercise. The result is an annual rent series presented in three appendices of rent received, rents assessed, and the two combined where both were entered in a single record, and in several graphs in the text (which it must be admitted become hard

to read when more than one item is graphed, owing to the cumbersome computer graphic symbols employed, which tend to overlap and merge into each other). Around this core data, informative discussions of previous rent histories, of the general course of agricultural history, of agricultural depressions, and of regional differences, are arranged.

The authors are understandably euphoric on the successful conclusion of their labours, announcing that they have produced a definitive rent index and claiming thereby to have solved all the problems of modern agricultural history. 'We now know what happened to the agricultural sector of the English economy between the late seventeenth and the twentieth centuries' is their triumphal concluding claim. Perhaps this idle boast was inserted with half an eye on impressing the assessors in the approaching Research Assessment Exercise; certainly there is a hint of the RAE's premium on instant research in the disclosure that ease of making extracts rapidly from an estate record was a significant factor in deciding which records to use. Probably the authors do not believe their own propaganda, for if true it would pretty well make all modern agricultural historians, a group of which they themselves are distinguished members, redundant. The nature of their achievement can be better appreciated in a more modest context.

The rigorous application of the self-imposed criteria for inclusion in the rent series means that for the early part of the period extremely few estates have qualified, which is unsurprising given the haphazard nature of much estate management and record keeping before the later eighteenth century, and given the situation that many farms, maybe even the majority of farms, were not let at rack rent at that time. Thus, the first 25 years of the series are represented by figures from no more than one or two estates, covering about 9000 acres at most and both in Yorkshire, and it is not until the last quarter of the eighteenth century that the team has captured consistently more than 100,000 acres and 15 to 20 separate estates. It is with the nineteenth century that the coverage becomes seriously impressive, climbing towards a peak of 1.4 million acres and 77 separate sources by the 1880s. The account of the process of composing the rent index and the explanation of the methodology employed are extremely detailed and completely transparent in spelling out the thin coverage of the first 50 or 60 years. Understandably, no attempt is made to specify the geographical coverage of the index before 1750, for which date a map reveals that figures from 13 counties (just less than one-third of the total) were included, but with a large swathe of counties running from East Anglia

through the southern Midlands to the South West unrepresented. By 1850 only 13 counties were not represented and in 7 counties the index recorded the rents of over 5 per cent of the agricultural land, while overall about 2 per cent of the total cultivated area of England had been netted in the trawl. In the light of these figures it is curious to claim that a definitive rent index has been produced for the entire period 1690–1914, unless the word 'definitive' is being used in an unusual sense to mean that those records which have been consulted have been accurately and exhaustively consulted and no further information could be extracted from them. On the other hand, the casual reader might suppose the statement to mean either that no other rent records exist for the period 1690–1718 apart from those of Castle Howard and the Emanuel Hospital estate in the East Riding which are used in the study, or that any other rent records for the period could not alter the index; neither is credible.

The authors would indeed be the first to admit that the early part of their index needs strengthening if at all possible. Thus their observation that the index does not reflect the 'Mingay Depression' of the 1730s and 1740s is as much an observation about the index as it is an observation about the depression, and although it is possible, even probable, that any depression at that time was restricted to specific regions and farming types, the index is not sufficiently firmly based to establish this. Nor, given the partial nature of the index for this period, is it more than a case of the pot calling the kettle black to contrast the technique of 'history by example' which established the 'Mingay Depression' with the history by scattered statistical sample which has constructed the rent index. In the broad reaches of the period from the late eighteenth century onwards the rent index may certainly be accepted as definitive in the sense that the addition of further rent data would be unlikely to alter significantly the trends established here — though they might affect the nominal figures of rent expressed as shillings per acre. For instance, the authors dither about whether or not to include Northumberland in their index, on the grounds that Northumberland, and in particular the duke's estate, embraced a large area of rough grazing with a small rental value, apparently because inclusion would 'artificially' deflate their figures of rents per acre. There is, however, no evidence that the rents of rough grazing were not subject to trends upwards or downwards like other agricultural rents, and plenty of evidence that rough grazings formed a significant part of farm economies in upland regions and more than ten per cent of the total 'cultivated' area of England as a whole, so that inclusion of information from such areas ought to enhance rather than

depreciate the value of a general rent index. At times the authors seem to attach considerable importance to the figures of rents per acre yielded by their sample, for example when comparing their findings with contemporary estimates of rent by Arthur Young, J R McCulloch, or James Caird, or with other rent series such as those of R J Thompson, R C Allen, or J T Ward (Greg Clark, who has an egregious rent index for c 1500 to 1850, is consigned to a footnote without ceremony). But since the authors acknowledge that 'there was no such thing as a national average rent, or at least that any figure purporting to represent this would be a fiction', nominal figures of shillings per acre do not signify; what matters is the internal consistency of each separate series, and the trends revealed by changes in rents per acre.

The reasonably close correspondence between the rent index and indices constructed from earlier sources for the nineteenth century by R J Thompson, J R Bellerby, and J T Ward, or from the Schedule A returns (which in theory recorded 100 per cent of incomes from land), and by Chambers and Mingay for the period 1700–1880, can be taken as validating the new index or as retrospective validation for the others. There are differences, and for the specialist concerned with short-term changes they may be highly significant; but in an overview of the long period they amount to fine tuning rather than radical change in the received picture of changes in rent. It is helpful to be shown that no countrywide post-Napoleonic War depression shows up on the new rent index, although this is not exactly a novel argument, and while the prosperity of the Golden Age has been seriously questioned the rent index rises as steeply between 1850 and 1870 as in the 20-year period after 1790. The discussion of the significance of figures for arrears of rent, collected as a by-product of the enterprise, shows convincingly that fresh annual arrears are a more reliable indicator of distress and depression than figures of accumulated arrears, but this is hardly news. At this point an analysis of the meaning of rent, of rent actually negotiated, agreed, and paid in discreet historical contexts, as distinct from Ricardian abstract rent, would illuminate the entire scene. The authors are fully aware that rent forms one of the three shares into which the net agricultural product is conventionally divided, but it was not part of their concern to address the other two, the wage bill and the farmer's income, except in passing, and unless it is assumed that the relationship between the three remained constant over time, as in the traditional valuer's adage that the land produces three rents, it cannot be taken for granted that reliable information on rents is equivalent to reliable information on the

state of agriculture. Students should perhaps ignore the implication that the rent book has solved all questions of agricultural revolutions, depressions, and the like, and instead welcome it as a businesslike aid to a better understanding of the course of modern agricultural history.

F M L THOMPSON

PETER MATHIAS and JOHN A DAVIS, eds, *International Trade and Economic Growth: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day*, Blackwell, 1996. 169 pp. £40.

This short book of seven essays on international trade and British economic growth is volume 5 in a series on the *Nature of Industrialisation* edited by Mathias and Davis. Aside from their general editorial control they have added a short guide to the simple aim of the series, the specific aim of this volume, and a succinct summary of each of the essays. The aim of the series is to contextualize the uniquely British path to industrialization in relation to the most important themes with which it was involved.

The theme of greatest interest to agricultural historians is of course the relationship between agriculture and industrialization, and this was the subject matter of volume four. Fellow agricultural historians might therefore wonder what direct value this latest volume has for them. As it turns out, the essays are all interesting in their own right and broadly attempt to distinguish two opposing views in economic history – whether trade was an engine of growth, or a child of industry. Yet beyond this question, which should interest all economic historians of whatever subtle hues, because the products of agriculture were often traded goods, there are indeed specific issues which agricultural historians will appreciate, especially coming from historians who take a different view of the historic world they observe. This does not apply to all of the chapters, but, for example, whilst Morgan in chapter one has the difficult task of unravelling the relationship between the Atlantic trades and British economic growth, we should not forget the nature of the goods involved in those trades. The imports from the New World consisted of ‘farmed’ products from plantations – sugar, tobacco, rice and coffee, to name but a few – and then increasingly that all-important raw material, cotton, which was no less an agricultural product even if it had eventually a direct industrial use. In particular, Morgan explores his subject matter in the context of the Eric Williams thesis of the slave/sugar nexus, embodied in his *Capitalism and Slavery*, and the extent to which the Atlantic slave trade and its profits was inextricably linked to British economic growth. Of course it was, but the size of, and the eventual use to which those profits were put have been under

considerable scrutiny by scholars in recent years, and therefore the direct links with British economic growth have similarly been under review. Yet whatever the solution to these questions, what their constant exploration reveals, often out of sight of the camera, behind the lens, or lurking in the shadows, is agriculture. Everyone sees those trans-Atlantic agricultural products as imports (and sometimes re-exports) in the great balance of payments game of economic history. But whilst ever specific parts of the New World remained British colonial territories much of that agriculture was directly British – first or near generation plantation owners of British families and goodness knows how much British capital sunk into developing the system over the eighteenth century. The fact that the Caribbean islands are 3–4000 miles south west of the Scillies makes them more foreign than perhaps they really were. Morgan only briefly touches on this particular issue, but it is the kind of supplementary question which we, as agricultural historians might raise.

In chapter two Pollard explores the relationship between British trade and economic development on the European mainland in which the increasing trail of manufactured goods leaving Britain was counter-balanced to a large degree by the products of the European agrarian classes. There was a direct link between the first industrial nation and the economic development of our nearest neighbours. We cannot turn all of the essays inside out in this way, to extract that which most appeals to us as agricultural historians, and perhaps these two examples are the limits to which we can go with this volume, but with careful reading the different questions which they address can sometimes reveal snippets of a scenery which is familiar to us.

MICHAEL TURNER

DENNIS MILLS and KEVIN SCHURER, eds, *Local Communities in the Victorian Census Enumerators' Books*, Local Population Studies Supplement, University of Essex, Colchester, 1996. xii + 450 pp. Pbk £12.50

This volume comprises 21 papers drawn from the journal *Local Population Studies* all of which had originally appeared at dates from 1972. The papers are arranged thematically by the editors into six sections which deal with all major aspects of the census: the enumeration process, population and demography, employment and occupations, migration and population turnover, family and household structure, and residential patterns.

The result is a most useful compilation, not only because it brings together and makes available material from a wide scatter of *LPS* volumes, but because of the editorial policy which has been adopted. The policy has resulted in added value by

means of an introductory chapter by the editors themselves who usefully summarise the information contained in the various census documents 1841–1891, and who also provide an extremely helpful analysis of each of the six themes dealt with throughout the volume by means of an introductory section at the beginning of each such theme. These are solid contributions to our knowledge about the census and deliver both empirical and conceptual material in compact writing. The Appendix to the introduction to Section II (Population and Demography) very usefully incorporates an appendix listing the published census reports 1801–1901, itemizing this valuable yet underused source.

These editorial contributions which update and contextualize the articles are in many ways the key features of the book. After all, the articles can, if sought, be found already published, but these linking introductory passages are new and provide the reader, both experienced and novice, with a great deal of thought-provoking information (although the Devon parish of Woodleigh is mistakenly referred to as Woodland on p 224). However, finding the articles will require a search, since there is no ready reference allowing the inquisitive reader to find the original in an old *LPS* volume, as is normally the case in such collections. Perhaps this should not matter, but we are told by the editors that the original articles have been modified by the authors subsequently, or by the editors themselves to avoid anachronisms, and also that new footnotes have been added, and new illustrative material inserted. We cannot always tell therefore, which footnotes have been inserted by the editors and which were the originals. This apart, the editors are to be congratulated on achieving as much uniformity in style of presentation as they have across a wide spectrum of articles. They have not only made the material accessible, but in so doing they have taken the opportunity to render a fuller service to demographers, local historians and others by their diligent additions. The 'accumulated bibliography' at the rear of the book, for example, also has a 'supplementary bibliography' of other articles from *LPS* which have made use of the Census Enumerators' Books between 1968 and 1995, although such a listing should itself be seen as a partial updating of previous bibliographic work such as that published by Mills and Pearce in 1989.

This *LPS* supplement, as with previous supplements (eg that edited by Drake on parish registers) can only be partial and cannot claim necessarily to be presenting the most influential papers in this wide research area. After all, there must have been at least a dozen other journals containing material of similar significance. But the concentrated blend

of empiricism and methodology, or amateur and professional researcher, does signal the continuing health of local historical population work, and the particularity of the genre with its roots in the locality, in empiricism and in social scientific analysis are most amply demonstrated.

BRIAN SHORT

IAN CARTER, *Farm Life in Northeast Scotland, 1840–1914*, John Donald, 1979, reprinted 1997. xiv + 258 pp. £14.95

This book first appeared in hardback and it is heartening to see it is still in sufficient demand for the publishers to reprint it in paperback. As a committed Marxist the author refers to 'capitalist' and 'peasant' farmers, instead of the more conventional 'large' and 'small'. The Marxist framework was often commented upon by reviewers at the time, and some regarded it as the main fault in what was otherwise seen as a soundly researched and pioneering regional monograph. But in the light of almost twenty years that have passed since then it should be remembered that many of the themes raised by Carter have endured and borne fruit in a number of ways. The topic of the nineteenth-century British peasant farmer has figured in studies by Reed, Howkins, Winter, and Winstanley. Carter argued that Scottish rural historians had concentrated on the Highlands and had neglected the study of the Lowlands, but since then Devine, Campbell, and Anthony – the last of whom is reviewed below – have done much to counter this. In his choice of source material Carter used not only the written records of large estates commenting upon landowners and substantial tenants, but also items taken from the oral tradition such as bothy ballads which serve to illuminate the views of farm servants, and oral sources have been taken up in the new journal *Rural History*. The only change this paperback makes to the original is an additional three page preface. This contains references to a selection of the comments and the most favourable reviews the book provoked after it appeared. As the author freely notes how 'many appreciated its detailed evidence but deprecated the Marxist machinery organising that material', it is a pity there is not a full list of reviews.

RICHARD PERREN

RICHARD ANTHONY, *Herds and Hinds: Farm Labour in Lowland Scotland, 1900–1939*, Tuckwell Press, 1997. 290 pp. £20.

This book is divided into two parts. Chapters 1–3 provide a general picture of Scottish agriculture from 1900 to 1939 with changes in production

patterns, general labour market conditions and the role of institutions. The institutions involved are the Board (later the Department) of Agriculture for Scotland, the National Farmers' Union of Scotland, and the Scottish Farm Servants' Union, which together covered government, management, and labour. It is symptomatic of the change from the previous century that these three can be represented by formal institutions, whereas in the nineteenth century they would have been more loosely categorized under the headings of capital (landlords), labour (farmworkers) and management (farmers). But by the twentieth century landlord power and influence had faded, though not entirely disappeared under the advance of owner occupancy, and government did the best it could under worsening conditions in the 1930s to fill the spot left vacant. This section of the book covers 156 pages and the essential statistical background of production, income and prices has been soundly constructed from a variety of series of official data supplemented by material from contemporary journal articles. As a result this book currently provides the best general survey of Scottish agriculture in the first half of the twentieth century, replacing Symon's now out-dated *Scottish Farming Past and Present*.

The second section, comprising chapters 4-8, is made up of local case studies of Scottish labour markets, and employs in its analysis the techniques of modern labour economics and rural sociology. The economics involves implicit contract theory and the study of labour mobility, whilst the sociology is centred around Newby's work on employer-employee relationships and the deferential worker. The case studies are based on two localities, East Lothian and Dumfries. There are a number of reasons for this particular choice. One important consideration was that the author did not want to present possibly misleading generalisations based on a single area so he chose two rather different localities. On the east coast East Lothian was dominated by large farms relying on the sale of farm crops, and Dumfries in the south-west had smaller farms, close to the Scottish Lowland average, with a greater emphasis on mixed farming and where before the Second World War production of milk was of growing importance. Also the work of Carter on the north-east of Scotland provides a third area which already has a scholarly literature on this topic that is used as a point of reference and comparison, at least for the years before 1914 when Carter's study ends. The author nevertheless warns the reader that his conclusions about the labour market are necessarily limited by the absence of other local studies within the modern Lowland

regions of the Borders, Central and Fife, and Tayside.

This section leads to a number of interesting conclusions. The author finds that workers were more likely than employers to resort to the courts when contracts were broken, and that the most common cause of complaint was unjustifiable dismissal. The place where the employment contract was struck in the nineteenth century was at the hiring fair, while in the twentieth century these declined in importance as newspaper advertisements came to dominate the recruitment of farm labour by the 1930s. Economic theory might lead one to believe farm servants were more mobile during times when the general economy and farming were prosperous and became less mobile during times of depression. But local studies lead the author to conclude reasons behind worker mobility were much more complex than can be explained by any simple link between the amount of movement and the general state of the labour market. Although subject to annual contracts, the average length of stay on individual farms varied from 22 months to eight years. However, when it comes to explaining this wide variation, the author is forced to conclude that the answer lies in qualitative, unquantifiable factors like worker preferences, quality of employers, and therefore cannot be statistically proved. But workers tended not to move great distances in search of work, the maximum being seldom more than 20 miles; and of the various groups within the hierarchy of farmworkers the longest moves were undertaken by shepherds.

In addition to the light thrown on the twentieth century Scottish agricultural labour market, there are two other areas where this study makes notable contributions. The first is as an addition to the growing body of Scottish agricultural history that is serving to counter-balance the past preoccupation — some might even say the obsession — with the Highlands and the neglect of the Lowlands. It also ensures more notice will be taken of Scottish Lowland agricultural history which, as the author points out, is far less well served by regional studies than the English Lowlands, in particular the south and east of England. Of course England has had the advantage of greater numbers of local agricultural historians, and has been helped in particular by the *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, which is now almost complete. However, as a contributor to two of these volumes, I am inclined to conclude that it is solo authors such as Anthony, working on local topics who have the freedom to make the really exciting advances in knowledge and demonstrate the use of new techniques.

RICHARD PERREN

WILLIAM H BROCK, *Justus von Liebig: The Chemical Gatekeeper*, CUP, 1997, xv + 374 pp. £50.

In 1996 United Kingdom farmers used nearly 4.5 million tonnes of artificial fertilizer, the bulk of it being a source of nitrogen. Without it yields would be lower, perhaps by as much as 40 per cent. In 1840, when Liebig was beginning to examine plant nutrition, they used less than 100,000 tonnes, most of it a source of phosphate. While Liebig cannot be said to be responsible for the difference (although it might not have been beyond him to claim otherwise), he was nevertheless an important influence in opening up the discussion on the merits and demerits of fertilizers, and of the wider question of how plants obtain their nutrients, in this country.

Liebig was born in Darmstadt in 1803, the son of a hardware merchant (the *von* came later, in 1845, after some assiduous lobbying, and was temporarily dropped in the turbulent times around 1848, when 'it began to look like a liability'). Family poverty curtailed both his schooling and his apprenticeship to an apothecary, but by the time he was seventeen he was at the new University of Bonn, as an assistant to the professor of chemistry, Kastner. Three years later, following a short spell in prison, a homosexual affair, and a period of study in Paris, he had a doctorate from the University of Erlangen in Bavaria (apparently obtained by purchase, rather than thesis); shortly after his twenty-first birthday, in 1824, he was made professor of chemistry at the University of Giessen. There he stayed until 1852, when, having established both his own reputation and that of the Giessen chemistry laboratory, he moved to the chair of chemistry at Munich. He died in Munich in 1873.

These are the very bare outlines of a life stuffed full of incident. It was his role in the debate on plant nutrition which first generated and continues to maintain his interest to agricultural historians. The outlines of the story are well known. Liebig addressed the 1837 meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, advocating the study of organic chemistry, and was in turn requested by the Association to prepare a report on the current state of the subject. In the event, he failed to do so, but instead produced, in 1840, *Organic Chemistry in its Application to Agriculture and Physiology* (which, as Brock demonstrates, was actually written as the introduction to a larger work on organic chemistry in general), wherein he argued that plants obtained nitrogen from the ammonia in

the air. This resulted in a long-running argument with Sir John Lawes, who, with his colleague Dr Gilbert (whose doctorate came from Liebig's own laboratory at Giessen) demonstrated that there was insufficient ammonia in the air to provide the nitrogen required by crops. Nevertheless, Liebig had successfully disposed of the idea that plants required humus for growth, and had opened up the question of inorganic fertilizers and their function in agriculture. The consequences of that were enormous.

This is the well-known outline of the story. Professor Brock's book fills in the details, and in so doing examines the whole question of how science contributes to society and its development. Perhaps only the naive would now cling to the idea of the scientist as disinterested seeker after the truths of the natural world, but Brock's Liebig is the scientist as salesman, of both ideas and the commercial products that derived from them. Following on from his work on plant nutrition came Liebig's patent manure, produced by his friends the Muspratt family, alkali manufacturers of Liverpool. Since the nutrients in it were made insoluble to prevent them being washed away by rainwater, they were unavailable to the roots of plants. The product failed commercially, Liebig cursed the whole business, and both he and the Muspratts lost money. Liebig was a laboratory chemist; had he exposed the product to the sort of field trials used by Lawes and Gilbert on Broadbalk (not Broadmack, as Brock has it on p 174) Field, the problems would presumably have been revealed. There were to be several other examples of fingers burned in the fires of commerce, and his involvement in a scheme to produce a substitute for quinine might now seem dangerously close to the criminal.

As a purveyor of ideas Liebig was more successful. Brock's appendix, listing the pupils who passed through the Giessen laboratory, contains several of the leading scientific names in Europe and America in the late nineteenth century, and even the immigration official to whom Liebig presented his passport in London in 1842 had read his work. He was clearly a great asker of the right questions, if not always a producer of the correct answers. Leaving aside its obvious merits as a readable account of a complex and contradictory figure, Professor Brock's biography will be essential for historians of nineteenth century agricultural science.

PAUL BRASSLEY