

Book Reviews

The British Isles

FRANCIS PRYOR, *Farmers in prehistoric Britain* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 1998). 159pp. 67 illus, 21 plates. £18.99

Francis Pryor is one of Britain's leading authorities on the Bronze Age and his excavations at Flag Fen and other sites near Peterborough have substantially illuminated our understanding of the farming economy of that remote period. The fact that Pryor is also an indefatigable livestock farmer and gardener may account for the clarity and straightforward common-sense which characterize the interpretations in his numerous published archaeological reports. The present work, however, is neither a report nor a textbook, but rather a layman's summary of recent Fenland archaeology wherein the author interprets the archaeological data not only through an archaeologist's eyes but those of an observant practical farmer. In this book, then, we are mercifully spared those endless lists of archaeozoological and archaeobotanical information and those impenetrable pollen diagrams and discussions of pottery fragments which comprise the bulk of the average excavation report. Pryor is concerned, first and foremost, with interpretation which, if occasionally controversial (and I can visualize several archaeologists of my acquaintance bristling as they read) is always logical and closely argued. Moreover, his writing conveys a sense of wonder, of awe almost, at both the physical and spiritual world of the Bronze Age where everything was expressive of everything else and where the worlds of ancestors and gods were as real as the world of air and water. Depositions of ritually-broken weapons, jewellery, pottery, or other valuable items, both in watery contexts and in the causewayed enclosure at Etton were probably viewed by the depositors as no less pragmatic than building a wall or thatching a hut. Some archaeologists are still sceptical over claims for 'ritual' activity, yet the probability is, as Annie Ross and Barry Cunliffe have suggested, that differences between the sacred and the secular in prehistory were rather less clear than is the case today.

In his early chapters, Dr Pryor summarizes the current state of knowledge of the origins of farming in northern Europe and Britain, making the now generally-accepted

point that as the 'wave of advance' foundered on the shores of the Channel and the North Sea, agriculture was probably as much a piecemeal indigenous development among Mesolithic peoples as it was the work of small groups of Neolithic settlers. Agricultural historians who take the trouble to read archaeological reports cannot help but be struck by how unimpressive is the evidence for early cereal cultivation in Britain. The odd hint in a pollen diagram, the occasional charred grain or grain impression in a piece of pottery, and the identification of plough marks under barrows (ritual sites, of course) are virtually all that we have to substantiate cereal farming before the middle Iron Age. Perhaps, as many of us have long suspected, cereal farming (gardening?) was of minor importance to the economy in earlier prehistory. Dr Pryor certainly takes this view, and argues compellingly that despite the early arrival of cereals in Britain, they only become of real significance some three and a half millennia after the early Neolithic. Based on his own excavations in the Fens and a careful review of evidence from elsewhere in Britain he concludes that for most of the country livestock formed the mainstay of farming life from 4500 BC until around 600 BC, and society and social institutions were geared up to meet the needs of a pastoral economy. Thus the enigmatic causewayed enclosure, for example, was both a profoundly important ritual site and a place where adjacent communities could meet formally to exchange animals (to prevent inbreeding) and discharge social obligations. The excavations at Etton certainly support a dualistic interpretation and when reading Pryor's account one cannot escape drawing parallels with the medieval village church within whose walls the pursuit of God and Mammon proceeded with alacrity. Again, the development-funded diggings at Welland Bank, Etton and Flag Fen hint at a highly-organized landscape with field systems linking to henges, ringditches and occasionally to 'cursus' monuments, the whole forming key components of a livestock economy carefully adapted to the prevailing environment. The flood-free dryland areas were juxtaposed with the wet fen, and the two environments linked by well-established driftways by which animals and people migrated to the fen to utilize summer grazings before returning to the dryland for the winter. The drylands,

moreover, were divided into banked and ditched fields (with hedges probably atop the banks), while droveways and tracks appear ubiquitous. Consonant with his argument that the area around Peterborough was intensively farmed with sheep before the later Bronze Age climatic decline, Pryor interprets some of the complex ditch structures and enclosures of early Bronze Age Flag Fen as a sheep handling unit and 'communal stockyard' with all the inevitable social and cultural implications. This interpretation is debatable, as is the assertion that Bronze Age sheep reared one lamb annually, or that salt may have been fed to these animals. One cannot help wondering, too, how the 5000 sheep grazing the wetlands of Flag Fen survived the winter as they were 'carefully' managed in the ditched and hedged fields of the dryland. Since haymaking appears to have been unknown before the Iron Age, browse would be the only available forage. Is there any evidence of browse being collected in summer/autumn for winter use (as in Neolithic Switzerland), or did these sheep subsist on winter grazing, in which case some 2500 acres would probably have been needed?

Among the many delights of prehistory is the opportunity offered for intelligent and enlightened speculation. Here Dr Pryor is a master of the craft. If his interpretations are sometimes controversial, his logic, imagination and capacity for lateral thinking are inescapable, while his capacity to relate archaeological discoveries to the realities of practical farming are as impressive as they are rare among his fellow practitioners. It is unfortunate that this most enjoyable, lavishly illustrated and stimulating of books is marred by deplorable proof reading, a point sub-editors should bear in mind with any further title in this series.

R. J. MOORE-COLYER

PAUL EVERSON AND TOM WILLIAMSON (eds), *The archaeology of landscape: studies presented to Christopher Taylor* (Manchester UP, 1998). xix + 198 pp. 29 illus. £47.50.

This well-presented and elegant volume comprises eight essays which collectively offer not so much a survey but an imaginative update on English landscape archaeology. It is driven in part by the efforts of contributors to take up and further develop ideas or research themes dear to the heart of Christopher Taylor, to whom the whole is affectionately dedicated, but it is far more than that. Taken together, these essays plot the subject's recent development and explore some of its current potential.

First comes a wide-ranging review by Williamson which starts as an introduction to the volume (and to the subject itself) but then takes on a life of its own to engage with the complex interactions between landscape archaeology and the later history of use of the landscapes

concerned. There follows an essay by Fowler which takes trackways and movement through the landscape as its theme and explores British evidence in the light of historic patterns of transhumance *et al.* in rural France. Fleming's is an associated theme, focusing on the theoretical constructions of space and territory in prehistory and the ideas about variable land-uses which those imply. Brown and Foard focus specifically on Saxon period settlement and land-use in Northamptonshire and environs, while in contrast Roberts and Wrathmell provide a national distribution of post-medieval dispersed settlement, and commentary thereon. Aston and Betty take up the post-medieval theme with an exploration of the impact nationally of economic change on landscape c. 1540–1700 – albeit with an understandable south-western perspective. An interesting essay on 'Gardens and designed landscapes' by both editors has perhaps more significance for landscape than agricultural historians, but the final essay by Pearson argues effectively for a less typological approach to vernacular buildings in favour of topographical analysis and a congruence of landscape and building research.

From the perspective of an agricultural historian, the essay by Brown and Foard is pivotal to this collection. Based on a mass of field-walking and detailed local archaeological research spread over decades and carried out by numerous individuals, Chris Taylor included of course, the authors revisit the 'great replanning' of the landscape and village formation of the late Saxon period. It was these little-understood phenomena which set off the transformation of a largely dispersed settlement pattern with unsystematized fields into the open fields and nucleated villages which, by the 1200s, had become almost ubiquitous across central England in a great band stretching from the Isle of Wight and Hampshire through the east Midlands and lowland Yorkshire up into Northumberland. The origins of open field and nucleated villages have been inextricably linked in the minds of researchers since the late nineteenth century, and the assumption that both came into existence as part of some grand, one-off reorganization has rarely been challenged. Brown and Foard propose a more complex model, starting with the establishment of royal villas with dependent settlements in the middle Saxon period and the later fragmentation of many of those estates to create 'manors' on which few tenants were free. The abandonment of marginal settlements and the development of villages is therefore examined against a tenurial and status-centric backdrop. Thereafter, 'the imposition of a regular open-field system over whole townships fixed the settlement pattern at whatever level of nucleation it had reached, and controlled the basic form of subsequent expansion' (p. 91). This, the authors

suggest, was a replanning of a primarily pastoral landscape for the purpose of expanding agriculture without losing pastoral capacity – as Harold Fox long since surmised.

At the centre of this model, therefore, is the assertion that settlement nucleation and landscape replanning are separate problems susceptible to different solutions and operating within different but overlapping time-frames.

This is, however, only one of eight essays, each and everyone of which makes a significant contribution to landscape archaeology. The volume is well edited and attractively produced, particularly as regards the line drawings. The paper quality is sufficient to enable all but one half-tone to be reproduced effectively – the exception being figure 29, a near vertical aerial photograph of parch marks, and this might perhaps have been omitted. That, however, is nit-picking. This slim volume must be recommended to anyone interested in the archaeological dimensions of England's agricultural past as an essential part of the core reading of the subject. As tributes go, Chris Taylor must feel proud!

NICHOLAS J. HIGHAM

SARAH J. WAGER, *Woods, wolds and groves: the woodland of medieval Warwickshire* (British Archaeological Reports, British Series 269, 1998). vi + 280 pp. 90 figs. £30.

In Warwickshire the two broad types of lowland English landscape are both well represented. The south-eastern or 'Feldon' half is champion country, with a history of open fields (later reorganized by parliamentary enclosure), villages, and not much woodland. The north-western or 'Arden' half is a country of irregular fields, ancient hedges, a tangle of lanes, dispersed settlement, and a history of much heath and woodland but little open field. The distinction seems to be cultural, not environmental. In the middle ages it was even clearer than it is now. There is abundant evidence for it in the Anglo-Saxon charters. Place-name evidence may take the difference even further back in time.

This is the background to Dr Wager's woodland investigation. Woodland history is the sum of the individual histories of thousands of wood-lots, and she duly traces the documents mentioning each of about 1000 woods from Domesday Book onwards. She works backwards to the more speculative subject of woods in pre-Conquest landscapes, widening her inquiry to relate woodland to settlement patterns and the origins of open field. (The book suffers from having no index).

The author produces some commendable findings. She documents the diminution of the abundant woodland in the north-west, whereas records of woodland in the south-east become more abundant. She kills off the

Forest of Arden, a phantom forest based on misinterpreting a twelfth-century charter. She offers new evidence on the meaning of *wold*, a place-name element which is ambiguous between woods and hills. Her book gives the impression that Warwickshire records are quite good on woodland topography but reveal little about management.

Non-documentary types of evidence – earthworks, coppice stools and other ancient trees, vegetation patterns, timbers in medieval buildings – are mentioned only briefly if at all. Although relatively few woods survive, such evidence exists in Warwickshire, and others such as David Morfitt have studied it. Documents are wonderful things, but have their limitations, such as that they leave out what was going on at times when people were not writing. The reader is left wondering how far the records are corroborated or contradicted by evidence on the ground. (I rarely go into a wood, even one better documented than any one of these, without learning something that the documents do not record).

Any discussion of early-medieval woodland must consider wood-pasture and the spread of coppicing. Dr Wager notes that Domesday Book omits about 40 woods recorded in later medieval documents. She supposes that the word 'grove', often applied to such woods, signifies coppice, and that these woods existed in 1086 but were not enumerated. Domesday would thus record only wood-pasture, in contrast to the theory of myself and others that in Warwickshire it includes wood-pasture and coppice but without distinguishing them. *Graf*, later 'grove', is one of many Old English woodland words whose exact meaning is lost. It is usually interpreted as a small wood; there is little direct evidence that it means a coppice-wood. Dr Wager proposes that Warwickshire Domesday records wood-pasture but omits woodland only, as well as pasture only. Since in this county woods are recorded by their dimensions, I find this unpersuasive: in some other counties Domesday records both types of woodland.

This book, like most others, has little to say on the paradox of wood-pasture. Cattle, sheep, pigs (except in autumn), and deer are not really woodland animals. Woodland plants are insubstantial, if not distasteful or poisonous. To sustain grazing implies a savanna-like ecosystem of grassland and scattered trees. Is this what much of medieval north-west Warwickshire looked like?

Reliance on written records means that various ambiguities remain untested. Is the author right in asserting that 'a wood recorded before 1350 ... was a wood in 1086'? Maybe so; but new woods did arise spontaneously even in times of general woodland destruction, notably between 1950 and 1975. Field evidence from woods whose first written record is late-medieval might settle the ques-

tion. Building timbers might throw some light on what wood-pasture trees were like.

An account of medieval churches, based on documents, would not be a complete history. The full story of how churches were built, used, and altered, and how their present differs from their medieval appearance, must depend on evidence embodied in the churches themselves. Written records, however, are essential in interpreting and dating such evidence. So it is with woods. This is a new and monumental study in the collection of documentary materials for ancient woodland, for which all woodland historians must be grateful. May others have the energy and courage to publish similar works for other counties; and may Dr Wager and others follow up many of the lines of inquiry suggested by this book.

OLIVER RACKHAM

CHRISTINE CARPENTER (ed), *The Armburgh papers: the Brokholes inheritance in Warwickshire, Hertfordshire and Essex c. 1417–c. 1453* (Boydell Press, 1998). viii + 214 pp. £35.

A quirk of fate preserved this exceptional document – edited and published here in its entirety – for posterity. The document was originally one of many acquired by the great seventeenth-century historian of Warwickshire, Sir William Dugdale. In 1660 it was ‘borrowed’ by his fellow antiquary, Dr Theophilus Howorth of Rochdale, never to be returned. It remained in the north-west, possibly because Howorth misread Mancetter in Warwickshire for Manchester in Lancashire, and was eventually donated to Chetham’s Library, where it has remained ever since, by the nineteenth-century Lancashire antiquary F. R. Raines. But for Howorth’s negligence or larceny the document would presumably have perished along with the rest of Dugdale’s remarkable collection of original documents in the fire that destroyed the Birmingham Reference Library in 1879.

The document, a single roll written on both sides and containing copies of letters written between 1417 and the early 1450s, owes its modern ‘rediscovery’ to Dr Michael Powell, librarian at Chetham’s. It has been transcribed and edited by Dr Christine Carpenter. As she points out, the Armburgh papers constitute the largest collection of private letters from the period to have been found since the letters of the Pastons, Stonors, Plumpton and Celys. Their significance is enhanced by the fact that they are mostly earlier in date than these other correspondences and derive from a family of more modest social standing, in the lower ranks of the gentry. This edition is therefore warmly to be welcomed. It will be of most value to the growing band of historians interested in the social and political aspirations and activities of the gentry in the

shires. Historians of gender will also find much valuable material, for most of the papers revolve around a property dispute in which women are the key links in the chain of inheritance although it is men who mainly pursue their claims and adjudicate the outcomes. Nor are the women mute. The single most strongly worded letter of the collection is from the pen of Joan, wife of Robert Armburgh. The powerful invective of this letter, written to an enemy, stands in stark contrast to the language of a largely unknown sequence of love poems. And there is much else besides. Literary historians can be expected to seize upon these fresh examples of early English prose and poetry.

Unlike the Paston letters, the Armburgh papers have little to say about estate management, let alone more mundane agricultural matters. Much is made of the allegedly illegal despoliation of woods (a classic act of asset stripping) at Radwinter, in north-west Essex, and there is passing reference to the price of malt. More interestingly, there is a protracted correspondence with the farmers of Mancetter about rents (arising from Robert Armburgh’s cash-flow problems), which they were understandably reluctant to pay when, if the dispute in progress over the title to the manor went the wrong way, they might find themselves having to pay twice. Nevertheless, the substantive agrarian interest of these papers lies less in this anecdotal information than in the direct light cast on the importance attached by the gentry to landed property (especially those who like Robert Armburgh – a younger son – had used marriage to enter the property-owning classes). Here is clear evidence of the difficulty of resolving disputed inheritances speedily and without great cost, of the potentially ruinous consequences of long-running litigation, and of the partiality of sheriffs, escheators, and the whole judicial process in this age of ‘bastard feudalism’. As Dr Carpenter points out (p. 40), ‘we can see, in both outline and detail, the truth of the accounts that emphasize the inseparability of private power and private influence from the official public processes and the fact that this was not seen normally as a form of “corruption” but accepted as part of the way the body politic functioned’. There is much here which therefore bears upon general issues. This is complemented by a wealth of detailed empirical information relating to specific places and a wide array of people, including some of the highest and most influential in the land.

Although the editor is quick to point out (p. 54) that ‘the roll and its language will repay further careful scrutiny’, she is well aware what a ripe plum Dr Powell has dropped on her plate and in her substantial and erudite introduction makes the most of the opportunity to have first bite at it. All future users of the Armburgh papers

will be indebted to her extended and meticulous discussion of the dispute that is the subject of the bulk of the papers. The broader lessons that she draws, in her consideration of the importance of the documents, will also set the agenda for future discussion, at least among social and political historians of the period. Regrets are few. Given the complex line of succession at the heart of the disputed inheritance, involving first and second marriages, legitimate and purportedly illegitimate offspring, and almost as many sudden deaths as in an E. M. Forster novel, a family tree would have been useful. So, too, would have been a separate listing of the senders and recipients of the letters. A glossary would also have helped to make the document more accessible to those less at home with the legal niceties of the early fifteenth century than the editor. These, however, are minor reservations. Chetham's Library has good reason to be grateful to Dr Carpenter, and she to be grateful to Chetham's, for this is clearly a case of the right document finding the right editor.

B. M. S. CAMPBELL

MARJORIE K. MCINTOSH, *Controlling misbehaviour in England, 1370-1600* (CUP, 1998). xviii + 289 pp. 23 tables; 22 graphs; 8 maps. £40.

This innovative study provides a major contribution to our understanding of fifteenth and sixteenth century society. McIntosh's source material is a sample of 267 public courts (manor, borough and hundred courts) from 255 villages, market towns and hundreds. The courts were chosen to ensure an even geographical spread, with most parts of England well represented. The court records were then searched for either presentments of people or the passing of a bye-law concerning 'misbehaviour', allowing the author to plot changing levels of concern between 1370 and 1600. To make this ambitious project manageable, generalizations and economies in method had to be made. Categories of misbehaviour are grouped into eleven main types, and these types are put into three clusters and a special case: the 'disharmony cluster' including scolding, eavesdropping, and night-walking; the 'disorder cluster' - sexual misconduct, badly governed or suspicious lifestyles, and disorderly alehouses; the 'poverty cluster' - hedge breaking, vagabondage or living idly, and receiving subtenants; and the special case of playing illegal games. Only the presence of concern for particular types of behaviour, not the depth of concern, is measured. The sheer quantity of records made sampling a necessity. Four to six consecutive leet courts for each duodecade were examined, representing two or three years' record. Thus the book can only claim to record minimum levels of concern about misbehaviour.

The research methods used are outlined in Part 1, along with the basic results: the incidence of the different types of offence, and the gender of offenders. The mechanisms of enforcement via local courts and other types of courts are discussed. This approach, with its long chronological range from the aftermath of the Black Death in the late fourteenth century to the late sixteenth century, its wide geographical spread, and its extensive use of local court records, provides some important findings. Heightened concern about social control first emerged in the late fifteenth century, but was highly localized, occurring most frequently in market towns. Concern became more general in the sixteenth century, peaking in the 1520s. As the century progressed, the role of local courts in enforcing control was eclipsed by other courts, church courts and quarter sessions, resulting in a decline in presentments relating to all of the issues surveyed except those in the 'poverty cluster' and gaming. So the level of concern about social control in the late sixteenth century, stressed in much of the existing literature, no longer appears 'special' or particularly high. The breakdown by gender also deflates the argument that the late sixteenth century saw a crisis in gender, with an increasing prosecution of women for scolding and sexual misconduct. McIntosh's figures suggest that scolding became *less* gendered over time. In the late fifteenth century scolds were predominantly female, but by the late sixteenth century this was no longer the case. Throughout the period, both men and women were presented for sexual misconduct. However, we should remember that this is a measure of the presence or absence of male or female prosecutions, not the number of individuals of either sex being prosecuted.

In Part 2 the book delves more deeply into the possible reasons for the patterns observed, the geographic, economic and social context of the different communities, and the ideological and religious influences on social control. It finds no marked contrast between arable and pastoral or moorland communities, although pastoral communities were slightly more likely to show concern. In the fifteenth century, the factors which correlated most strongly with controlling misbehaviour were whether the community was a market centre on an important trade route with a large population and higher level of wealth - all factors connected with increased commercialization. It is not surprising, therefore, that south-east England had the highest proportion of communities showing heightened concern. During the sixteenth century these contrasts disappeared as concern became more general. Surveying a selection of fifteenth century literature, McIntosh concludes that ideas about social order and harmony change little in this period, and that in both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the

elite literature discussing the problem of poverty lagged behind the practical actions being taken by more humble men in their role as jurors of local courts. Jurors were not acting as a result of changing directives from above, from church or government, but in reaction to the changing social and economic circumstances in which they found themselves. This carries the profound implication that concern for social control was an effect of commercialization rather than religious change. While Lollards and Puritans may have increased the intensity of social control in particular communities, they were not pioneers in bringing about social control.

Although packed with complicated arguments, methodology, and a heavy weight of evidence, the book is on the whole lucid, and the arguments clearly stated. If anything, McIntosh could have gone further with her conclusions. The implication that economic change, mediated through the changing social structure of communities, altered the way ordinary people interacted on a day to day level and ultimately affected elite ideologies is only hinted at. The extensive approach and sampling of courts may also be criticized, but here McIntosh is surely right to point out that the issue of social control has already been explored in many fine local studies; it is the wider understanding of change over time and geographical difference that has been lacking, and this is what she has provided. Perhaps the most serious criticism relates to the problem of using the records of only one type of jurisdiction, local courts. More could not be expected in a single study of this type, but future work might focus on how far the patterns observed are actually real changes in concern, and how far they are the result of shifting jurisdictions. Was the decline in concern in local courts the result of the expanding jurisdiction of quarter sessions in the late sixteenth century as McIntosh assumes? How do the changes observed relate to shifts in offences presented to church courts? These are minor reservations about the enormous value of this study. It is a book which needs to be taken seriously by all medieval and early modern historians interested in the interaction between economic, social and religious change, and in the development of government, poor relief and the legal system.

JANE WHITTLE

EILEEN SPRING, *Law, land, and family: aristocratic inheritance in England, 1300–1800* (University of North Carolina Press, 1993, pbk 1997). 199 pp. £13.50.

The paperback publication of *Law, land, and family* makes more widely available one of the two important but contrasting books on English landed society and upper class estate building published in the early 1990s. Sir John Habakkuk's monumental book *Marriage, debt*

and the estates system covered a vast range of problems, and illustrated his points with thousands of examples in over 700 pages of text. Eileen Spring's approach in what is fundamentally an extended essay, is to look at key pressure points in the system as it developed to provide quite different perspectives on its workings and the motives behind it. Habakkuk's book was criticized by more than one reviewer for being relentlessly masculine in its approach. Spring begins with chapters on the position of the heiress-at-law, and the widow, before considering the fate of younger children, and then looking at inheritance patterns, re-appraising the strict settlement, and considering the impact of her findings on theories of the family. She sees landowners' legal history 'as a long multi-faceted struggle against the common law rules of inheritance' (p. 16).

The argument advanced is that the strict settlement was primarily developed to find ways of reducing the proportion of inherited estates that passed to heiresses, widows and younger children both under medieval entails, and default inheritance customs. The position of the heiress-at-law is innovatively discussed, and the whole question of gender conflict and 'postponing females' (p. 94) in family inheritance is a recurrent and fruitful theme of the whole book. The argument is made vigorously and refreshingly, usually with great clarity. It is lightly footnoted mainly from secondary sources and legal cases and authorities rather than individual case studies. This paperback edition will provide scholars and students with an accessible, and readable reappraisal of what has always appeared a difficult and arcane topic.

JOHN BROAD

ROBERT A. DODGSHON, *From chiefs to landlords: social and economic change in the Western Highlands and Islands c. 1493–1820* (Edinburgh UP, 1998). xi + 265 pp. 25 figs; 16 tables. £16.95.

Having explored the origins of infield-outfield, runrig and many other aspects of the pre-improvement landscape of lowland Scotland, Professor Dodgshon has turned his attention in recent years to the Highlands. A good deal of the material contained in this book has appeared in journal articles over the last decade but, collected together in the present volume, it forms an impressive achievement.

Many books have been written about the evolution of Highland society and economy from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, including a good deal of romantic rubbish. In recent years, however, there has been an important burst of serious scholarship tackling the nature of change in the Highlands from a variety of angles, ranging from Bruce Lenman's focus on the Jacobites, and the politically-oriented approaches of

David Stevenson and Allan Macinnes, to the geographical perspective of Charles Withers. Professor Dodgshon's book differs markedly from these in that it eschews a narrative or strictly chronological treatment in favour of the type of closely-argued theoretical approach which is the hallmark of his work. There is certainly a mass of detail here, extracted from painstaking research among a range of central and private archives, but this detail is strictly marshalled in support of the theoretical arguments. The result is a book which is of major importance to our understanding of Highland clanship and its economic basis.

It is nothing new to emphasize that Highland society was far from being static and unchanging from the sixteenth century to the eve of Culloden, but rather in a state of constant change, flexible rather than conservative and certainly not an Iron Age tribal anachronism. However, the social and economic mechanisms of change and the constraints within which they operated are presented here with great clarity. While most recent writers have focused on the progressive political integration of the Highlands and Highland chiefs into British society, Professor Dodgshon structures his study around two major themes, closely inter-related but at contrasting scales: clanship and the changing role of chiefs on the one hand, and the structure and operation of the farming township on the other, stressing the tensions that existed between them.

The author's work on clanship has been influenced by anthropological theories regarding the nature and functioning of chiefdoms and represents a significant advance in our understanding of how clans actually worked. In the past, while it has been acknowledged that Highland society changed gradually, the Highland township has continued to be viewed as inefficient, anachronistic, an archaic survival with only limited capacity to adapt to change. Within the arable sector, for instance, there was a surprising variety of rotations, cultivation practices and systems of nutrient cycling. Here, however, the geographical diversity and flexibility of townships is emphasized. Township structure and development is illustrated by a wealth of documented examples. As the author says, there is no Pandora's box of undiscovered source material relating to the Highlands waiting to be opened, but much can be gleaned from detailed scrutiny of the surviving sources which have often in the past been interpreted in a superficial way. It is a pity that the tight structure which the author has adopted does not allow him to do more than mention the evidence for the late spread of nucleated settlement, open field systems and runrig in the Highlands with the advance of feudalism, replacing a system of dispersed settlement and enclosed fields, a process which was not complete even in the eighteenth century.

The final chapter unites the two themes of chief/landlord and ownership by analysing the condition of various estates on the eve of the clearances, emphasizing how estate owners faced problems, the limited options which were available to them, and the degree to which the interests of landlords and tenants were diverging as commercialization spread and clanship decayed. This is a book which deserves to be widely read not only for its insights about the Highlands but as a fascinating approach to the study of the pre-improvement world more generally.

IAN WHYTE

JOHN GWYNFOR JONES, *The Welsh gentry 1536-1640: images of status, honour and authority* (University of Wales Press, 1998). xxvi + 300 pp. £30.

Forty years ago Penry Williams bemoaned the fact that the Welsh gentry had received a discouragingly bad press from the Tudor period onwards. Thanks to the work of social historians like Richard Moore-Colyer, Philip Jenkins and David W. Howell, no such complaint could be voiced nowadays. As far as the Tudor and early Stuart period is concerned, no Welsh historian has done more to 'rehabilitate' the gentry than Professor John Gwynfor Jones, and he has an advantage not shared by the above-mentioned historians insofar as he is able to read, interpret and use to good effect valuable Welsh-language sources, notably the complex evidence of bardic verse. In a relatively short period of time he has produced a rich and impressive harvest of works which are now fundamental to our understanding of class, order and authority in the Tudor and early Stuart period. Major volumes such as *Concepts of order and gentility in Wales 1540-1640* (1992), *Early modern Wales c. 1525-1640* (1994), *The Wynn family of Gwydir: origins, growth and development c. 1490-1674* (1995) and *Law, order and government in Caernarfonshire 1558-1640* (1996), as well as a crop of well-regarded publications in the Welsh language, have established his reputation as a leading authority in matters relating to *uchelwriaeth*, local and regional government, and socio-cultural patterns during a period of significant change in community life and ideological values. It is no exaggeration to say that he has pioneered the method of analysing conceptual values and attitudes displayed by the Welsh ruling élite in Tudor times.

This current volume sets itself the goal of scrutinising the reaction of the landowning families to the new administrative authority established by the Union legislation of 1536-43, the influence exerted by the concept of the 'island empire' on their pursuit of public duties, and the degree to which loyalty to the Crown and to kindred groupings affected the public image which they cultivated in a period of social, religious and cultural

transformation. In six chapters replete with densely layered evidence, Professor Jones argues his case with characteristic attention to detail and a dispassionate air. At times, the discussion is excessively source-led, but one cannot fail to be impressed by the author's mastery of a wide range of contemporary writings, family correspondence, legal and administrative records, and in particular Welsh bardic and literary material. By eschewing idle speculation and rhetorical flourishes, Professor Jones displays many of his personal qualities as well as his devotion to his craft. The conclusion to the volume is a particularly fine example of how to bring together, in a sensible and illuminating way, evidence of how the Welsh gentry struggled (not always successfully) to reconcile their much-vaunted public image with their hidden private agenda during a period when powerful socio-economic forces were tugging them in different directions. Even if the unflattering image of the gentry still holds sway in the popular mind, this admirable volume will help to set the record straight as far as Tudor and early Stuart Wales is concerned.

Scholars and especially undergraduates and postgraduates will be pleased to find an up-to-date bibliography in this volume, but it is a pity that the notes and references which so greatly help to enrich our understanding of the manner in which the argument has been constructed, have been consigned to the end of the work. Professor Jones and his readers deserve better.

GERAINT H. JENKINS

MALCOLM WANKLYN (ed), *Inventories of Worcestershire landed gentry, 1537-1786* (Worcestershire Historical Society, New Series 16, 1998). xxix + 475 pp. £29.95 incl p & p, from Robin Whittaker, Worcestershire County Record Office, County Hall, Worcester WR5 2NP.

Among editors of county record society publications a collection of probate inventories ranks high among the subjects to be covered, that is, if a volume on the source has not already been produced. I do not need to explain the value of such a book to agricultural historians but, of course, its usefulness does depend on decisions made on such matters as the period covered, sampling procedure and indexing. Dr Wanklyn has side-stepped some of the problems by focusing upon a particular group of county society, the gentry. As a result, he is able to include all surviving probate inventories of Worcestershire gentry over three and a half centuries. The introduction is brief but informative, succinctly summing up current debates over the use of probate inventories, but making no attempt to analyse the data in the documents themselves. The index refers to all the items covered but the most numerous categories, the ones that agricultural

historians are going to be interested in, are recorded merely under their first entry.

This volume does not deal with the whole of the landed society of Worcestershire, omitting the peers at the top and the people deemed personally to be farming their land at the bottom. Dr Wanklyn's distinction between the landed gentleman and the gentleman farmer is an important one and this makes the group dealt with here a socially cohesive one. On the other hand, it does prevent the historian of rural society from examining a particularly interesting set of individuals, those operating at the edges of gentility, either striving to get in or struggling to remain there. Apart from looking at other sources, he uses the possession of specific goods as indicators of gentility. Ironically, this means that the rising freeholder with social aspirations and the money to buy status symbols will be netted in the collection.

Most of the individuals covered here were farming the demesne at the time of their death, though their role as agricultural innovators seems rather muted, judging from the lack of references to new crops. Hop production, a local specialization, is well-represented and there is an interesting example of commercial woad growing on William Baldwyn's estate at Longborough. Technological developments such as the switch from oxen to horses and the introduction of the heavy four-wheeled waggon can also be charted. Because the information relates to specific properties it is possible to pinpoint changes taking place over time. In general, the Worcestershire gentry seem to have farmed in much the same way (and often on the same scale) as the farmers around them. To appreciate fully what they were doing, the reader will have to analyse the material for himself or herself. They will be helped by the care with which Dr Wanklyn has put the volume together. It is well-produced and the information set out in an easily digestible way. This is a fine volume and useful source for agricultural and social historians of early modern England and perhaps the first of similar studies elsewhere.

PETER EDWARDS

CHARLES F. FOSTER, *Cheshire cheese and farming in the north west in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Arley Hall Press, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 6NA, 1998). xii + 116 pp. 21 illus; 4 maps. £8.95.

This book is the second volume in a series of publications based upon the archives of the Arley Hall estate in Cheshire, the aim of which is to examine aspects of the social and economic life of the area in the century or so after the Restoration. When reviewing the first book in this journal in 1993 I looked forward to the second volume and having now read it have found it as interesting and informative as the previous one. This is not to say

that the book is without faults. As the publication of what is essentially a local history project, it possesses the strengths and weaknesses of the genre. It has a good sense of place, an intimate knowledge of the inhabitants of the district and a wealth of local material. On the other hand, it is often rather parochial and at times fails to engage with current debates in rural history.

The book is divided into three sections, loosely unified by the theme of dairy farming. The first part deals with the development of dairy farming in Cheshire from the mid-seventeenth century, the second with the lay-out of a late-seventeenth century dairy farmhouse and the third with farming in the district in the mid-eighteenth century. Readers who have not read the initial volume will be at no great disadvantage but it would help them if they were to read it first. All three sections have valuable points to make but they are not really integrated with each other. Indeed, much of the third section is concerned with agricultural practices c. 1750 on the demesne of Arley Hall, which was a mixed farm rather than a dairy one. Nonetheless, because the account is based upon a very detailed set of estate accounts agricultural historians will find it very useful as an illustration of input costs as well as the value of various sources of income. Some assumptions are made when calculating the figures, but the reader is told what they are and he or she is given a good deal of valuable data.

The most important section is the first one, covering as it does a subject of national significance. The author pinpoints the mid-seventeenth century (21 October 1650, to be precise) as the time when the cheese trade with London was established. With this vast market opening up for them, Cheshire farmers responded by converting to dairy production, raising output by increasing the size of the herds and selling off all but dairy replacements. Farms grew bigger by enclosing the wastes and engrossing holdings. This was standard practice but it is useful to have the evidence. There is much of value here, particularly in the discussion of the ports, the trade routes and the people involved – the farmers, ships' captains and cheesemongers and factors. However, I question the timing of the development of the trade. According to this chronology, north Shropshire was in advance of Cheshire since it already had a thriving cheese trade by the middle of the seventeenth century. In both counties the years after the Restoration period were crucial ones, but I suspect that in Cheshire too there was a longer lead-in period than is suggested in this book.

Because this book deals with the development of Cheshire's most important agricultural produce, cheese, it will have wide appeal. Historians of early modern English agriculture and commerce will read it with profit. Other matters of general interest can be discerned too,

as, for example, the development of specialist farming, the growth of the London food market, the modernization of tenures and the demise of the small farmer. The author provides a well-documented local study and at times tries to put the experience of the farmers of the district into a wider context. However, this tends to be rather generalized and unselective. Farming in north-western England was far more varied than the title or the contents of the book imply. He also misses one or two important issues. At least he does present material which others can use, and I hope in due course to read the third volume in the series.

PETER EDWARDS

EDWARD ROYLE (ed), *Issues of regional identity, in honour of John Marshall* (Manchester UP, 1998). xiv + 252 pp. 10 tables; 23 figs; 1 illus. £40.

These eleven essays are a fitting tribute to John Marshall's long and distinguished career as a regional historian. He above all others has advocated the study of 'total history' at the manageable level of the region. As Elizabeth Roberts and Oliver Westall make clear in the final chapter of this *estschrift*, he has been both earnest in his advocacy of this approach and immensely productive in his studies of north-western England. He is a very worthy recipient of this honour.

John Marshall has always insisted on the elusive nature of regions and their instability over time. This may be said to be the central theme of this book. As Edward Royle says in his Introduction, the historical concept of the 'region' is frequently used but difficult to define. It is a term of convenience for the historian, 'located specifically in time as well as space.' Norman McCord draws on his vast experience of studying the history of Northumberland and Durham to show how the concept of 'the north-east region' means different things at different times. The area dominated by the mining and export of coal in the nineteenth century did not form an obvious region in the Middle Ages. Moreover, 'the north-east' can be divided into smaller regions for particular purposes. Thus, Winifred Stokes identifies a distinctive financial and business community that controlled the mines and transport systems of south Durham. On the other hand, many regional cultural identities have deeper historical roots. Some of these roots are identified in John Langton's essay on south-Lancashire Catholicism from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

The physical setting is an obvious determinant of part of the nature of regions, but how far can we go in asserting its importance? Sidney Pollard looks at well-defined physical regions in many parts of Europe where the geographical environment has conditioned economic

activities and the whole culture of the inhabitants. He concludes that while we can learn from the broad comparisons between regions with similar physical settings, geographical conditions do not determine human economies and culture. Human activity, or lack of activity, shapes the nature of individual regions. Environmental determinism is also dismissed by John Walton and Luis Castells in their comparative study of the Basque Country and north-western England. The broad similarities between the two regions mask very different histories.

The editor likens the concept of a region to the physical property of the Cheshire cat. Image is all important. Robin Butlin contrasts the images of the Fens conjured up by outsiders, who thought in terms of monotonous waste, isolation and the need for 'improvement', with the introverted way of life and beliefs of the smallholders and cottagers – 'of brutish uncivilised tempers envious of all others' as Camden thought them. Edward Royle argues that the feeling that inhabitants have for a place, illogical, nostalgic, romantic though it may be, can become a historical 'fact'. David Neave shows that Yorkshire's boundaries were neither consistent nor logical, nor did they embrace a single region, yet Yorkshire as an idea has survived its abolition as an administrative unit. The East Riding has refused to die and Humberside has departed unmourned. The identity of Wales is as elusive as that of Yorkshire. Neil Evans looks at how north Wales was, and is, very different from south Wales in terms of physical structure, language and culture, and he identifies three separate units within the north.

The editor observes that regional identity in England has lacked a political dimension. The nineteenth century saw the growth not of regionalism but of provincialism. Instead, the administrative unit has served as a substitute. Will the new Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly cause the English to think more seriously about their own regional identities? If so, then the politicians should listen to historians. These essays make it clear that regions considered from the bottom up exist first of all in the minds of local people. The boundaries and cultures of English regions change gradually over time, but many regions have deep roots in the past.

The regional approach to the study of history continues to stimulate enquiries. Even the vexed question of regional identity is productive, as these essays demonstrate so well. Michael Winstanley's piece on 'Women and the grocery trade in Britain, 1851–1911' takes regional analysis in a new direction. He analyses the remarkably varied pattern of female employment in shops in different parts of Britain and shows that these can be explained only by studies of regional economies and culture.

DAVID HEY

DAVID KERR CAMERON, *The English fair* (Sutton Publishing, 1998). viii + 240 pp. 122 illus. £25.

If Aberystwyth is a highly desirable place to be for much of the year, it is best avoided in the dank dark days of early winter when the Celtic gloom settles in with a vengeance. Yet, as if to anaesthetize the denizens of the town against the miseries of the rainswept months to come, the annual fair in all its tawdry splendour descends in late November to the delight of children and the unfathomable gloom of parents. Devoid of the primitive excitement of the past when, as David Kerr Cameron points out, the fair 'focused the wild spirits of the community' the modern fair, be it at Aberystwyth or elsewhere, is a travesty, a mere charade, an opportunity for children to have 'fun' and for fathers to grumble at the expense and ghastliness of it all.

With the growth of auction markets, improvements in communications and the shifting of periodic fairs to market centres close to the railway lines, the commercial significance of the fair had begun to decline by the mid-nineteenth century. Meanwhile, the baleful moanings of nonconformists and the hypocritical cant of Victorian moralists conspired to suppress the more salacious aspects of the old fairs so that with the passing of the Fairs Act of 1871 they became mere shadows of 'their former rollicking selves'. Rural fairs especially, with their opportunities for revelry, anarchy, and riot, began to fade from the country calendar so that landmarks which had punctuated the drudgery of the year for both farmer and labourer gradually disappeared.

In this beautifully illustrated volume Mr Cameron not only discusses the origins and commercial significance of fairs in medieval and early modern England, but offers a detailed and almost encyclopaedic account of the fair in all its guises. Cattle fairs, goose fairs, cloth fairs, onion fairs, sheep fairs, mop fairs; all played a major role in a society moving increasingly towards economic integration. Early chapters underline the important part played by the Church (which became greatly enriched by the profits of fairs) in the encouragement of the pursuit of Mammon, while the significance of the wool trade both to the Church and the burgeoning bourgeoisie is closely examined. It is difficult today to imagine the sheer scale of some of the great international fairs of eastern England during medieval times, typified by St Ives, Stourbridge (Cambs), Boston and Scarborough. Accessible by land and sea, these epic commercial occasions attracted Hanseatic merchants, cloth traders from Ghent and Amiens, Norwegian peddlers trading in amber and all manner of men selling Gascon wines, spices from the east and swords from Spain. Many of the horse and cattle fairs where 'a man took his life and his pocket-book in his hands' were of a similar scale and Horncastle, the

greatest horse fair in Europe by the nineteenth century, became the venue of cavalry officers continent-wide keen to restock their squadrons. Then, of course, there was the commerce in human stock; the undignified humiliating drama of the hiring fair to which 'milling market of rootless humanity' Cameron devotes a whole moving chapter.

But even here among the poor and dispossessed were the fiddlers, jugglers, cheapjacks, stalls and sideshows invariably associated with the fair. In describing these aspects of the fair with its boundless and sometime irresistible temptations for the innocent, Cameron is in his element. Here we have the fair as a safety valve; the world turned upside down when, for a brief period, men could forget the tears of things in an atmosphere of bacchanalian licentiousness. In a chapter devoted to the London fairs, which by the nineteenth century had degenerated from serious trading ventures to opportunities for the pursuit of frivolous pleasure, Cameron writes with relish of the 'Bards, Whores, Pickpockets, Jilts, and Cheats' who graced the occasion. What fun it must have been to drift from cockpit to whorehouse (taking in a little bear-baiting or a dog fight on the way), before rounding off the day with gin-and-water and a well-piled plate of roast ox!

On the whole a respectable body, readers of the *Agricultural History Review* will enjoy these highly-coloured descriptions of social behaviour for which most have no longer the taste nor inclination. They will find neither tables, statistics, footnotes, nor bibliography. They will, moreover, become irritated by some of the more heavy-handed descriptive writing and the over-reliance on Defoe and Cobbett. Yet few will deny that in its richness of anecdote and quality of illustration and production it comprises an admirable companion volume to William Addison's *English Fairs and Markets* of the 1950s.

R. J. MOORE-COLYER

ROBERT MALCOLMSON AND STEPHANOS MASTORIS,
The English pig: a history (Hambledon Press, 1998). xvi
+ 160 pp. 47 illus; 17 plates. £14.95.

The preface of any book is an illuminating but often overlooked section. It is here that the author is allowed a modicum of space to justify what follows and, as such, represents a brief insight into what rationale was adopted, what approach was followed and, sometimes, why some areas were considered worthy of inclusion or omission.

We have here, once again it must be said, the pig in its social, allegorical and biological glory. But why the *English*? Surely the advice of Marshall, offered in the early years of the nineteenth century, should have pertained?

He considered that 'natural, not fortuitous, lines are requisite to be traced; agricultural, not political, distinctions are to be regarded'. Although admittedly writing as someone passed over for a grand role, his position has much merit in suggesting that political boundaries are artificial and should not be the bases for matters rural. I commend Marshall to a wider readership and would suggest that Malcolmson and Mastoris would have been wise to have absorbed his counsel.

In the preface we learn that 'England rather than the British Isles is central. Pigs were less common in Scotland, and Ireland is its own world. Occasionally we do make use of a piece of evidence from Scotland or Wales'. In a few words, a glittering collection of analysis, data, anecdotes, opinion and intelligent discourse is summarily dismissed if its provenance is not south of Hadrian's Wall or east of Offa's Dyke (to say nothing of the role of the Irish Sea as a barrier). Such power at one's fingertips. But this decision carries with it a further problem: Ireland. If ever there was an example of the essentiality of the pig as a provider of food and living to an impoverished and dispossessed sub-stratum of society (the theme of the cottagers' pig is developed in the book, but only for the *English*), then this was it – and this was before the Famine. As Youatt remarked on the Irish pig in his seminal work, somewhat patronisingly but fairly accurately, 'on him the poor man reckons for the payment of his rent'. The Irish pig was also an important contributor to trade and commerce – large and increasing numbers were imported into Liverpool during the early decades of the nineteenth century. Ireland cannot be regarded 'as its own world'.

What of Wales's 'piece of evidence'? Surprisingly (if one limits one's reading on matters porcine to this book), the pig was also important here. Davies reported in 1813 that large numbers were sent from Anglesey (origin Ireland?) into the English markets and a thriving droving trade was established reminiscent of the probably more important cattle movements across Wales from Ireland into the fattening pastures of England. Store pigs were sent from the Principality to the dairying regions of Wiltshire and Gloucestershire and often made the difference between profit and loss for milk producers. The bacon, which was considered the finest in the country, was dispatched to London. In addition the cottagers' pig was now replaced by the miners' pig (but with the same purpose).

And so to Scotland where 'pigs were less common'. Why didn't the Scots like pork? Is there still an abhorrence of it? What are the origins of this? Nothing. A golden opportunity missed. An invaluable academic inquiry sacrificed on the altar of adherence to political boundaries (it is tempting to write 'political expedience'

but in these days of devolution, such language might be regarded as unduly intemperate).

What of matters artistic and allegorical? The pig has traditionally been employed to describe some of the basest of human characteristics (although, more recently, we have witnessed a rehabilitation – pigs as cuddly toys, no less), but the wider role of the animal in history, art, literature and general matters cultural is fascinating and has occupied the minds and pens of many. The theme is a well, and better, trod path than we find here. *The ubiquitous pig* (1992) and *Farm animal portraits* (1996), to which the authors do refer but in the briefest possible of footnotes, are in fact splendid and copiously illustrated accounts of the relationships between pigs and people, with the latter tome being a superb compilation of pig paintings complemented by a detailed text. The earlier, but equally well-prepared *Pigs – a troughful of treasures* (1981) does not appear, however, even to warrant a mention. Neither does *The symbolic pig* (1961), which really is a classic. Rather more obscure (as it is from the USA, although it should be noted that Malcolmson is from Ontario – perhaps anything south of the St Lawrence was not considered appropriate; we are back to political barriers again) is *The hog book* (1978). Any aspirant authors wishing to delve into the subject would do well to immerse themselves in these texts and reflect that, rather pessimistically, what has gone before is unlikely ever to be bettered. The book provided by Malcolmson and Mastoris is an eloquent proof of this dictum.

Whilst *The English pig* is comprehensive in its coverage, its thesis is not novel. Its value is in the copious number of citations included (a large proportion of which have, incidentally, appeared elsewhere in other anthologies), not in the originality of its theme – there has been much written on the development of pig breeds, the omnivorous habits of the animal, its invaluable role as a provider of meat for the general population and how this has impacted on the development of human society in general. Human:pig interactions in their widest possible context and interpretation have also been comprehensively addressed in many recent, more scholarly and more readable publications.

The pig is certainly a topical subject (witness the media coverage given in the UK to the 'Tamworth Two' and the popularity of the overly-sentimental *Babe*) and the book will undoubtedly 'do well'. But this probably says more for the short term memory together with the very modest breadth and depth of reading of 'coffee table' browsers and 'popular' reviewers to whom, wittingly or unwittingly, it will undoubtedly appeal.

JULIAN WISEMAN

CHRISTINE CLARK, *The British malting industry since 1830* (Hambledon Press, 1998). xx + 300 pp. 40 illus; 24 figs; 21 tables. £35.

Malting, with its distinctive buildings and traditional working practices, is a fascinating industry. It ranks along with milling as one of the principal processing industries for the produce of arable farming. Yet malting has attracted little detailed historical study, especially in comparison with brewing, the main customer for the maltster. The balance has been largely redressed with the appearance of this detailed study.

The book started out as a history of one firm, R. & W. Paul of Ipswich, but, as the expansion of Pauls in recent decades has encompassed much of the British malting industry, the extension of the study to cover the whole industry was a natural and justified step. Pauls' absorption of other firms has also had the happy result for the historian of bringing together many of the surviving records of the industry. The survival of records has been extremely patchy, and few have been deposited in record offices. The maltsters have now been able to make more of their own records available for study, it seems.

As a major processor of agricultural produce, malting has traditionally been a rural industry, located more for its raw materials than for its markets. To a considerable extent that continues to hold good, with maltings to be found in such market towns as Grantham and Wallingford. There has been a steady regional shift over the decades towards the best barley lands of the east and south, and this in turn reflects the needs of the brewers for quality malt. The close links between brewing and malting form one of the main themes of Christine Clark's book. Indeed, she would argue that at many points the maltster's dependence upon the brewer's demands has produced a relationship amounting to dominance on the part of the brewer. Dominance took many forms. Brewers might own their own maltings. There were links of various types and degrees of formality with the independent maltsters through contracts, loans, shareholdings, family connections. The relationship was not entirely one-sided. Many maltsters made a very comfortable living, and there were times when it was the maltster's capital that might keep a brewery afloat rather than the other way about. However, the long-term trend was for the brewer to become more influential. Periods of over-capacity in the trade, such as the inter-war years, led to rationalization that was more at the expense of the maltster than the brewer. The cycle was broken only from the 1960s onwards, when restructuring in brewing began to change the position of brewery-owned malting in the industry, and the growth of malt whisky distilling and of export markets

began to reduce malting's dependence on the brewers of the United Kingdom.

A second main theme running through this study is that of concentration within the industry. In common with most businesses, the course of malting's history has seen an enormous decline in the number of firms. The scattered rural industry of the mid-nineteenth century with many thousand separate businesses has given way to an industry dominated by a few major companies investing heavily in large-scale, technology-driven processing. The independent maltsters have had their share of large mergers. At the same time, many of the established malting families, such as the Fisons, the Pauls and the Cherry-Downses, remained centrally active even in the large publicly-quoted companies. This was a feature in the early history of Associated British Maltsters, formed as the result of a multiple merger in 1928. In common with many industrial mergers of that period this firm failed to integrate its constituent parts into one strong body. Malting's story thus has parallels with some other areas of business history. The large-scale involvement of international capital has been missing until recently. The observation that Pauls have recently been sold to Greencore, an Irish-based multinational, closes the book in a manner that sets the scene for a sequel.

There are copious appendices giving statistical detail. A glossary might usefully have been added, for there are a number of occasions when technical terms peculiar to this industry are introduced with less explanation than the uninitiated might prefer. Details can go awry sometimes, especially in the minefield of corporate names.

The traditional working practices of malting have all but gone, and with them the most distinctive buildings, but this trade retains its fascination, and has repaid a full study.

JONATHAN BROWN

HARRIET RITVO, *The platypus and the mermaid and other figments of the classifying imagination* (Harvard UP, 1997, pbk 1998). xiv + 288 pp. Illus. £9.95.

Anyone who has come across the gloriously convoluted structures of Jeremy Bentham's chrestomathic system of education, particularly his 'tabular diagram of the principal and most extensive branches of Art and Science (Eudaemonics)' framed in the exhaustively bifurcate mode' (yielding at the fourth level of subdivision eight categories including the alegomorphic, morphoscopic, physiurgoscopic and anthropurgoscopic), can only rejoice that some figments of the classifying imagination have failed to exert an enduring influence on educational practice. But occasional instances of a taxonomy ill-conceived or still-born only serve to underline the

central and generally triumphant role of taxonomy in the production, dissemination and communication of knowledge, and the organization of its associated institutional structures. Noting with approval the anthropologist's dictum that classifications of animals are apt to tell us as much about the classifiers as the classified, Harriet Ritvo explores the nineteenth century's taxonomically-challenging encounter with an ever-widening sample of the world's fauna. The book therefore begins where her previous volume (*The animal estate: the English and other creatures in the Victorian age*, Harvard UP 1987) left off, focusing explicitly on issues of classification in human-animal interactions. Like its predecessor, the book is based on evidence relating to Britain and to British encounters overseas.

The argument is developed in five pithily titled chapters, each divided into attractively labelled subsections. 'The Point of Order' explores the discovery and classification of the Australian fauna, and the developing challenge to the Linnean system of taxonomy, a process resulting in an emergent ethnocentric, at times even localized approach to classification. A section 'Earth, Sea and Sky' at the end of the chapter discusses the enduring uncertainty, evident even among zoologists, about the true taxonomic status of such creatures as bats and whales. 'Flesh Made Word' traces the evolution of naming practices, touching on such issues as the changing connotations of the term 'nondescript' and the developing but contentious practice of discoverers' parenthetically appending their own names or those of their patrons to the Latinate binomials of new discoveries, a process which led to excessive splitting and ultimately to calls for a return to simple vernacular nomenclatures. The chapter also surveys the use of taxonomic subdivision by breeders of farm and other domesticated animals. In 'Barring the Cross', the author turns her attention to problems of identity, and the fascination exerted by real and imagined hybrids. These could be a source of pain as well as pleasure. Innocuous intra-specific crosses entirely acceptable to those unconcerned with the purity of their bloodlines became a feared source of contamination to pedigree breeders. Pedigreed elites and favoured breeds or animals were themselves held to possess prepotency or the heightened power to shape progeny. The chapter ends by discussing reactions to human difference. Monsters or freaks, human and animal, are the subject of 'Out of Bounds'. Classification depended heavily on supposed causation, resulting in taxonomies which mixed description and explanation, the latter often revealing a moral dimension. Finally, 'Matters of Taste' ranges over taxonomic practice as applied to different species of game, meat-eating and vegetarianism, proscribed and permitted meats, and in reaction to cannibalism.

One can only admire the extraordinarily wide compass of the author's research and the intellectual skills which have turned her disparate material into a coherent and stimulating argument. But where it touches on the interests of agricultural historians, the book is not beyond criticism. Although it is not too surprising that a historian of science and ideas should show some reluctance to engage in economic analysis, the discussion of livestock breeding would have been more persuasive had economic issues been granted greater attention. Pedigree cattle breeders founded 'tribes' or 'families' less in imitation of the practices of zoological taxonomy than as a means of raising the unit cost of their cattle through the simultaneous creation of brand identity and scarcity. Within their world, cows became more valuable than bulls and published pedigrees were structured accordingly, in subtle but significant contrast to the male-oriented emphases of human genealogies.

JOHN R. WALTON

LIAM BRUNT, *Turning water into wine: new methods of calculating farm output and new insights into rising crop yields during the agricultural revolution* (Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History, University of Oxford, 2, 1995); LIAM BRUNT, *Nature or nurture? Explaining English wheat yields in the agricultural revolution* (Discussion Papers 19, 1997); DAVID STEAD, *An arduous and unprofitable undertaking: the enclosure of Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire* (Discussion Papers 26, 1998); OLIVER GRANT, *The diffusion of the herringbone parlour: a case study in the history of agricultural technology* (Discussion Papers 27, 1998).

From its inception in November 1995 until December 1998, there have been 27 contributions to the University of Oxford series of Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History. Four of these have been on agricultural history. Copies are available on personal request to Dr Avner Offer at Nuffield College.

In *Turning water into wine*, Liam Brunt collates and then presents new ways of calculating likely farm output from the farm data in Arthur Young. He compares a traditional method of calculating output in wheat equivalent terms by using wheat and other crop price ratios, with a new method which does not depend on the availability of price data. Instead this uses wheat yields and the acreage distributions of other crops to estimate wheat equivalent output. The conclusions which emerge have particular relevance for the mix of crops, or the crop rotations. The fact that there were mixes of crops in crop rotations is not surprising, but the estimated magnitude of the effect of each crop on a subsequent wheat yield is. The other cereal crops compete with wheat – that is they reduce what might have been the

yield of wheat in their absence – but the presence of pulse and root crops in rotations aided the ultimate yield of wheat. In *Nature or nurture*, Liam Blunt reinterprets the level of English wheat yields c. 1770 by developing a model which looks at God-given environmental factors – climate and soil characteristics – relative to man-made technological factors such as drainage, new crops (turnips) and new implements (seed drills). The proving ground for the model is Arthur Young's data for yields, technological attributes, land use and others factors, married to twentieth-century land classification data and regional weather data. Nature was important in explaining differences across countries, but the explanation for improving yields within England was that nurture (acquired advantage) was more important than nature (natural endowment). This is not necessarily surprising, but within it there is another more startling conclusion. It was not due to some of the traditional reasons listed by agricultural historians – not due to a move to mixed farming, which surely knocks additional manure on the head, not due to the production of clover, and not due to more frequent ploughing. Instead it hinged on the turnip (also a champion of good old-fashioned agricultural history), the seed drill, liming and marling, and improved drainage. In both of Blunt's papers there is food for thought, but the many sensitivities involved in the econometric modelling should not yet encourage us to rewrite the textbooks.

David Stead's contribution to this series is an in-depth investigation of one Oxfordshire enclosure, the village of Stanton Harcourt. Ostensibly it is set up as a contribution to the debate over rent adjustments as a motive for enclosure, or as an outcome from enclosure (cf. Allen, Clark, McCloskey and others). In practice this paper is more than this because apart from the survival of rental series that span the passage of the enclosure, there is also a cache of correspondence relating to the opposition and horse trading that preceded the passing of the act (in 1773), and this is explored in great detail. On both counts this is an interesting paper, but to suggest that any major conclusions emerge that agricultural historians might find defining in terms of current debates will be to place too much weight on a sample of one, and therefore I am not inclined to report the major conclusions. However, an important aspect of this example is the exploration of tenures other than rack rents.

The final paper in this series is Oliver Grant's analysis of the diffusion of a specific piece of agricultural technology, the herringbone milking parlour. It was a means of mechanically milking a large number of cows by one person. It was invented in Australia in 1908–9, but by about 1960 only two per cent of British cows were milked this way, though 70 per cent were by the early 1980s. The

seemingly simple brief of this study is to ask why was there a seventy-year delay between invention and adoption. The essential explanation is the amalgamation of a number of factors which can best be described as 'learning by doing'. And because the original technology required adaptation there was no obvious advantage in early adoption. Indeed, later adoption, which avoided investment in intermediate systems allowed advantages to accrue by the process of technological leapfrogging.

MICHAEL TURNER

NOEL G. EDWARDS, *Ploughboy's progress: the life of Sir George Edwards* (Centre of East Anglian Studies, University of East Anglia, 1998). 156 pp. 9 illus. £10 incl p & p.

Agricultural trade unionism has, with good reason, been historically linked to the few heroic figures who dedicated a lifetime to championing the cause. Rarely could an undertaking have offered so little promise. Apathy and acquiescence characterized the majority of farm labourers; failure and disappointment awaited those who attempted the Sisyphean task of organizing the rural working class. Whereas most activists have faded into relative obscurity, George Edwards, like Joseph Arch before him, proved to be a notable exception. As a natural leader he rose from the humblest beginnings to win popular accolade as a Member of Parliament. Previously recounted in a volume of autobiography entitled *From crow scaring to Westminster*, published in 1922, this epic journey now forms the kernel of a full life story by his adopted son, Noel Edwards, in what is, understandably, very much a work of piety.

Why George Edwards turned to social and political action is immediately clear. As a baby boy he was placed in a workhouse, separated from his mother, when his father received imprisonment for stealing turnips to feed the family. From the age of six, arduous agricultural work robbed him of his childhood and youth. Poverty, tyranny, exploitation and victimization were to be commonplace experiences. Fortunately in his case, a religious conversion kept him on the straight and narrow. Supported by a steadfast wife, who laid the foundations for his self-education, he was to serve the Primitive Methodists as a lay preacher for sixty years. Moreover, this deep faith underpinned a single-minded crusade to improve the lives of those at the bottom of the rural hierarchy: he became a 'union man' in close association with Joseph Arch.

The vicissitudes of agricultural trade unionism are all-too-familiar. After initial success, internal divisions contributed to the demise of Arch's union in the 1890s. By this time George Edwards was a well-known and trusted figure whom the farm labourers could turn to

for leadership. Despite falling foul of employers, and being badly let down by the very people he sought to serve, he gave crucial support to a Norfolk-based union in 1889, to be followed by the Eastern Counties Agricultural Labourers' and Small Holders' Union in 1906. Now in his late 50s, he acted as general secretary and organizer, travelling hundreds of miles to build up membership. No other person did more to lay the foundation of what soon became known as the National Union of Agricultural Workers, with branches in almost every county of England and Wales. Given past failures, this was a remarkable achievement.

Extending his involvement to embrace local issues and political campaigning, George Edwards served as a local councillor, later becoming the first direct Labour representative on Norfolk County Council. Such was his standing that he was nominated as Labour Party candidate in the 1918 general election, although it was not until the South Norfolk by-election two years later that the rural workers could claim a worthy successor to Joseph Arch in the Commons to represent their interests. Time and again, as during confrontational strikes (which he strove to avoid) and official wage negotiations, he was always at hand to provide counsel. Still braving opposition from various quarters, to say nothing of rival unions, he soldiered on, remaining deeply involved in public life until his last days.

One cannot fail to be impressed by his personal qualities and level of commitment. Here was an able, courageous and principled man, showing little regard for his own physical well-being, suffering tragedies in private life, yet never giving up the fight even following those dark days when he 'lost all faith' in his fellow workers. Few could have doubted his sincerity or fail to show respect. It is a measure of George Edwards's integrity that he sought no material reward (upon settling his estate a balance of £10 remained), but at least his public role received due recognition when he was knighted in 1930.

George Edwards's life presents a compelling reminder of the harsh world of ordinary farm workers and the nature of the struggle to overcome the disadvantages and injustices that blighted rural communities. If the 'horny handed' are indeed to become objects of scorn within New Labour circles, then his example can claim some value if only as an inspiration to others. The author, benefiting from access to family records, has crafted an honest tribute replete with evocative memories. Whilst it eschews a concluding evaluation, misspells Tillet (p. 142), and provides but scant acknowledgement to the source material, we are nonetheless mercifully spared the sociological jargon so beloved by academia. For both his enterprise and devotion, Noel Edwards deserves commendation.

DAVID A. PRETTY

DAVID MATLESS, *Landscape and Englishness* (Reaktion Books, 1998). 367 pp. 80 illus. £25.

The question of how people's environment and cultural identity shape each other is an important one for agricultural and rural historians. It must be said at once that *Landscape and Englishness* is concerned principally with the period from 1918 to the early 1950s, with some attention given to more recent decades but virtually none to the time preceding it. Perhaps the readers of this journal in particular should also be informed that, although David Matless lectures in Geography at the University of Nottingham, his methodology combines documentary research with textual deconstruction. Considering a wide range of publications, such as topographical guides, official reports, political tracts, documents from conservation bodies, architectural treatises and nature guides, as well as posters, photographs and cartoons (the illustrations are integrally part of the book's content rather than ornaments among its text), he shows how the English landscape has been the prime subject of rival visions of national identity, informing people's ideals of the past and, through selected features of its contemporary character, suggesting future developments in society and culture. Demonstrating the depth as well as the breadth of his research and gladly engaging with the issues raised, Matless presents this material clearly and cogently, with an alertness to thematic relationships, sub-textual messages and unintended ironies, making his book as thought-provoking as it is informative. It is also, for a work of scholarship, remarkably entertaining: I smiled often and actually laughed out loud on two occasions as I read it.

Unfortunately, I have to qualify my praise with one serious criticism. Matless argues that the equation of landscape and Englishness, often flavoured by nostalgia, is a recent cultural formation, but it is unclear from what date he sees it to have originated. This equation certainly exists in H. V. Morton's *In search of England* (1927) and S. P. B. Mais's topographical books published during the 1930s, and both of these authors are briefly discussed by Matless. As he barely glimpses further back than 1918, Matless is able to suggest that this equation gradually emerges after that date; yet it would be more accurate to suggest that it was already well established, taking on different forms of expression in response to changing aspirations and anxieties. In *England and Englishness: ideas of nationhood in English poetry 1688-1900* (1990), John Lucas has shown how earlier poets were very concerned with tradition as a factor in English cultural identity, whether they decided to adhere to or rebel against the values they perceived within it, and that predominantly they expressed their positions through rural subjects or imagery. William Morris (1834-1896) is

mentioned twice in Lucas's book, on the second occasion to assert that 'Morris's poems promote a vision of England whose vitality is inseparable from its rurality'. Across the whole range of his concerns, Morris was inspired partly by an idealized vision of life and culture in the Middle Ages and this helped to determine his Utopian socialism along with his work as a designer and his campaigns to preserve ancient architecture and the countryside. Another poet (one not mentioned in Lucas's study) was Edward Thomas (1878-1917), aptly described by Walter de la Mare as 'a mirror of England', who once explained to a friend his decision to fight in the First World War by scooping up a handful of English soil and holding it out, saying, 'Literally, for this'. These examples are merely the two pre-1918 poets who, for other reasons, come most readily to my mind: dozens of other writers could be cited. In its title of *Back to the land* (1982), Jan Marsh's study of the pastoral impulse in England from 1880 to 1914, the first two words have a weight equal to the latter two. Ruralism and nostalgia are easy to find in the writings of purportedly progressive figures of the inter-war period. Here there is a link back to William Morris whose ideas had considerable influence upon early twentieth-century architects and the planners behind garden city movement. Indeed, Clough Williams-Ellis, author of *England and the octopus* (1928), a book discussed by Matless as an important 'planner-preservationist' text, was both of these and in some respects a disciple of Morris. Urging that new developments should be carefully *planned* and *appropriate* to their settings, it soon emerges that Williams-Ellis's vision is essentially both ruralist and nostalgic. If his advice is ignored, he warns, 'Little enough will be left for our own latter days: already we begin to tell each other guardedly and secretly of remote places where things are still as they used to be, where brutal exploitation is not yet, and where there is no new building, or where such buildings as there may be are well-mannered and harmonious'. Matless does not quote this significant passage. His apparent unfamiliarity with the broader scheme of English cultural history has led him to over-simplify this phenomenon in his chosen period of study and it is curious that he omits material which suggests the need to explore beyond it. This is a sad shortcoming in an otherwise impressive book.

Landscape and Englishness has three main sections. The first of these looks at the 1920s and '30s, when many people came to regard preservation and progress as complementary aims in the management of their physical and cultural environment and Englishness became identified as orderly and modern. This 'planner-preservationist' notion of Englishness gained dominance during World War II, when it not only supported but

appeared to ennoble the drive to maximize agricultural and industrial production, necessary in the war effort, as desirable objects in their own right, whilst also offering to the English people an attractive image of themselves as progressive and adventurous, yet rooted in an illustrious past and appreciative of its rich heritage. The third section of this book deals with how the effects of the war on the rural landscape, changing attitudes towards agricultural production, the experiences of land workers and child refugees from the cities, and a universally heightened consciousness of national identity, were reflected in publications during those years, and it proceeds to show how ideas embraced in wartime determined the policies of reconstruction afterwards.

The middle section of *Landscape and Englishness* is devoted to the 'organicists', who upheld traditional authority against progressive enterprise and eschewed planning policy in favour of local responsiveness to changing circumstances. Anticipating the concerns of recent ecologists, whilst also reviving a conservatism older than the industrial revolution, organicists sought – quite literally – a closeness to the soil, an organic social order and the practice of good husbandry. Despite articulate advocates such as H. J. Massingham and Rolf Gardiner, whose frequently polemical books were widely read, and the *New English Weekly* (1939–49) as a respectable periodical serving the cause, organicism failed to win many converts, appearing Spartan and reactionary when set against the promises attending technological progress. Rightly giving special attention to Massingham's writings, Matless offers a detailed and perceptive account of organicist thinking and practice in the 1930s and World War II, making this section of the book especially useful for anyone interested in this counter-cultural movement and its anticipation of present-day Green concerns.

In a very short fourth section, Matless discusses the unravelling of the landscapes of modern Englishness. He correctly emphasizes the importance of the broken association of productive land use and cultural value which has occurred in people's minds: agriculture is now widely seen as harmful to landscape and nature. With growing public concern about environmental damage and the safety of food, organicism now has a much higher profile than it did sixty years ago. On the other hand, whilst few people today have faith in the capacity of the state to generate a landscape that is both modern and beautiful, the legacy of planner-preservationism continues to influence many government policies on farming and the environment. Beyond these and similar observations, and some vignettes of notable post-war commentators on rural heritage such as John Betjeman, W. G. Hoskins and Richard Mabey, Matless does not

attempt to assess the current relationship between landscape and Englishness; his study effectively stops at 1951 with the Festival of Britain.

As a wide-ranging and perceptive account of competing visions of England during a period of tremendous social change, out of which a distinctly new yet supposedly familiar landscape emerged, this book reminds us that landscape in itself and through its representations is a manifestation of culture and that by studying it we are participants in its continuous and often contentious re-evaluation. *Landscape and Englishness* deserves attention from anyone engaging with this issue.

MARTIN HAGGERTY

HENRY CLARKE AND HILARY BINDING, *The history of Lloyd Maunder, 1898–1998; a West Country family business* (Tiverton: Halsgrove, 1998). 95 pp. Illus. £8 from Lloyd Maunder Ltd, Willand, Cullompton, Devon EX15 2PJ.

This handsome folio commemoration volume follows the progress of a meat firm in the south west of England. In the early nineteenth century the Maunders were a yeoman farming family from Witheridge in Devon who diversified to become meat traders as a way of protecting themselves during the agricultural price fall of the 1870s and 1880s. In 1879 Lloyd Maunder's father, Frederick, started as a meat wholesaler and later opened retail butchers' shops in Devon and London, expanding further in the 1890s into milk processing. The real growth of the firm came after 1898 when his fifth son Lloyd started to supply the London grocery chain of J. J. Sainsbury with poultry, rabbits, eggs and possibly butter. Since then, Lloyd Maunder's fortunes were closely linked with those of the Sainsbury empire, built on, among other things, the supply of high quality home-produced food in which Lloyd Maunder specialised. The authors provide clear and convincing reasons for the firm's survival and steady expansion into meat processing, and how it became an important local employer in the south west. Besides providing a useful addition to twentieth century food history, they also explain the general impact of depression on a pastoral farming community and the reaction of one enterprising family.

RICHARD PERREN

Elsewhere and general

CATO, *On farming / De agricultura* (A modern translation with commentary by Andrew Dalby, Prospect Books, 1998). 243 pp. 11 illus. £12.50.

This is a splendid edition of an agricultural text by the earliest surviving Roman prose author. Andrew Dalby, the editor, has published widely on ancient texts concerned

with food and eating and brings a fresh eye to this valuable work: not every book on Cato has a contents page with 'a note on money' and 'a note on sex', the two aspects of culture which, if not held in check, Cato considered among the most threatening to his own ideology. Dalby writes elegantly and with exemplary clarity in his introduction, translation and explanatory footnotes. The Latin text used is the Budé edition of 1975, with small changes.

The introduction covers the development of Italy in the third and second centuries BC, in particular the relationship between Rome and the Italic and Greek communities of the southern part of the peninsula. Cato (who was born in Latium or Lazio) became the severe Roman Censor of Republican political mythology and wrote damningly of Hellenic influence. Yet there are traces of Greek influence in *De agricultura* (pp. 19–21), including adaptations of medical treatises which ignore such vital considerations as season and individual constitution and may have been a hazard to health. Dalby notes (p. 22) a conflict in the work between 'the farm as a way of life and the farm as a mere investment'. Attention is given to the religious year and to magical practices but the main thrust of the work is advice on agricultural investment to a speculator. Dalby is at pains to point out (p. 23) that the focus is on cost and savings rather than maximizing income. But this is no subsistence farm. Olives, wine, vegetables, lambs and pigs and perhaps even cakes (p. 21) are produced for sale and attention is given to contractual detail.

The imagined farm appears to be located in the inland region of Campania or Latium close to the town of Venafrum which was an olive-growing region. It would have been helpful had Dalby given some idea of the typical farm of 60 acres in the area at this period (early second century BC) or later. He comments (pp. 55–6) on the problem of Cato's order of priorities, which was discussed in antiquity: 'first the vineyard (or an abundance of wine), second an irrigated kitchen garden, third a willow wood, fourth an olive field, fifth a meadow, sixth a grain-field, seventh a plantation of trees, eighth an orchard, ninth an acorn wood'. According to Dalby these are 'added-value features whose presence – independently of whatever is the main produce – helps to promote self-sufficiency, to reduce marginal expenditure and to provide added sources of profit'. But we still need to know why Cato puts cereals sixth: why is the 'main produce' not the main concern? Later authors identified viticulture in particular as dangerous and speculative farming (see N. Purcell, *Journal of Roman Studies* 75 (1986) pp. 1–19).

Dalby's notes are particularly helpful in directing readers to other agricultural authors such as Varro

and Columella, and to the secondary works of Joan Frayn on subsistence farming and the late K. D. White who wrote extensively on practical aspects of Roman farming.

Readers of this journal know better than I the influence of Cato on agricultural authors after the classical period, whether in the UK or in Mediterranean countries. Dalby does not address the matter of reception. The text has many fascinating features ranging from the construction of presses and a lime kiln, to grafting, pitching containers, force-feeding geese and cutting wood when the moon is not full. Veterinary details are remarkable (pp. 151–3, 168–71), as is the section on cakes (pp. 154–61) and the manufacture of Greek-style wine (pp. 174–5). These appear to be luxury items against which we might have expected a diatribe from the Censor. Similarly, the presence of a fishpond is notable (p. 181), given its censure in later Roman authors. The only named fish to appear (p. 221) are in a rambling recipe for a laxative. Dalby draws the line at section 157 with its 'cabbage eater's urine' and its use of cabbage to cure breast cancer: this is the work of an inferior author.

For the modern reader, this treatise is a source of endless fascination, in its details of husbandry, in its moral and ideological setting, in its prose form (in a culture where poets were quite happy to describe the construction of a plough), in its treatment of topics of scientific and medical interest and much more. The reader can also speculate on the apparent contradictions of its totemic author. Andrew Dalby is to be warmly praised for bringing the work to the modern reader in an edition that is helpful and attractive, with maps and diagrams to illustrate the area under review and ancient constructions of buildings, presses and kilns.

JOHN WILKINS

PETER GARNSEY, *Food and society in classical antiquity* (CUP, 1999). xiv + 175 pp. 9 illus. £35 (hbk); £12.99 (pbk).

For those who imagine food in antiquity to be a series of imperial banquets with such delicacies as dormice in fermented fish sauce and roasted parrot, Garnsey may come as something of a disappointment. There are no recipes to try, though there is a menu card which includes horse-meat from Padua (p. 85). He is interested in how food choices are made, such as spices and imported foods for the elite, and wild and semi-wild plants for all, and the extent to which choice is culturally determined. This contribution to the *Key themes in ancient history* series aims both to review research undertaken in an enormous field, not least by Garnsey himself in his *Famine and food supply in the Graeco-Roman world: responses to risk and crisis* (Cambridge 1988) and in *Cities*,

peasants and food in classical antiquity: essays in social and economic history (Cambridge 1998), and to propose new approaches. There are nine chapters and an introduction covering substance and symbol, diet, food and the economy, crisis, malnutrition, 'otherness', forbidden foods, food and the family, 'haves and have-nots' and commensality. A valuable bibliographical essay follows.

Two major concerns are the mechanisms by which the elites of ancient cities used banqueting and their control of the food supply to consolidate their social and economic power, and the conflicting interests of small farmers and others who comprised 90 to 95 per cent of the population. Garnsey has much to say on agricultural production, distribution of surplus and access to that surplus by different sectors of society. Garnsey assesses the ancient Mediterranean diet (a good diet that should not be glamorized nor assumed to be accessible to the full population) and reviews optimistic and pessimistic estimates of production. Certain groups were at risk of malnutrition, in particular women and children. A number of arresting suggestions and approaches are made. Notable are medical and demographic studies of populations in the developing world and Fogel's study of English and French populations in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. These may be tested against skeletal analysis from ancient cemeteries, a vast resource 'if only archaeologists were interested' (p. 54). Stature, iron-deficiency and damage to teeth supply interesting evidence. Texts are not neglected. Garnsey (unlike some historians) allows some contribution from comic texts (in which food is prominent) and from Athenaeus of Naucratis (not Naupactus, p. 169) who is also suspect (though Garnsey underestimates Athenaeus' interest in the Roman world). He reviews the cultural constructions of texts, in particular their definitions of 'barbarians', mountain-dwellers and other groups marginal to the classical city. Particularly important for Garnsey is the vast corpus of Galen who was acquainted with the Greek and Roman parts of the empire and was familiar both with the elite of the imperial court and those whom ancient texts normally ignore. Galen had encountered peasant communities in Asia Minor, he knew the urban diet in Alexandria (he testifies to the remarkable range of plants and animals consumed) and he was acquainted with the choices available to small farmers in northern Greece when main crops failed (he provides an informal hierarchy of grains and pulses). He also synthesized the Hippocratic tradition of nutrition and the understanding of the effects of food on the body, a system which Garnsey finds theoretically misguided but not without substance based on empirical observation and modern comparisons.

Garnsey is subtle and sophisticated. He suggests, for example, that women had a shorter life expectancy than

men (based on data from the developing world) and that the children of the rich suffered in particular from a lack of colostrum when put out to wet nurses. Morbidity rates in these groups Garnsey puts down less to the cultural prejudices of the political and intellectual elites than to ignorance. Ancient peoples, he claims, normally followed rational principles, such as feeding slaves involved in heavy work a better diet. Hence we should not assume that women necessarily had a worse diet than men, particularly if large numbers of them worked in the fields at busy times of year.

In sum, this book is a delight. Though brief, it is wide-ranging and intellectually challenging. There is praise for Amartya Sen on poverty and power; there are swipes at the followers of Levi-Strauss who have been influential in the analysis of Greek culture; there is space to discuss taboos and small religious groups (Garnsey draws on a number of anthropological approaches here and elsewhere). Above all Garnsey challenges the assumptions of his reader, particularly in regard to the power of the elite in antiquity and the limits of that power. He also writes well. Chapters are elegantly summarized, often with an epigrammatic coda.

JOHN WILKINS

TOM SCOTT (ed.), *The peasantries of Europe from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries* (Longman, 1998). xi + 416 pp. 12 maps. £44 (hbk); £19.99 (pbk).

This book offers a rich feast of information on peasant life across Europe between 1300 and 1800. Ten essays span different territories: Iberia (effectively Spain only); France; Italy; West Germany; East Elbian Germany and Poland; Russia extending as far as Archangel, eastward beyond the Volga and south to the Ukraine; the Austrian Empire through Hungary to Galicia and Transylvania; Ottoman lands in Greece and the Balkans, to Syria; Scandinavia including Finland; and England. At a time when historians obtain significant insights into peasant life from the study of one single estate, these essays surveying vast territories over five hundred years carry the reader on an adventure that is exhilarating, and yet at moments, because of the large generalities, suspends belief.

But at the end of it all, the book is extremely helpful in bringing the reader up-to-date with the most recent European literature in many different languages, and it is reassuring in showing a significant shift in the current interpretation of peasant strategies. Historians begin to see the logic and practical good sense in some of the choices made, moderating the old assumptions that peasants were passive sufferers, stupid and doggedly conservative. A more nuanced interpretation of peasant regimes is emerging, coupled with a more wide-ranging

enquiry into the innumerable influential elements shaping their fate. S. R. Epstein on Italy, Jonathan Dewald and Liana Vardi on France, and William Hagen on East Elbian Germany have highly pertinent remarks in this vein. Plainly, stern lordship did not govern everything; as John Langton puts it, peasants were active historical agents, and we need to adopt a humbler posture when judging their actions, for innumerable considerations entered into their decisions of which we have not yet perceived or fully understood all. Some of the influential factors recur in these essays and the repeated references are insistent and thought-provoking, though space in this book does not allow for any detailed analysis. Yet they herald a time when closer attention will be paid to the full practical consequences of some ingredients that are already acknowledged in this volume to have influenced the scene: local inheritance customs, labour services that call to be more precisely weighed and measured, the burden of several different kinds of taxation, and the distinctive, local geographical constraints which feature in endless variety. Some other factors, such as self-regulation by peasant communities, for example, hardly receive mention except in the article on Russia, but plainly that essay by Edgar Melton raises issues which all the others need at some time to accommodate.

Tom Scott introduces the book with a rehearsal of the debate on definitions of 'the peasant'. He sees the group consolidating its status locally between 1200 and 1400, contending with, and exploiting to varying degrees, the emerging market between 1400 and 1700, and disappearing between 1700 and 1900. He prefers the term 'peasant' to be reserved for someone who only occasionally engaged in the market; those who regularly served the market he deems to have been different and calls them 'commercial family farmers'. But is such a dividing line realistic when English and some other evidence suggests rather that everyone saw and responded to the main chance if and when it arose in their vicinity? It seems to be circumstances not people which determine engagement in the market. Peasants were always ready, though also shrewdly cautious. Robisheaux seems to agree with this verdict, identifying the opportune moment in West Germany after the Black Death. In England, the remarkably rapid spread of tobacco growing in the seventeenth century suggests that peasant society there might have survived much longer if a batch of thoroughly successful labour-intensive crops had been found at the right moment in the early modern period. Woad looked like being one other excellent small man's crop when it first appeared as a commercial possibility, but it turned out to be more congenial to gentlemen farmers. Yet half a dozen such innovations might have staved off 'the disappearance of the small landowner' at that time. S. R. Ep-

stein's account of the more successful experience of smallholders in southern Italy cultivating diversified new crops offers comparisons that shed light on this theme.

As editor, Tom Scott plainly gave considerable freedom to his essayists for their themes and styles are very different. Some show themselves in much closer contact and sympathy with the daily routines and expectations of peasant life, notably Teófilo Ruiz on Iberia, while others stand at a distance, detached from the practicalities, and direct their remarks, at a high level of generalization, at state policies, administrative systems, and taxation. It is disappointing in a book planned in England to find no essay on the Netherlands (though the work of Jan de Vries is summarized in the editor's introduction), while the essay on the English peasantry is confined to a discussion of changing terms of land tenure mainly in the Middle Ages, and ends in 1650. The legal aspect is plainly significant in the English case, and this highly original essay, by Richard Smith, will be much cited in future for its cogency and clarity in explaining some of the advantageous consequences for yeomen flowing from legal (and economic) changes in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But it does not match the scope of the other essays, and it treats southern and eastern England as though it stood for the whole kingdom. One wishes that the authors had been able to work together for a month and coordinate their writing so that the same themes featured in all essays.

John Langton offers a thoughtful conclusion by a historical geographer, attempting to put the many varied experiences of European peasants into one, more unified framework. He analyses the way the simple but severe discipline of a peasant economy required self-sufficiency, first and foremost, but that was softened in course of time when a food surplus was achieved. All essays show how the geographical constraints, the patchy growth of markets, and lordship, weighing heavily on some estates, lightly on others, circumscribed peasants' opportunities when new chances offered. Such chances did arise at different periods in the different territories, however, and peasants could be markedly observant and resourceful.

What is noticeable to the historian, having a somewhat different standpoint from John Langton in his conclusion, are the similarities in peasant strategies when a surplus of basic foods did appear, and released cultivators from constant anxiety about the grain harvest. At moments when grain was relatively plentiful, labour-rich peasant families had a positive advantage over their lords. If labour services were not a heavy burden (some essayists judge them tolerable during this period), an opportunity could open up for peasants to diversify. A mature local market was, of course, essential. But the moves into industrial crops like silk, cotton, hemp and

flax, vegetables, fruit and nuts, and part-time industrial occupations did occur in many places.

It may be that decades rather than centuries or half-centuries of the early modern period will have to be examined for these chances to be brought into high relief, for wars and failed harvests intermittently restored the demand for cereals to the top of the agenda, and advantages then fell to the large cereal farms, including those of lords. So the nature and chronology of diversification varied across Europe, and it was never a choice for those peasants from whom ever heavier labour services were demanded.

All essayists emphasize great local variation, but all at some point appreciate the shrewd decisions of peasants. In eastern Europe, new lands awaiting cultivation drew them strongly when the terms of tenure were right. So did lands in the Balkans, when they seemed to offer under Ottoman rule 'freedom from servitude'; in 1556, writes Fikret Adanir, some 70,000 peasants took themselves into Ottoman Bosnia rather than remain in Hapsburg lands under Christian rule. In other places peasants turned to the labour-intensive cultivation of special crops which exploited their special skill. Other alternatives involved the more deliberate marketing of rich local resources like timber, legally or illegally, or part-time crafts. Peasants in Italy and Sicily seem to show the first moves to produce industrial crops, along with more varied and sometimes luxury foods like rice, fruit, nuts, vegetables and wines; Epstein is a perceptive commentator on these activities. Peasants in the Netherlands are thought to have been among the first to have relied on imported grains so that they could specialize and concentrate on production for the market. But it remains for all these varied alternative pursuits to be better examined, to discover their demands on peasant labour and the profit they yielded. Historians regularly examine them nowadays from the viewpoint of industrial growth and to illustrate the consumer revolution, but do not yet consider them from the farmer's angle.

A stimulus to all this interest in diversification clearly came from the enhanced mobility of people in the early modern period, carrying innovative ideas from one country to another. Mobility is stressed by several essayists, but not the innovative ideas which they carried with them. A recent writer, not cited here, has described the achievements of the Bulgarian gardeners who carried Turkish vegetable-growing into Hungary. On these lines, the reader may be prompted to wonder how much of the early development of fruit, vegetable and silk production in Sicily, Italy, and southern Spain was owed to Moorish influences from across the Mediterranean. No one asks who was responsible for carrying woad growing across Europe from east to west between 1300

and 1800, though our documents reveal the wealth that it created for woad merchants, and in France we can see some of their fine houses that survive. More questions could flow about the spread of buckwheat, rapeseed, madder, safflower, and more. They were all regionally successful, all new ventures in the early modern period, and in some cases played a crucial role in their development.

Plainly, Tom Scott has edited an ambitious survey of European peasantries, and the result is a most stimulating collection of profiles. Every single one offers insights to widen narrow perspectives.

JOAN THIRSK

PETER PRIESTER, *Geschiedenis van de Zeeuwse landbouw circa 1600-1910* (A. A. G. Bijdragen 37, 1998). 880 pp. 101 tables; 45 illus; 58 figs. No price given.

With his study of agriculture in Zeeland, a province in the far south west of the Netherlands, Peter Priester has added a large brick to the already impressive edifice of the A. A. G. Bijdragen, the historical series of the Agricultural University at Wageningen. In the best traditions of the A. A. G. Bijdragen, Priester offers a plethora of data on demographic developments, land use, yields, land rents, agricultural prices, taxes and wages, as well as an analysis of the changes of agriculture in Zeeland between about 1600 and 1910.

The book starts with a description of the natural circumstances of Zeeland (literally: Sealand). Zeeland consisted of a number of islands as well as some coastal plains. All this territory was characterized by quite marshy and salty clay soils, which were continually threatened by flooding. In the lower parts of Zeeland, the wetness of the soils prevented arable production. Throughout Zeeland, a shortage of sweet water during the summer limited the possibilities for livestock farming, thus also limiting the availability of manure. Maintenance of dykes required large sums and caused a high level of taxes, and during the winter large parts of Zeeland were flooded by the winter rains. These dismal natural circumstances caused quite an unhealthy environment: nineteenth- (and probably also seventeenth- and eighteenth-) century death rates were very high and agricultural labourers from outside the province in particular were almost sure to be caught by fevers – in hot summers the environment was almost ideal for malaria. An English invasion of 40,000 soldiers in 1809 failed, as 13,000 soldiers fell ill and had to be sent back to England, while another 4000 died.

Surprisingly, these rather dismal circumstances did not prevent the existence of a productive agricultural sector and dynamic developments. Already around 1600, wheat yields in Zeeland seem to have been as high as in

Norfolk around 1800, and they stayed at this level until about 1830 when a secular rise began which continues until the present day. Also, the farmers of Zeeland managed to increase the production of specialized commercial crops like oilseeds and, most notably, madder. Madder, which took two to three years to grow, was used to produce dyes for the Dutch and English clothing industry. Though wheat stayed the most important crop in Zeeland, the labour- and capital-intensive culture of madder, already dating back to medieval times, continued to expand until well into the nineteenth century. After 1870, artificial dyes caused the demise of the culture of madder, but this crop was quickly replaced by sugar-beet. Also, between 1600 and 1660, new polders almost doubled the agricultural area of Zeeland, while another increase of about 25 per cent occurred between 1660 and 1850.

Priester covers much new ground. One of the weak spots of agricultural history in the Netherlands is the lack of yields series in the coastal provinces before about 1820. By making use of tithe data, Priester manages to establish a yield series from about 1600 onwards, thereby filling at least part of this gap. His data on rents and wages add to the already existing stock of data on rents and wages in other provinces, implicitly underscoring the rather exceptional development (read: rise) of wages as well as rents in Holland and Utrecht between especially 1580 and 1620. His demographic data show that urbanization in Zeeland before about 1700 has been strongly overstated, which means that the eighteenth century decline of the urban population and economy of the Netherlands must have been a little less severe than depicted by, for instance, Jonathan Israel. Indeed, rising agricultural wages in Zeeland around 1800, and in other coastal agricultural areas like Groningen and Friesland compare favourably with wage trends in the cities of Holland and Utrecht, indicating that the Dutch economy did show a somewhat two-sided development during the latter half of the eighteenth century. The city economies showed a clear decline, but agriculture prospered.

Priester falls a bit short when he tries to explain the high productivity of agriculture in Zeeland. Of course, clay soils are relatively fertile. Also, crop rotation systems did not show any extensive use of clover, but pulses were extensively grown. In fact, around 1800 the area under pulses was about two to three times higher than in other clay soils areas with more favourable natural circumstances (especially more sweet water during the summer). Pulses might explain why yields in Zeeland could stay so high for so long, but this is not systematically analysed.

But these are minor criticisms. The book is a massive addition to our knowledge of the agricultural history of

the Netherlands and of north-west Europe generally. For readers outside the Netherlands and Belgium, the lack of summaries in any of the major European languages and of bilingual heads for tables and graphs may cause problems.

MERIJN KNIBBE

PAUL BRUSSE, *Overleven door ondernemen: de agrarische geschiedenis van de Over-Betuwe 1650-1850* (A. A. G. Bijdragen 38, 1999). 566 pp. 66 tables; 20 figs; 4 maps. No price given.

This book is the history over two centuries of a very small place. The Over-Betuwe is a piece of marshy land in the east of the Netherlands, bounded to the north and south by the Rhine and Waal rivers, below Arnhem and above Nijmegen: it measures about 10 x 20 km. Its population in 1650 was some 8000, and by the mid-nineteenth century it had risen to 24,000: no more than a small town. The book appears in the almost legendary series, A. A. G. Bijdragen, which has given us over the last few decades the products of the Wageningen School of Agrarian History, famous for its long-term quantitative studies of quite large areas such as a province, much in the manner of the Annales School in France. This, then, is a much smaller affair. Some 70 to 80 per cent of the population were involved in agriculture, and Brusse's concern is to explain their fortunes over 200 years within the framework of the rise and fall of agricultural fortunes, which he links closely to the Kondratieff cycle. His aim is to examine the structure of agriculture and of the farming business in the Over-Betuwe, and to look for changes over time in material culture, by which he means such consumer items as carriages, cupboards, clocks, carpets, and even buildings, as specified in probate records and other property inventories.

The Over-Betuwe posed its farmers a number of problems, due to the hydraulic conditions. The water which seeped through the river dikes made many kinds of farming extremely difficult, and was apparently particularly helpful for the growth of weeds. As a result of this and other factors, the area has enjoyed the dubious reputation of being a backward place, where farmers were conservative primitives in the peasant mould, refusing to take on new technology and resisting all attempts to lift them out of their relative misery. Certainly in terms of productivity, this part of the river district in the Netherlands was well behind the rest of the country in the period before 1930.

Brusse is concerned to rehabilitate the farmers of the Over-Betuwe. By a detailed analysis of many local sources, he is able to show that the farmers were integrated to a high degree into the local and regional markets, and were by no means auto-consumptive peasants.

Furthermore, he shows (and uses as a major explanatory factor) that they were highly flexible in their approach to economic circumstances. Many of them had interests in more than one economic sector, and while practising as an artisan for much of the time, would also run a tobacco or potato patch for the market. There was also a high degree of flexibility between various kinds of farming, according to the pertaining conditions of the market. They introduced many technological changes, such as clovers and new rotation patterns. Nevertheless, it has to be said that productivity increases were smaller than elsewhere, and that farmers persisted in using the device of fallow (in order to combat weeds) far longer than in much of the rest of the country.

In his analysis of the material culture of the people of the Over-Betuwe, Brusse is able to demonstrate that a certain embourgeoisement was taking place at most levels of this society long before the civilization offensives which are usually associated with the nineteenth century (though many studies have actually noted their origins in the eighteenth century). The methodology of dealing with the inventories and other legal records is difficult, but Brusse is aided by his numerically small subject, and Chapter 7 on these matters is one of the best in the book. He also shows that after 1740, when farming fortunes began to improve, considerable social differentiation occurred. The rich became richer, but there is little evidence found here of proletarianization; social polarization occurred, but not at the cost of the deprivation and alienation of the poor in society.

The book is well written and clear to follow, and the summary in English makes it partially accessible to an international audience. There is a welter of statistical appendices, though the quantity of this material is less in evidence than in many of the other Wageningen studies. It is a well-documented story of a small population surviving in sometimes difficult circumstances by flexibility and ingenuity. These qualities found in the eastern Netherlands were familiar to us from the work of other scholars (e.g. H. K. Roessingh on the cultivation of tobacco, also a Wageningen study), and although there is little contribution to theory or methodology here, as an empirical study it will be of use to historians seeking to make sense of the wider picture.

MICHAEL WINTLE

JUDITH A. MILLER, *Mastering the market: the state and the grain trade in northern France, 1700–1860* (CUP, 1999). xviii + 334 pp. 6 tables; 16 figs. £30.

The history of state intervention in grain markets has conventionally focussed on its high politics and the responses of market participants to real and presumed food shortages. The originality of this excellent monograph on

government regulation of grain and flour markets in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France is to view it from the perspective of the local officials charged with ensuring urban consumers a steady flow of their principal foodstuff at reasonably steady prices. Their task was not a simple one, since any intervention undertaken in response to the demands of the urban poor for cheap food had to be reconciled with the economic requirement that effort and capital supplied by growers and merchants earn an adequate return. It took administrators several generations and several severe market failures, one of which came close to provoking a famine, to learn this lesson. This book tells the tale of that learning.

The problem of food supply in northern France in the eighteenth century was not so much one of supply as of distribution. The rapid expansion of Paris between 1550 and 1700, which was succeeded by the growth of smaller cities and the spread of rural industry, gave a strong impetus to market integration in a region with a long tradition of municipal regulation of the grain trade. It was thus inevitable that the development of commercial practices that pooled regional supplies for redistribution throughout the region should come into conflict with municipal rules that reserved the first claim on local produce to local consumers. By the eighteenth century, much of the municipal apparatus had been absorbed by the central government, and with it political responsibility for maintaining order in food markets. This 'nationalization' of provisioning policy, however, did not immediately produce policies tailored to the needs of a regionally integrated market. Instead, royal officials maintained the traditional particularistic regulations with which they were familiar. The debate over 'free trade' in grain pitted those who mistrusted the ability of a regionally integrated market adequately to protect local consumers against those who believed it was the best way in the long run to pool inevitable subsistence risks. What complicated the debate was that regulations were usually enforced in times of shortage, which in limiting the returns to speculative holdings by professionals impeded the accumulation of stocks that could have mitigated expected shortages by smoothing the flow of grain onto the market. In their absence minor interruptions in supply provoked sharp increases in speculative holdings of grain by the public, which were attended by correspondingly sharp increases in the spot price of grain and flour. Government regulation was directed at moderating these increases.

Professor Miller analyses a rich archive from the Seine Inférieure to document how local officials in Rouen tried to influence market behaviour by restricting sales to public markets and by secretly selling stocks of government grain to create an illusion of local plenty. These

measures met with variable success. Price controls imposed on public markets predictably caused growers and merchants to withhold their stocks or to divert them to other markets; surreptitious sales of state-owned grain stabilized price expectations, but discouraged merchants from bringing in private grain; when officials built up public reserves, their competition with private buyers for scarce supplies drove up prices, defeating their purpose. State intervention thus disrupted the commercial networks which handled the bulk of the trade, often intensifying rather than palliating crises. During the Terror, private commerce in grain collapsed, and the ensuing famine taught administrators and the public a hard lesson in practical economics, which had to be repeated in 1812 when Napoleon re-instituted price ceilings on bread in Paris. By this point, most officials had lost confidence in the efficacy of administrative control of the grain and flour trade.

Professor Miller traces this learning process through well-constructed narratives based on the experience of officials in Rouen and Paris. She follows the story in the nineteenth century through the history of the *Caisse syndicale des boulangers*, which inherited the Paris grain reserve ordered by Napoleon in 1812. The story ends with the decrees in 1863 liberalizing the grain trade. This is first and foremost an administrative history. As a result it pays relatively little attention to the parallel construction of commercial institutions which eventually made it possible for the state to forego intervention in urban food markets. The administrative perspective also downplays the connection between military provisioning and the growth of large-scale wholesale trade. These developments, which were central to the emergence of a regionally integrated grain market in northern France, await their historian. As a first step, we have in this book a first-rate study of the governmental side of the equation.

GEORGE GRANTHAM

TOMAS A. MANTECÓN NOVELLAN, *La muerte de Antonia Isabel Sánchez: tiranía y escándalo en una sociedad rural del norte español en el antiguo régimen* (Alcalá de Henares: Centro de Estudios Cervantinos, 1997). 187 pp. No price given.

The semi-naked body of Antonia Isabel Sánchez was discovered on 1 July 1799 in the small Cantabrian village of Udías. The woman, who had been married to Domingo García for nineteen years, was brutally murdered, probably by the family's maid. The crime provoked a scandal in this rural community and resulted in a lengthy judicial process. The husband, a prosperous farmer who owned land and livestock in Udías and the surrounding valley, had a long history of marital violence and had

threatened to kill Antonia on numerous occasions. Yet at the time someone plunged a knife into his wife's body thirty seven times, Domingo was away from the family home in Andalusia. There are a number of other details of the plot which merit attention. The maid, Manuela Sánchez, had previously been engaged to Domingo's brother-in-law, Antonio Bajuelo, who happened to be the local political boss (*cacique*). Antonio, meanwhile, was a notorious womaniser who stood accused of raping another female servant from the village at knife point, not to mention a number of other offences. It seems that the jealous husband, Domingo, was fed up of his wife spending so much time with Antonio that he got the maid to bump her off.

Yet, in the hands of a writer like Tomás Mantecón, the story of Antonia Isabel Sánchez's frenzied killing is more than a historical whodunit. Subtitled *Tyranny and scandal in a village in northern Spain during the ancien régime*, this nicely written account is a fine piece of micro-history, a genre first popularized by scholars such as Carlo Ginzburg in *Il formaggio e i vermi* (Turin, 1976). Based on this exceptional case, which generated a mass of detailed documentation, Mantecón cleverly constructs a world where men are forced to emigrate in search of a better livelihood, where their wives are left to conduct everyday economic affairs, where rivalry builds up between local bigwigs (*poderosos*) and sexual aggression is tolerated within certain limits. Mantecón's work is divided into three sections: the crime and its resonance in the local village community; victim, aggressor and the limits of marital violence; and the power of the local *caciques*.

Not all of this story has equal relevance to the agrarian history of late-eighteenth century Spain. What interested me most of all was the author's description of how this tiny village in the Lloredo valley was linked to the rest of the national economy. Apart from visiting woodcutters from the nearby Basque Country in search of firewood for the region's forges, a fair number of local peasants emigrated to Castile, Andalusia and Spain's American empire. The contemporary *Catastro de Ensenada* showed that, out of a total of 249 inhabitants in the valley, seven per cent were absent from their dwellings at the time of the survey. Half of these migrants were said to be in Andalusia. Thus the probable instigator of the murder, Domingo García, was not alone in his exile while the tensions of everyday rural life as demonstrated by this case may not have been untypical. What stands out however in the murder of Antonia Isabel Sánchez is that patriarchal values in this part of La Montaña were found wanting. The usual social controls which would normally have prevented the appearance of a scandal failed completely. Mantecón's study vividly conveys the

impact of this horrible crime in rural Cantabria at the end of the eighteenth century which, according to local custom, had a greater resonance within the region than the events of the Napoleonic invasion.

JOSEPH HARRISON

ANNE K. KNOWLES, *Calvinists incorporated: Welsh immigrants on Ohio's industrial frontier* (University of Chicago Press, 1997). xxiii + 330 pp. 21 tables; 34 illus; 18 maps. £19.95.

I began reading this absorbing, well-argued and meticulously-researched monograph on a first visit to Australia. There, I was inevitably struck by the extraordinary uprooting which nineteenth-century transoceanic migration involved: the sheer scale of the journey and the social, economic and cultural dislocation which resulted makes for fascinating research. Though Dr Knowles's example of the Welsh in Ohio is rather different, the fascination is no less. She reminds us that there is a general dearth of local studies of emigration in the nineteenth century. More precisely, perhaps, there is a dearth of studies that provide an integrated view of local origins, stages of intermediate movement, and destinations.

The theoretical and empirical background to this volume is provided by the earlier more general work of other authors, notably Dudley Baines (*Migration in a mature economy*, CUP, 1985) who saw such detailed research as a necessary prerequisite to a firmer understanding of the links between industrialization, internal migration and overseas emigration. Central to the process of migration was chain movement, which ensured strong regional identity in both urban and rural destinations: 'residential clusterings of immigrants from the same county, parish, village, and street were the geographical manifestation of chain migration, the process by which communication back and forth across the Atlantic guided emigrants to particular destinations in the United States' (p. 28). Studies of identity and cultural assimilation or separation abound, and are well reviewed by Dr Knowles, but what makes this book particularly welcome is its insistence on the importance of the economic context and effects of migration and thus its contribution to the wider debates on the nature of nascent capitalism in the United States in the nineteenth century. So the central question here is 'how did immigrant culture respond, whether creatively or defensively, to American capitalism?' (p. xvii).

The heart of this work is migration from selected communities in Wales to Ohio in the first half of the nineteenth century. It concentrates in particular on Gallia and Jackson counties where perhaps three-quarters of the Welsh immigrants came from Cardiganshire, such that the area became known as 'little

Cardiganshire' amongst the Welsh American community (p. 27). The sources used are varied and in many respects innovative. A key problem was not only the general shortage of records of emigration but also the specific one that the Welsh were not generally identified separately from the English: not until 1908, for example, did the Board of Trade distinguish Welsh from English passengers aboard emigrant ships. The study of migrant biographies derived from obituary notices (recorded in a vibrant press of Welsh religious magazines) forms the core of the study of individual migration paths and proves an excellent source of detailed longitudinal information: some 1,772 cases are recorded for the period 1838 to 1853, though the migration experience so generated covers over sixty years and two generations of emigration.

The findings of the study lead towards a better understanding of the ways in which migrants responded to and shaped the economies of the destination areas. There is much helpful discussion about the choices that were open to potential migrants between the attractions of the south Wales industrial areas, of England (with an excellent discussion of the London Welsh) and of America. As far as the last is concerned, Welsh migrants 'could be characterized as both family-oriented yeoman farmers and competitive entrepreneurs whose investments (in charcoal iron furnace companies) hastened the development of industrial capitalism in their rural Ohio community' (p. xxi). A key ingredient here was the influence of religion. Stephen Innes (*Creating the Commonwealth: the economic culture of Puritan New England*, W. W. Norton, 1995) remarked with respect to the English Puritans in Massachusetts that 'industriousness and frugality brought wealth, which in turn brought temptation and worldliness' and Knowles shows the ways in which this tension manifested itself for the deeply conservative Calvinistic Welsh. As a character in a fictional account of emigration to New York remarks: 'we could have lived at home all right were it not for the lust for cheap lands and the splendid life in America' (p. 225). What such 'exemplary elders' of the church as Isaac T. Jones and John H. Jones thought of such lusts can readily be imagined from their memorable portraits reproduced on page 153. Dr Knowles traces the confrontation between religious values and change through three major points of transition – through the decision to emigrate, the decision to become involved in industrial production and the 'prolonged negotiation with the meaning and consequences of prosperity' (p. 256). The analysis is very adept at showing both similarities with other European emigrant groups and the distinctiveness of the Welsh; and at insisting on the multiplicity of migrant experiences in the face of burgeoning American capitalism.

In summary, this is a fine book: well-planned, elegantly written, original, thoughtful and provocative. In her introduction, Dr Knowles expresses the hope that her book will indicate how the close study of localized culture through individual life histories and geographies can further enrich our understanding of economic change. It does.

PHILIP E. OGDEN

HUGH PRINCE, *Wetlands of the American Midwest: a historical geography of changing attitudes* (University of Chicago Press, 1998). xiii + 395 pp. 30 tables; 42 figs. £16.75.

While reading Hugh Prince's historical geography of changing attitudes towards wetlands, I was unable to shake boggy metaphors from my mind. Themes get lost in swamps of detail. Slow-moving passages mire a truly fascinating environmental history. Like the travels of early surveyors and farmers on the wet prairies of the Midwest, my progress through the book was often arduous and irritable. Early chapters are chopped up into short sections that too often repeat information. Only near the end of the book does the narrative develop a compelling flow.

Yet this book is an extremely good work of historical geography that no student of wetlands, Midwestern settlement, or environmental history can afford to miss. It is indispensable because it compiles the essence of wetlands scholarship from many fields and because it places the environment at the heart of agricultural history, filling blanks we did not realize existed in classic studies by Paul Wallace Gates, Allan G. and Margaret Beattie Bogue, even Frederick Jackson Turner. Prince meticulously culls contemporary observations of wetlands to lay out the full range and trends of environmental attitudes as they changed over almost two centuries. Along the way he examines how those attitudes were manifest in the actions and inaction of federal and state governments, railroads, speculators, and individual farmers. If the writing sometimes too nearly mimics its subject, the measured pace does help make the point that wetland environments were remarkably difficult for Euro-Americans to bring into fruitful agricultural production. Ohio's Dismal Swamp and the prairie plateaux, potholes, and bogs of states further west resisted farming for over fifty years, leaving blank spots on the map, causing illness and bankruptcy for decades because they were so costly to drain.

The first two chapters define terms. As Prince makes clear, the historical distinctions between different kinds of wetlands are crucial because their physical characteristics posed particular problems for intensive farming. Legal definitions of land categories also directly

influenced the price and marketability of land. Wet prairies in Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa had rich soils that repaid farmers' efforts once they were well drained, but ditching and tiling required expensive machines that even some large farmers could not afford until 1870 or later. Bogs and swamps, typical of boreal wetlands throughout Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan, yielded good crops initially when drained but soon became troublesome as desiccated topsoils lost nutrients, caught fire, or blew away. Both kinds of environments were feared and abhorred as breeding grounds of swarming mosquitoes and vicious biting flies. Prince relates many delightful quotations from white people's first incredulous encounters with these beasts, including one unforgettable description of what makes the green-head fly particularly nasty. One wonders how native Americans put up with them while harvesting the bounty of grains, fruits, and wild game that wetlands provided.

Some of Prince's most careful and original documentation comes in his explanation of the various circumstances that thwarted the agricultural development of wet prairies. The most interesting is wet prairies' exceptionally high rates of tenancy. Tenants comprised up to 45 percent of farmers for some time because speculators, banking on the region's long-term growth, had bought up swaths of cheap prairie – land that they rarely improved. Prince finds that the risks wetlands speculators took rarely paid off; cyclical slumps ruined their investments before land scarcity drove up prices. Experience reinforced negative attitudes towards wetlands throughout the nineteenth century. Farmers working the black peat soils of the cutover district suffered the greatest heartache. The misery lay in the details, such as the fact that peat conducts heat poorly. Wisconsin farmers really did lose crops to killing frosts in July on such soils. At the same time, draining, 'because of its long deferred rewards, underscored the covenant that tied a family to the land' (p. 311). This covenant proved terribly costly for family farmers during the debt crisis of the 1980s, when carefully drained farms carried extra burdens.

From 1925 onward, the obdurate nature of boreal wetlands finally registered in the minds of government officials and farmers. Thousands of acres reverted to public ownership, leading gradually to the reconsideration of how wetlands should be managed for non-agricultural uses. Southern wetlands meanwhile became increasingly rare, as economic incentives to intensify the draining of fertile soils overwhelmed concerns about erosion and the loss of nesting habitat for birds. Only when bankrupt farms turned to subdivision did resident public opinion favour wetlands conservation and restoration.

Wetlands of the American Midwest puts the lie to the notion of a seamlessly advancing agricultural frontier. Land sales, settlement, farm-making, and the development of intensive agriculture all happened in fits and starts unevenly over the Midwestern landscape. Despite the region's gentle topography, wetlands impeded Euro-American settlement in some places as effectively as the Appalachian Mountains had in the eighteenth century. The message Hugh Prince delivers, modestly but emphatically, is that environment matters. He is one of the first scholars to tackle environmental history with all the tools of historical geography. One hopes many more will follow his example.

ANNE KELLY KNOWLES

BRIAN MCGINTY, *Strong wine: the life and legend of Agoston Haraszthy* (Stanford UP, 1998). xii + 579 pp. Illus. £40 (hbk); £14.95 (pbk).

Agoston Haraszthy (1812–1869) is a larger-than-life figure in the history of American wine-growing, whose legendary stature as the 'father of Californian viticulture' and early adopter of the Zinfandel wine grape provides a running counterpoint throughout McGinty's book. The author admits to a more than casual interest in the subject as he is Haraszthy's great-great-grandson, and positions himself to write a family history that is objectively tolerant and subjectively critical of his nineteenth-century ancestor. He succeeds admirably in both respects, and that is the strength and weakness of *Strong wine*. This meticulously researched and documented work is a definitive historical biography of an enigmatic agricultural pioneer. Yet the history is wrapped inside a substantive genealogical narrative that delivers more than most readers interested in the subject may be looking for.

McGinty sets out to separate the man from the myth and to place Haraszthy in the context of his times, somewhere along a continuum between eccentric innovator and adherent to the status quo. Contrary to popular notions at the time, Haraszthy was neither a member of Hungarian royalty nor a political refugee who escaped to America, as he held himself out to be. Nor was he the first wine-grower to cultivate the Zinfandel grape in California, though he was highly active in disseminating this unique European variety and the expertise to grow it there. He was most of all an opportunistic booster of, among many things, agricultural improvement and the profitable application of Old World grape varieties to New World growing conditions and markets.

The primary sources used are extensive and well documented, clearly indicative of the many years of research and travel undertaken by the author to produce the book. Family correspondence, business ledgers and

account books, and land and church records are used to detail Haraszthy's roots in Hungary and the family's immigration to the United States and eventual settlement in California. Transactions and proceedings of the state horticultural societies and agricultural agencies are an especially rich source, as are the travel accounts and treatises on viniculture written by Haraszthy himself. These sources are brought together well as readable scholarly prose, with a few distracting exceptions when the author turns to fictional re-enactment of conversations involving Haraszthy and others.

One quibble with the book's presentation is the lack of illustrative maps. Towns and regions in Hungary, Wisconsin, and California are frequently mentioned in the narrative, as are other places Haraszthy visited during his many domestic and foreign journeys. Since much of the book concerns Haraszthy's role in the agricultural history of California and his grape growing and winemaking activities both there and earlier in Wisconsin, reference maps would be helpful in illustrating the far-reaching nature of his experimentation. The omission is significant because wine-quality grape cultivation, like many horticultural endeavors, is bounded by the limits and opportunities of location, specifically the soil, topography, and microclimate necessary for successful viticulture using finicky varieties. Referencing this activity in maps would add significantly to the text and complement the photographs, engravings, and other illustrations already provided.

In the end, though, *Strong wine* is a fine contribution to the literature of wine-growing history in America and adds a summative chapter to the story of one of its more complex and colourful protagonists. While details of the Haraszthy legend continue to be revealed in this work and others sure to come, the man distinct from the myth is still a remarkable example of nineteenth-century entrepreneurial spirit and enthusiastic participation in the agricultural experimentation of the day.

CHARLES W. DEAN

STEPHEN BELL, *Campanha gaúcha: a Brazilian ranching system, 1850–1920* (Stanford UP, 1998). xvi + 292 pp. 12 tables; 33 figs. £40.

The cattle economies of Latin America were already initiated half-a-century before the foundation of Jamestown, yet while the American West has spawned a vast academic and popular literature and innumerable 'Westerns', its counterparts south of the Rio Grande have no popular image and have at best limited academic coverage.

Stephen Bell's *Campanha gaúcha* is therefore much to be welcomed, as a valuable and thorough analysis of the cattle economy of southern Brazil. The fundamental

sections of the book detail the economic and social structure of cattle ranching on the interior grasslands of Rio Grande do Sul, the nature of hide and meat processing in the coastal *charqueadas*, and the switch to *frigoríficos* to produce refrigerated meat late in the study period.

However, if these discussions provide the substantive base of the work, it is in other observations that the author provides invaluable and original insights. For example, Rio Grande do Sul is not usually thought of as a 'slave state' in Brazil, yet, using wills and other sources, Dr Bell demonstrates the use of slaves in the fields and *charqueadas* until abolition in 1888, and explores the role of slave rather than wage labour as a factor in inhibiting modernization. Similarly, he makes very effective use of the records of landowners' associations, agricultural journals, and cattle exhibitions to trace the desire for innovation in the late nineteenth century. This is counterposed against a detailed discussion of the actuality of improvements in stock breeding, the introduction of wire fencing, improved pasture and veterinary assistance, and the establishment of *frigoríficos* to supply more palatable meat to expanding European markets.

This modernization proved at best halting, and Dr Bell sets the conventional view that this was due to the innate conservatism of the gaúcho ranchers against other factors, such as the persistence of slavery, insecurity of property rights, civil unrest, inadequate infrastructure of railways and ports, and the lack of an urban elite and merchant class comparable to that of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Indeed, one of the most stimulating facets of the book is that it places a comprehensive case study firmly in a wider context. The author compares the process of innovation in Rio Grande do Sul with that in Argentina and Uruguay, and in fact suggests that the province was essentially the lagging periphery of a circum-Plata regional economy. This, he argues, was compounded by its geographical and political marginality in the Empire and Old Republic of Brazil, in which the province and its pastoral economy received limited consideration from central government until the advent of President Getalio Vargas, scion of a gaúcho ranching family, in 1930.

The study is based on meticulous research using a wide range of archives, official publications, newspapers, and secondary literature from Brazil and abroad. It is framed in the best traditions of the historical geography of Sauer, Darby and others, and combines thoughtful scholarship with elegant prose. There are some finely nuanced observations and telling phrases, which are supported by copious and informative footnotes, and an impressive bibliography. Effective use is made of contemporary photographs of gaúchos, livestock and equipment, and of numerous relevant maps.

This is a book not merely for the Latin American specialist, as the author provides an excellent scene-setting of location, natural environment, and the historical context prior to his study period. Though it is in essence a scholarly monograph, *Campanha gaúcha* offers much more than a case study of a small part of South America over a brief span of time because, in addition to the new insights it provides into the Rio Grandense cattle economy of the late nineteenth century, its detail is carefully set into the encompassing regional context of the pastoral economy of the Plate estuary, and tied to the evolving Atlantic trade in livestock products. This book will be read with great profit not merely by Brazilianists and other Latin Americanists, but by anyone interested in the history, geography and economics of pastoralism, or in links between the local and the global in late-nineteenth century economic history. It also provides a role model for other studies of the historical geography of Latin American pastoralism, with Dr Bell modestly suggesting a number of areas for 'further research'.

JOHN DICKENSON

SHAWN EVERETT KANTOR, *Politics and property rights: the closing of the open range in the postbellum South* (University of Chicago Press, 1998). x + 187 pp. 30 tables; 2 figs. £35.95 (hbk); £14.50 (pbk).

Building on the author's 1991 doctoral dissertation at the California Institute of Technology, this compact study addresses the circumstances leading to institutional change. It does this using the specific lens of fencing reform, namely the drive to enclose livestock through the 'stock law' in postbellum Georgia. Although Georgia's General Assembly provided the opportunity for counties to adopt the stock law through referendums in 1872, there was no response before 1881. Why was something promising a net benefit slow to appear?

Assuming that individuals act from economic self-interest, Shawn Kantor's study argues that at least in this part of the world economics rather than class or ideology motivated the enclosure debates. Kantor uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods but it is his multivariate regression analyses that constitute his major contributions. Estimating the economic impact at the county level in 1880 of adopting the stock law in that year – a truly complex exercise – Kantor finds that only a minority of counties with expected net gains had adopted the innovation by 1882. Picking up on the contemporary idea that fence reform needed to mesh with meaningful geographical units, the author narrows his focus on slow innovation still further, providing case studies of the fence debates in two upcountry counties, both of which have been a focus of earlier work on the topic. Analysing census data and voting records, he

identifies how various groups sided in the fence debates and shows that distributional conflicts hampered reform. Further legal reforms in the early 1880s made it easier to build a winning coalition in some district referendums, not least through the provision of pasturing to tenants set to lose access to the open range.

Within its own terms of reference, the research in this study is impressively thorough. For all of its rigour, however, the book glosses over important matters. In the push to tell the reader how we should decompose the dynamics of institutional change, the author understandably begins with much on theory but he gives very little by way of vital regional background. Although Kantor treats regional issues from beginning to end, it is strange to find no maps, not even for 'the six conventional regions of Georgia' (p. 29). Behind the tort reforms at issue lay a series of varied and changing agrarian systems. The importance of their diversity is glimpsed at times in the quoted material from contemporary sources but we are never given a clear sense of the farming systems present. For example, improved breeding as a motive to push for the stock law is raised at various points in the text (pp. 22, 33 and 46) but there is no sustained discussion of the topic. Some of the quoted contemporary comment brings up important factors, such as the vital presence of a water supply on fenced range, which receive no further consideration in the analysis. Although the author argues the need to examine institutional development at the level of specific societies (p. 9) and concludes that we cannot separate the economic from the political and the social (p. 145), there is little explicit attention to society in his account of fence reform.

Overall, I find this book of mixed value. The succinct epilogue will probably give agricultural historians most of what they need from it. Kantor succeeds unequivocally in showing us that some of the earlier categorizations in the fence debates need refinement; we can no longer view landowners, tenants or labourers as taking their stands *en bloc*. He succeeds also in making the case for more local case studies that probe the regional support bases for Populism in the 1890s. Yet, while Kantor criticizes earlier historians of fence reform issues for providing insufficient historical context, the historical focus in his own study is extremely narrow; there is little broader context here on the enclosure of open range. Kantor's criticisms of earlier authors, especially the historian Steven Hahn, have a hectoring quality; in my view they do not compel. The author succeeds in making the basic argument that economic concerns drove much of the debate for adoption of the stock law but his insistence on playing down cultural components jars. How, for example, can he deny the importance of class, then write of 'yeomen farmers' stifling the enclosure process in

certain districts, or of 'large planters' seeking redress at the state legislature (p. 84)? Much of the evidence drawn from contemporary sources to support the economic argument developed in this study is open to broader interpretation. To approximate more closely the reality surrounding the fencing issue in postbellum Georgia, we still need research open to synthesizing the findings of both 'traditional' historical researchers and the 'sophisticated' world of the cliometricians.

STEPHEN BELL

DAVID GODDEN, *Agricultural and resource policy: principles and practice* (OUP Australia and New Zealand, 1997). xv + 408 pp. 35 tables; 92 figs; 22 boxes. £40.

Discussions of public policy towards agriculture and natural resources tend to be dominated by the north Atlantic perspective. Thus a textbook explicitly written from the opposite compass point appears refreshing at first sight. After all, Australia has produced an agrarian political party (formerly the Country Party, now the National Party) displaying a curious *mélange* of conservatism and radicalism, and this should be sufficient to rouse a scintillating debate. However, Godden's approach is to set down fundamental principles for policy analysis, hoping that their illustration with local, contemporary applications will not cause them to become too swiftly dated. To achieve this, he uses the theoretical framework of public choice theory – effectively, the application of neoclassical economic principles to political processes. Whilst it yields some useful insights, such an all-embracing, ahistorical outlook frequently neglects the contingent factors influencing policy processes and may disappoint readers familiar with the broader narrative scope of economic history.

The book is divided into four parts. The first establishes Godden's overall outlook, beginning with a mildly critical review of Pareto's model of welfare. This dismantles some key assumptions, using modish perspectives from institutional economics with respect to transactions costs, externalities, public goods and moral hazard. The naïve view of policy processes, wherein disinterested, altruistic actors struggle to achieve socially optimal outcomes, is discarded for the more realistic 'market for votes' approach, in which sophisticated lobbyists shuffle options with pork-barrelling politicians. Whilst explaining more, unhappily public choice theory still doesn't explain enough. For instance, it neglects the curious twist, increasingly evident in the US and Europe, of lobbying in pursuit of altruistic ends, on behalf of the environment and alleviation of global poverty but also (more recently) the improvement of animal welfare. One might almost argue (in line with some conclusions of experimental economics) that participants in the policy

making process, educated with such textbooks, are more likely to behave in the way the perspective suggests: public choice theory could well become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The book proceeds to an exploration of policy issues in the remaining three parts. Two sections deal with the agriculture and natural resource sector itself (looking initially at input and product markets, and then at structural change); and the concluding section examines the relative balance of policy emphasis on this and all other sectors of the economy. A substantial core of the text relies on equations, graphs and other kinds of formal reasoning, thoroughly familiar to anyone who has a neoclassical schooling and thoroughly unpalatable to anyone who has not. However, a couple of chapters stand out, as they grapple with exciting and more generally relevant issues.

The discussion of water resources in Chapter Four is a good example of the insights that can be gleaned, although my own came in reaction to, rather than as a consequence of, the arguments Godden provides. He starts by noting that water restrictions affecting urban consumers in Australia are often imposed, even when supplies are abundant, as the government 'apparently wanted to demonstrate to its rural constituency that metropolitan residents were sharing the pain' (p. 125). Unfavourably dissecting the complex web of special-interest exchanges made in water pricing and allocation, he concludes that prices should more accurately reflect the opportunities provided and alternatives foregone. This unfortunately overlooks the earlier critique of standard economic analysis, the intelligent conclusion from which is that large corporate utilities and governments influence 'free' market prices to the extent that they bear little relation at all to underlying costs and benefits.

Chapter 10 discusses the aborigine issue, a source of increasing angst and controversy in Australia, and provides further distinctiveness to this textbook. The discussion is, effectively, in three sections. The first is a case-study of the effects of extremely unequal resource distribution on a single aboriginal village community. The second, an analysis of the deficiency of the legal decision to grant common law land title to aborigines, leaving open the possibility of statutory extinction of title by the state or federal legislatures. The third is most remarkable, since despite the preceding sections, it embarks upon a standard social welfare analysis of the effects of white settlement on output, distribution and productive efficiency. This cultural insensitivity, treating all actors in the policy process as if they share the neo-classical vision of discrete, utility-maximising individuals, is breathtaking in its neglect of the magnitude of

historical context. Presumably, if aboriginal people had already had, or at least acquired, the mind-set of Anglo-American capitalism, there would not have been a problem in the first place. For a more enlightened approach, yet still within the domain of economic thinking, see Clive Hamilton's discussion of the same question in *The mystic economist*.

Soundly and efficiently produced, this is nevertheless a rather dull book. Its market is assured, not by popular appeal, but by desiccated adherents to the conventional wisdom who will undoubtedly recommend it to their students.

PETER MIDMORE

SUSAN J. BUCK, *The global commons: an introduction* (Earthscan, 1998). xiv + 225 pp. £14.95

The commons have long been central to agricultural history – from the management of herds by pastoralists to the enduring open-field system, from the co-management of forests and fisheries to twentieth-century machinery rings. Get the rules right and trust right, and natural resources can be managed and used sustainably to the wider benefit of rural people. Get them wrong, or see them undermined by external stresses and shocks, and both social structures and the resources themselves can be rapidly diminished.

Recent years have seen a rapid growth in interest amongst political scientists in how different configurations and stocks of social capital can affect the natural environment. Social capital is taken to be the relations of trust, reciprocal exchanges, and common rules and norms embedded in institutions. Social capital is an asset that gives value when used. It can also be run down when ignored or when people fail to invest in it. Social capital is a vital part of any attempt to seek more sustainable solutions to resource, and particularly common resource management.

This book, *The global commons*, addresses local, national and international interactions with four global commons, namely Antarctica, the oceans and seabeds, the atmosphere, and space. Until recently, these commons have been sustained largely because we did not have the technologies to extract value from them. That has now changed. All four commons are being steadily overused through resource removal, waste assimilation and various forms of pollution. The core problem, of course, is that the appropriate legal and institutional mechanisms for establishing fair and sustainable property rights over these commons lag far behind our capacity to exploit them. As a result, private stakeholders, whether individuals or companies, tend to overuse them and underinvest in them.

The four cases themselves will interest agricultural

historians less than the analytical framework, which is relevant to many wider contexts. It draws on the history of the development of western law, the property rights paradigm, national sovereignty and bundles of property rights held in the international arena, and the ideas underpinning the common heritage of mankind. The framework itself incorporates regime theory and institutional analysis to come up with a set of eight clearly

defined design principles for sustainable regimes for the commons.

As Elinor Ostrom says in the foreword 'our future is dependent on our joint use of the global commons'. This book is a welcome, albeit relatively short contribution to the complexities of these challenges, and provides useful pointers to further analysis.

JULES PRETTY

Society Notes and Queries

Annual report to members, 1998–1999

At the Annual General Meeting on 8 April 1998, Dr Joan Thirsk retired as president after a distinguished incumbency, and was succeeded by Prof. E. J. T. Collins. Dr A. D. M. Phillips stepped down as editor of *Agricultural History Review*, being replaced by Professor R. W. Hoyle, with Dr J. R. Walton as book review editor in place of Prof. D. Hey. Dr P. E. Dewey was elected as secretary; Professor M. Overton as Treasurer. There were some organisational changes: the Treasurer's office moved from Reading to Exeter and the membership roll was computerised. The printing of the *Review* was transferred (from volume 47 part one) to Carnegie Publishing of Lancaster.

The Society held three successful conferences during 1998. The Spring Conference was held at Walford College near Shrewsbury. A total of nine papers were presented. The Society is grateful to Dr Paul Stamper for acting as conference secretary. The Autumn Conference was held at the University of Central Lancashire on the subject of 'Land, Family and Estates'. The Winter Conference, 1998 was held, as usual, on the first Saturday in December. Its theme was 'Religion in the countryside'.

At the AGM held at the society's Spring Conference held at Caythorpe College near Grantham, Lincolnshire. Professor Mark Overton was able to report that over the previous year, individual membership had risen slightly from 495 at 1 February 1998 to 509 at 1 February 1999. Sales of the *Review* to libraries and institutions had fallen slightly over the year. Overall the society's position on membership was very satisfactory, and the indications were that we were continuing to attract new members at the same rate as in previous years. Professor Overton reported that the overall financial position of the society remained healthy, with a surplus over the year of 5.8k and assets of over 64k. The income and expenditure account showed a substantial rise in income from sales,

reflecting the rise in the price of the *Review* to institutions. On the expenditure side, the printing costs of the *Review* had risen considerably reflecting both an increase in printing charges and larger issues of the *Review*. In view of the balance of income over expenditure and of the reserves, there would be no need to raise subscriptions in the near future.

The society's full accounts can be obtained from the Treasurer's office at Exeter.

Postgraduate bursaries

It has always been the intention of the society to encourage postgraduates to attend the society's conferences and has made bursaries available to assist with their travelling and other expenses. Postgraduate students who wish to take advantage of this should write to the Secretary of the Society, enclosing a brief letter of support from their supervisor.

Work in progress

From time to time the society has published a directory of researchers into the history of agriculture and the history of rural society either working in the British Isles or researchers based abroad concerned with the rural history of the British Isles. No one is excluded from these lists: we hope to make them as comprehensive as possible. Dr Bethanie Afton has agreed to collate a new list of work in progress for the society. Forms are included with this issue of the *Review*, but anyone wishing to be included in the next work in progress is invited to send her their names, contact address (including e. mail address), institutional affiliation and up to 25 words describing their current areas of research before 1 June 2000. Dr Afton can be reached c/o the School of History, University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2RD, e.mail bethanie.afton@Nottingham.ac.uk.