

Book Reviews

The British Isles

PETER BRANDON, *The South Downs* (Phillimore, 1998).

xvi + 248 pp. 182 illus. £25.

Having been amongst the original list of landscapes recommended for designation as a National Park in 1945, but then dropped from the final list, the South Downs are in some ways the least fortunate of our areas of countryside beauty in England. With visitor pressure consistently on a level with the declared National Parks, the South Downs were given Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) status in 1966, a designation which allows local authority planning departments to take full account of the requirements of conservation but which, until recently, attracted no extra central government funding. But from 1992 the South Downs (or at least the Sussex portion) were allocated a Conservation Board to administer the AONB, and funding now runs through to 2001 while the future standing of the area is decided. This was a significant step forward in countryside planning, with the Sussex Downs Conservation Board heralded as a possible way forward for other AONBs in England and Wales.

So this is a timely book by Peter Brandon, and one in which he brings his abundant knowledge of his own beloved Downs fully to bear on the current question of their future. This is an area on which he has worked for many years – indeed, some of the material is taken from his 1963 doctoral thesis – and all is written with his characteristic verve and depth of feeling. For example, on the post-war agricultural revolution he writes, ‘The immediate aftermath of a bloody conflict was to prove a watershed in the history of the Downs. Most of their legendary beauty was extinguished as indiscriminately and as finally as were the lives of so many men and women who went to war to defend them’.

The volume is organized chronologically, with the first chapter setting out the landscape themes and the second dealing with the physical background, although the activities of the farming communities and their uses of the natural environment are always to the fore. With Chapter 3 we move on to early peoples, and thereafter we are conducted through the Saxon, the medieval, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries and thus into the twentieth century and ‘the austere present’. Thematic passages are also included within this broad chronological approach. And due attention is certainly given to the all-important Southdown sheep, whether in its medieval setting, or at the time of its great transformation at the hands of John Ellman of Glynde and other great contemporary flockmasters. Not only the vital agricultural importance of the animal is brought out, in its role in the precocious sheep/corn husbandry of the area, but also its social significance, as for example at the Lewes Wool Fair, which attracted nobility and gentry from near and far. Peter Brandon provides a fascinating account of this annual event, noting that hardly a Wealden farmer competed for prizes or helped organize the Fair, thereby underlining an ages-old division within Sussex between the Weald and the downland.

Much of the charm of this volume lies in its synthesis of historical and contemporary, artistic and literary themes throughout, and in its grand sweeps of vision. Widely available in Sussex high-street book retailers, it will appeal to general readers who should thereby be treated to a text which is at once erudite and eminently readable. But that is not to deny that others might take issue with some of the detail: can it be demonstrated, for example, that the South Saxons did settle in villages as well as individual farms as early as two or three centuries after their initial colonization, as implied (p. 33)? Indeed, the author himself elsewhere (pp. 50 and 59) notes that the downland (or more likely scarpfoot) villages date from the ninth to the eleventh centuries. The illustrations are generally well-chosen (there are several colour plates) and make their own full contribution to a volume which draws out the spirit of place of the Downs in a unique way. It is, however, unfortunate that in the version of the book sent to this reviewer, there are problems with some of the illustrations which render them virtually meaningless: on p. 67, for example, the values of sheep and corn tithes 1340 are identically shaded except for the highest values, and similar problems exist on pp. 65 and 94. I understand that a later print-run rectified this problem. It would have been helpful too for the sources of the diagrams to have been given, especially where these were derived from primary source material, as in Chapter 6, ‘Farming communities in the Middle Ages (1100–1500)’.

To attempt such a grand sweep of history and to write a book which aims to extend readers' active enjoyment and understanding of their downland surroundings is at once an ambitious and laudable project. In this, Peter Brandon succeeds admirably.

BRIAN SHORT

DIANA K. CALDICOTT, *Monxton: a Hampshire village history* (The author, Mill Pound Cottage, Monxton, Andover, Hants SP11 8AW, 1998). xii + 179 pp. 44 illus; 4 maps. £11.50 incl. p & p.

This reasonably-priced paperback is a comprehensive economic and social history of the village, in which the author herself resides, from prehistory to present times. She has done this in the usual chronological way except for a large 'chunk' of Church of England history, 1700–1846; happily, the latter is relieved by tales about a wayward cleric who had an undue interest in the sins of the flesh. Each period is placed in a context, usually with reference to national political contemporary events, and the work is interspersed with appropriate maps and illustrations.

All sections are well researched and presented, and this review will concentrate on farming in the village during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During this period King's College, Cambridge held the manor of Monxton, and the wealth of their archive material forms a firm basis for detailed interpretation at a local level. Diana Caldicott has done this in a way which, for the most part, reflects the latest research elsewhere.

Perhaps the high point of the resource material is the invaluable map of the manor prepared in 1751. Amongst other things, it is evident that open field strip-farming was flourishing at this time, and that the tenants were readily adapting innovative crops to it. In this respect it is worth remembering that when the tenants sought retrospective permission from their landlord for enclosing a piece of common land known as Cowdown in the 1580s (p. 32), it would still have been worked on the strip system. In this sense, the enclosure of Cowdown was actually an encroachment, and simply an enlargement of the area devoted to open field husbandry.

Furthermore, a significant acreage of open field survived until the parliamentary enclosure of the parish in 1806–8. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the latter had less to do with more efficient cereal farming than with creating conditions more appropriate for the production of sheep meat. Indeed fencing and hedging are largely irrelevant for cereal production, but essential for the containment of livestock, and the provision of controlled feeding regimes for them. As further proof of this, the enclosure award at Monxton led directly to

the creation of a new holding (Prospect Farm) on the old downland: here extensive common grazing was to be largely replaced by intensive feeding based on farm crops grown especially for the sheep flock.

GAVIN BOWIE

JOHN HUNTER, *The Essex landscape: a study of its form and history* (Essex Record Office Publications, 1999). x + 210 pp. 79 illus. £16.95.

This book fills a gap left by the omission of Essex from the series of county histories modelled on W. G. Hoskins' *Making of the English landscape*. Since 1955, when Hoskins wrote, further research in natural as well as cultural history has greatly advanced the understanding of how and why landscapes have evolved. John Hunter devotes two long chapters to describing geology, land-forms, regions and subregions and his accounts of soils, drainage, woods, heaths and hedges draw extensively on the work of D. R. Bridgland, Oliver Rackham, George Peterkin and other ecologists.

Recent studies in archaeology and local history have thrown new light on early changes in the human landscape. Many recently-discovered Bronze Age artefacts on coastal inlets and on loam terrain in north-east Essex bear witness to widespread development of agriculture. Sites of large, fortified Iron Age towns have been investigated and evidence for extensive trade in salt, ewes' milk cheese and bacon has been found. A detailed account of the turbulent relations between Belgic tribes and Roman rulers is reflected in landscape changes. Towns were built, destroyed, fortified and rebuilt. In the countryside, trees were cleared for cultivation, villas were founded, sheep farming expanded and roads were constructed. At the end of Roman occupation population declined and cultivated land reverted to wood. From the early fifth century the land was overrun by bands of Saxons. Small territories united to form an East Saxon kingdom that flourished in the seventh century but in 991, the East Saxons were defeated by Danes at the Battle of Maldon and many villages were plundered and burnt. The Norman conquest was followed by a peaceful takeover of Essex and agrarian settlement revived. The Domesday Book compiled in 1086 recorded that no part of the county was densely populated but villas on chalky soils in the north-west had many plough-teams.

The fullest and most interesting section of John Hunter's book deals with medieval and early modern landscape changes. Diverse wood-pasture activities were developed over much of Essex. Large areas were set aside as royal hunting preserves for deer and other beasts of the chase. By the early fourteenth century, the boundless Forest of Essex had been reduced to four separate forests: Waltham with Hainault, Hatfield, Writtle and

Kingswood next to Colchester. At the same time, lords and prelates obtained licences to enclose private deer parks. Tracts of woodland were managed by lopping, chopping and coppicing to produce poles, charcoal and faggots. Thousands of pigs foraged in the undergrowth and cattle and horses grazed seasonally in open glades. Expansion of arable farming in the north-west and on the eastern side of the county was accompanied by the construction of great timbered barns. In the later middle ages, Essex suffered no less than other counties from famine, plague and civil war, but many survivors enjoyed new opportunities. Peasants won freedom from feudal obligations and occupied farms as tenants or independent owners. In north Essex, cloth manufacturing enriched a few merchants and paid for the building of magnificent churches and substantial town houses. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, new wealth, including profits obtained from acquisition of monastic lands, was poured into sumptuous mansions built in brick and stone, adorned with large glazed windows, surrounded by ornamental gardens.

As the pace of change speeded up after 1700, John Hunter's narrative becomes shorter and shorter. The making of Georgian landscapes is covered in 16 pages, dealing mostly with creations of large landowners, landscape gardens, agricultural improvements and civic architecture. The vast changes that occurred between the accession of Queen Victoria and World War Two are compressed into five pages. The era of high farming, the coming of the railway, the making of nineteenth- and twentieth-century townscapes are passed over rapidly. The building of factories, breweries, gasworks, miles of terraced houses, des. res., shops, pubs, chapels, schools and cemeteries are largely ignored. John Hunter's view of Colchester excludes its Victorian landmarks: the railway station, Severall's hospital, army barracks, gothic town hall and romanesque water tower. Contemporary Essex is dealt with in 12 pages. Traditional domestic architecture by Raymond Erith receives more attention than Frederick Gibberd's modern design for Harlow New Town and neither Stansted airport nor the two motorways, M11 and M25, are mentioned. John Hunter does not say that he disapproves of modern design but he leaves an impression that the best features in Essex were created before 1800.

The book fully engages the reader's interest and generates enthusiasm for traces of medieval landscapes. It contains many useful maps and imaginative bird's eye views of settlements and farms reconstructed by Frank Gardiner. It is an admirable successor to Hoskins' classic work.

HUGH PRINCE

DELLA HOOKE, *Warwickshire Anglo-Saxon charter bounds* (Boydell Press, 1999). iv + 145 pp. 8 plates; 25 maps. £35.

This is the third in a series of county volumes compiled by Dr Hooke, in which the topographical information in pre-Conquest charters is presented and interpreted. Each charter is calendared, and references are given for manuscript and printed versions. The parts of the charter which provide information about land, such as the number of hides or the brief formal descriptions of land use, are quoted verbatim, and translated. But the main purpose of the book is to provide the texts of the boundary clauses, accompanied in each case by a lengthy discussion of the exact location of boundary points, and a map showing their position. The documents are classified by century, from the eighth to the eleventh, with charters separated from leases. A further distinction is made within each category between those documents which have boundary clauses attached, and those which do not.

Readers are given in very accessible form a resource previously requiring searches through a dozen volumes. The charters and their boundaries are the most important written sources for landholding, land use and agriculture before Domesday, and their ready availability will assist work in this period. This evidence makes best sense when combined with other types of information, and Dr Hooke points the way by referring to Domesday, later documents, and archaeological finds, but there is insufficient space for this supplementary material to be presented comprehensively.

Warwickshire is not very fully provided with charters and boundary descriptions of this period, mainly because ancient church institutions held relatively small amounts of land in the county. There are groups of documents relating to the south-west of the county, in the Avon and Stour valleys, and a number for the south-eastern Feldon, but the wooded Arden in the north-west has little evidence. But the handful of bounds attached to the county's charters still contain much information of interest. Dr Hooke has done a formidable amount of research in identifying boundary points, by looking for names in early maps and other documents, and she has walked many of the boundaries. There are still mysteries, such as locating the place called *Fachanleah* (with a number of variant spellings) which was an estate and presumably a settlement of some importance near Stratford-upon-Avon. In the same part of the county, it is hard to explain why the boundary description attached to a charter for Shottery appears to exclude the village and territory which carried that name in the later middle ages. Indeed, Stratford and its many attached settlements would repay further detailed research. Its documents in the ninth to tenth centuries show the conventional process by which parts of an estate

were detached and granted to lesser lay lords, thus creating the pattern of territorial units – manors, townships and parishes – that provided the framework for the countryside in later centuries. However, the starting point for that process is normally seen to have been a large and primeval estate, yet Stratford's early charters refer to smaller units in the eighth century, and suggest that the 'ancient' estate was going through complex changes, and may even have been created at that time.

Agricultural historians will be particularly interested in the references to fields, crops and animals which appear in boundary clauses, but these are not very numerous in Warwickshire charters. A lease for Alveston in 966 grants 'acres' (meaning open-field strips) distributed over a field system, but unlike the Berkshire documents of this period, the boundaries do not pick their way in detail through the headlands and furrows of developed arable fields. We will not be fully aware of these regional differences, nor be in a position to explain them, until we have more of these valuable books.

CHRISTOPHER DYER

BRYAN WAITES, *Monasteries and the landscape in north east England: the medieval colonisation of the North York Moors* (Oakham: Multum in Parvo Press, 1997). x + 214 pp. Illus. £15.95; JANET BURTON, *The monastic order in Yorkshire, 1069–1215* (CUP, 1999). xxii + 352 pp. 6 tables; 3 maps. £40.

As well as their being concerned with Yorkshire, a joint review of these books is justified in that both summarize the more particular and detailed researches of their respective authors. That by Bryan Waites is, as he states in his introduction, a valedictory piece; but hopefully this will not be the last word on the subject by Janet Burton. The two books have, however, clearly differing aims. Dr Burton's purpose is to present a comprehensive and balanced account of the development of monasticism in the whole of Yorkshire between 1069, when there were no monasteries north of the Trent and when the county was enduring Norman conquest and settlement, and 1215, when the papacy forbade the creation of new monastic orders and the monastic map of Yorkshire was complete, except for the Charterhouse at Mount Grace founded towards the end of the fourteenth century. In contrast, Dr Waites covers a longer span of time but is narrower in his geographical and thematic focus: his concerns are exclusively economic and he concentrates on the land eastwards from the Vale of York and between the northern slope of the Wolds and the Tees. Because of this, I feel his title is too broad: North East England surely implies the old counties of Durham and

Northumberland. As Dr Burton recognizes, the Tees is a boundary of considerable historical significance.

Although differing in purpose, both studies deal with matters of importance to all who are interested in medieval settlement formation, land organization and farming; and both historians come to the unequivocal conclusion that the development of Yorkshire owed a great deal to the ambitions and policies of the county's monastic houses and the orders to which they belonged.

However, to concentrate exclusively on the economic aspect would be unfair to Dr Burton since it would necessitate ignoring the important contribution her book makes to our understanding of the many other facets of monasticism in Yorkshire in a period which saw the birth of sixty-seven houses at an average rate of almost one every two years. Her analysis highlights two basic features. One is the primary role in monastic foundation of those who possessed land and political power. She argues that the Crown played a direct part only in the earliest phase when William I and William II were at pains to establish Selby and then (and more importantly) St Mary's, York as royal abbeys. Otherwise, the driving force on the lay side was the baronage introduced by the Norman kings, but with the knightly class gradually becoming more involved, although on an understandably smaller scale, in the later twelfth century. Surprisingly, perhaps, the largest group of houses (twenty-five or thirty-seven per cent) were nunneries. All of them were much smaller and poorer than their male counterparts, essentially, Dr Burton stresses, because they were designed to fulfil more limited and localized functions.

The other important feature was the symbiotic association between monasteries and their lay founders and benefactors. As regards the former, Dr Burton insists that we must recognize the deep and genuine urge that moved men and women to enter the cenobitic life, although she underlines the fact that they did not, and were not expected, to live solely for themselves. While their prime duty was to offer spiritual insurance and (hopefully) assurance, they were also expected to provide education, retirement facilities, prestigious burial grounds and solutions to family problems. In return, the laity furnished the real estate without which no monastery would have been viable. Thus, as members of endowed corporations, monks joined the laity in the economic world, while wealthy laymen and women engaged to some degree either in life or in death with the spiritual world of the cloister.

Of necessity, Dr Burton deals more briefly and broadly than Dr Waites with the economic aspects of Yorkshire monasticism, and in doing so is aware of Dr Waites's contribution in this field. One of her main purposes is to emphasize that monastic influence was felt

and was of great significance throughout the county, although it was more evident in the more sparsely settled districts. She contrasts the Benedictines and the Augustinians with the Cistercians and their Premonstratensian and Gilbertine imitators. The former acquired extensive properties in the densely settled parts of the county and were comfortable with the notion of having lordship as well as land, although she believes that the meagre evidence indicates that they were not engaged in direct exploitation. On the other hand, the eight Cistercian houses eschewed lordship and were closely engaged in the management of their eighty-three granges. She notes their prominence in the business of wool production, but cautions that prominence should not be interpreted as dominance.

Concerned as he is with only seventeen monasteries and with only one of their interests, Dr Waites has explored his chosen region in much greater depth and detail, including a very helpful preliminary description of its geological and geographical features. His analysis shows that in every case the bulk of a monastery's estate was located fairly close to the house, and that this tended to become more pronounced as most monasteries strove to remove the illogicalities and inconveniences of their foundation endowment by means of purchase, exchange and mortgage foreclosure.

Like Dr Burton, he emphasizes the importance of the grange, which he describes as 'the spearhead of the monastic *blitzkrieg* – the impact was just as great; the results just as overpowering'. However, he exposes the hyperbole of this statement by his explanation of how many granges evolved only gradually into consolidated farms: in many instances, the monks had to share their chosen sites with lay owners whom they were able to buy out only piecemeal and over an extended period. He also goes further than Dr Burton in arguing that many granges began as adjuncts of appropriated parish churches where the monks required facilities for collecting, storing and selling tithe produce. Overall, his perception is that geographical factors were of secondary importance in grange formation, although, like Dr Burton, he acknowledges their greater importance in areas of sparse settlement. He too emphasizes the important role played by monasteries in wool production, but he also stresses that the grange was not solely a pastoral phenomenon: at most granges there was some agrarian activity, and many were primarily concerned with grain production.

Because of his longer timespan, Dr Waites is able to calculate changes in the prosperity of his region as measured by the value of land. Using national taxation surveys and valuations from 1292 until 1535, he has estimated the impact of extraneous factors, notably the Scottish raids and the fall in the size of the population

in the fourteenth century. What emerges is that, although land values changed in absolute terms, they remained highest in the Vales of Pickering, York and Tees and lowest in the Moorland and on the Coastal Plateau.

The one major difference between these two historians is their interpretation of the term 'waste' in Domesday Book. Dr Waites accepts the traditional and more pessimistic view that the county experienced massive disruption and depopulation in 1069–70. Dr Burton, however, recognizes the more recent perception of the 'harrying of the north' as less damaging than the word 'waste' suggests.

Both books in their respective ways add considerably to our knowledge and understanding of what was happening in medieval Yorkshire and of the roles played by monks and their supporters. They are valuable and worthy additions to the growing body of work on the county.

RICHARD LOMAS

RAY LOCK (ed.), 'The court rolls of Walsham-le-Willows 1303–50' (*Suffolk Records Society*, 41, 1998). vii + 373 pp. 2 plates; 2 maps. £30.

Of late there has been a minor glut of publications directly related to the late medieval manor court. The appearance of a further edition of manorial court rolls from the early fourteenth century is particularly welcome, offering as it does the easy opportunity for close inspection of a rather full series of courts at a moment when the historiography of medieval manorial court rolls is increasingly directing researchers to examine the nature of law in manorial courts and the extent to which those courts responded to developments in other jurisdictions, notably the common law.

The parish of Walsham-le-Willows is situated in West Suffolk, approximately ten miles north-east of Bury St Edmunds. Manor and village were not coterminous and the manorial rolls represent the proceedings of more than a relatively minor lay manorial lord, as Lock's introduction to the edition makes clear. The location and lordship of the manors certainly add to the interest of the court rolls: firstly, most, but not all, series of manorial court rolls exploited by researchers tend to come from the largest lay and ecclesiastical estates – it is very useful to have this edition of the proceedings of minor lay manorial courts; following from this, the close proximity of Walsham-le-Willows to a cluster of manors belonging to the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds, the manorial court rolls of which have been subjected to detailed investigation, also encourages comparison; further, the fact that the records of courts survive from those held by other than a single landlord allows further consideration of the extent to which individuals held land from more than a single lord.

We had been offered a foretaste of the Walsham-le-Willows rolls, which are presently kept at the Record Office in Bury St Edmunds, when a pre-publication excerpt from the 1349 rolls, which listed tenant death after tenant death, was published by Horrox in her edition of sources on the Black Death. These courts, of course, appear in full here, as do their early fourteenth century predecessors. Lock offers a translation as well as a transcription of the first two surviving courts, those of October 1303 and October 1316; thereafter the text of the rolls appears only in translation. The content of the rolls is, for the most part, fairly typical for this part of the country at this period. Inheritance was partible, the land market was very active and many of the entries record transfers of very small plots of land; the rolls are also full of the range of entries that we might expect to find: amercements for breaches of by-laws, brewing offences, acts of petty criminality, inter-tenant disputes, and so on. The inter-personal disputes generated, in the 1320s and 1330s, a number of rather detailed and interesting pleas of debt and covenant of a kind which help to add an extra dimension to our view of the pre-plague world of the peasantry. The manorial rolls of Walsham-le-Willows, as elsewhere, also shed most light on the great of the village community. This is well illustrated in the case of a substantial villager, the villein William Lene, who died in 1329 leaving a considerable estate in land, chattels, and livestock; symptomatic of the sort of acquisitive peasant who occupied a place at or near the top of the village pyramid. William, in leaving a will which included a bequest for someone to attend the shrine of St Thomas of Lancaster, the popular 'saint' killed by Edward II in 1322, also reminds us that the view of the early fourteenth century English peasantry did not stop at the nearest hedgerow.

There are some oddities of translation and extension. For instance 'incidit per inquisitionem/per cognitionem' has been translated as 'he intervened through the enquiry'/'by his own admission he intervened' (pp. 35, 39 and elsewhere) when the sense is surely that the party has lost by the ruling of an inquest / by his own recognition. 'R.' (as p. 43) should be extended and translated as 'respit' rather than 'reply'. It would also have been useful to have been offered the Latin on more than one occasion where the entry is unusual: for example, it would be useful to know the verb, translated here as 'mortgaged', which was used in an entry recording an illegal lease made in the court of June 1335 (p. 187). There are also the almost inevitable errors of production: 11 and 12 Edward II is not the same, of course, as Jan. 1337-Jan. 1339 (p. 171). The index, is very full and useful, as is the glossary. In an ideal world, this translation would have been supported by an envelope of micro-fiche of the original rolls fixed inside the back cover but, no doubt,

practical and financial constraints dictated otherwise. Irrespective of this, by producing this handsome edition of an important series of manorial court rolls, Ray Lock and the Suffolk Records Society have performed a service for historians of the medieval peasantry and of late medieval agrarian history.

PHILLIPP SCHOFIELD

BERYL SCHUMER, *Wychwood: the evolution of a wooded landscape* (Charlbury: The Wychwood Press, 1999). xi + 116 pp. 8 tables; 14 maps. £7.50.

This slim volume forms a new edition of a work first published by Leicester University Press in 1984. The text has been revised throughout, and illustrations and a new chapter (six) added. In his generous foreword, Harold Fox describes Beryl Schumer's account as belonging to a new phase of writing in woodland history, one that emphasizes not destruction but management. Whereas previous writers on woodland history (like W. G. Hoskins and H. C. Darby) had cast the period from the Norman Conquest until the Black Death as one of large-scale woodland clearance, the 'taming' of a wilderness, Schumer's *Wychwood* advances the view that much of its wooded area had, in prehistory, been cleared land. Thus Wychwood had seen cycles of clearance and regeneration. In parallel, she argues that in medieval times the picture in Wychwood was less one of rapid and continuous change than of remarkable stability – especially in the west and south parts of the forest where there was hardly any alteration in the woodland area between 1086 and the modern era. As Fox remarks, these various conclusions have found echo in other recent writing on woodland history.

The area studied coincides broadly with the current administrative district of West Oxfordshire. Historically, it covers 28 medieval parishes and at least 40 Domesday manors. Almost every parish demonstrates evidence of Roman settlement, implying that there was no large untouched area of primeval woodland left in Roman times. Under the Saxons, settlement contracted and some cleared areas reverted to wood pasture. However, by Domesday it is plain that the woodland of Wychwood was nothing like as extensive as often believed, nor did it belong exclusively to the King. Within it were large clearings occupied by Domesday manors. There were other 'open' forest areas used as sheep walks, not to mention a grid of routeways. Thus, Schumer concludes, medieval Wychwood was far from an indeterminate wilderness but rather 'an organized area of wood and wood pasture with definite and fairly stable boundaries' (p. 47). It follows, therefore, that the villis that were thought to be the result of post-Conquest assarting were mostly already in existence in 1086.

Wyckwood reveals two distinctive sub-regions in the medieval period: river valley settlements which had stable populations, agriculture based on two fields of equal size and little or no assarting; and 'forest' vills where assarting led to the growth of irregular field systems. It was in these latter areas that population growth was greatest, helped by an influx of men from elsewhere, so running contrary to the accepted view that the medieval peasant was bound to his manor.

In Chapter Six (added for this edition), Schumer carries Wyckwood's story beyond 1400. The extent of the woodland changed little, but ownership and organization in the forest did, particularly in association with Dissolution. This section of the book is probably the weakest. It lacks the level of detail of earlier chapters and appears somewhat disengaged from the vast array of writing on forests covering the period. Such criticism aside, it is hard to dissent from the view that Beryl Schumer's *Wyckwood* remains a most scholarly contribution. Its detailed exposition of Domesday woodland and of settlement and rights within it is full of interest for the local historian. More widely, it affords revealing comparative perspectives alongside other forest realms.

MICHAEL FREEMAN

ELIZABETH K. BERRY (ed.), 'Swaledale wills and inventories, 1522-1600' (*Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Ser.* 152, 1998). xiv + 411 pp. 1 illus; 2 maps. £48. The probate courts of the Yorkshire divide between the courts of the diocese of York (which covered most of the county) and those of the archdeaconry of Richmond, responsible for the western part of the North Riding. The records of the York court in the sixteenth century are primarily a marvellous set of probate registers, in which wills and their administrations were engrossed. Until the very end of the seventeenth century, the original wills and their inventories do not survive. For Richmond, we have the original wills and inventories – with many lacking – and it is upon these that any inventory-based assessment of the rural economy of Yorkshire before c. 1690 must be based. In this volume Mrs Berry prints all the surviving sixteenth-century wills and inventories for Swaledale above Richmond, 210 in all. As the inventories make plain, this was cattle rearing country with some evidence for cheese and butter production, but with relatively little arable. Indeed, some inventories with cattle make no mention of either grain or arable tools. A few inventories contain evidence for lead production.

The difficulty with wills and inventories is that read individually, they normally contain very few surprises, and so it proves with this volume. There are a few gentry wills, a scattering of women's wills and such oddities as the will of a household servant and a Dutchman resident

in Gunnerside (no. 153). A Downholme yeoman had £329 owing him from 120 individuals: this, and many other individual wills, could profitably be investigated further. The interest of wills lies in our ability to infer norms and exceptions from them and in this respect 210 remains a small number. The transcriptions look to be well executed but rather under edited. Mrs Berry prints verbatim to the point of neither punctuating nor paragraphing her texts: she does not extend 'wch' or 'yt' nor, in an inventory in which every line ends 'p' (and not, in her transcript, 'p') explain that this stands for price. (And see also 'jnor', 'L:ship' and 'qter'). More regrettably, she provides no subject index. For references to pasture gates or bee hives and swarms, one has to search the text. I can readily understand why, but this will reduce the utility of the volume to historians. To a degree, the extensive introduction stands for a subject index, for here Mrs Berry fillets her wills and draws attention to many of their features. But the introduction also reflects the essential weakness of the volume. Mrs Berry is not a historian. The introduction sticks very closely to the evidence of the wills themselves, supplemented by a small number of printed sources. It is determinedly not quantitative. It makes no comment on the preambles to the wills despite the enormous literature on the subject. It is of some interest that in the first will (of 1572) in which the testator claims to be a member of the elect, the offending phrase has been struck out. When? By whom? A distinctive form of preamble was being used in Grinton in the 1580s (cf nos. 118, 123, 126, 129, 130, 132): what does this tell us? Elsewhere Mrs Berry falls into error by saying that her testators were mostly copyholders: they were not. They held by tenant right. It is to be hoped that Mrs Berry's stamina extends to offering us a second volume, perhaps running through to 1640: a large undertaking, but one which would reveal social change within the dale. A companion volume of lowland wills and inventories from the archdeaconry archives would also be a desirable companion. We cannot have too many of these volumes, and for preparing this one, Mrs Berry deserves our gratitude and encouragement to undertake another.

R. W. HOYLE

ANDREW MCRAE, *God speed the plough. The representation of agrarian England, 1500-1660* (CUP, 1996). xv + 335 pp. 13 illus. £40.

Agricultural historians of early modern England are familiar with contemporary authors such as Tusser, Blith, and Worlidge and have used their writings to illustrate husbandry practices. *God speed the plough* uses these authors – and a great many more – to explore the changing attitudes to rural England during the period 1500 to 1660. In addition to the more familiar agricultural

writers, the author takes opinions from sermons, speeches, pamphlets, poetry and drama in an attempt not to document agricultural practice but to reveal changing ideologies of the nature of rural society.

The central argument of the book is that while in the sixteenth century responses to crisis were through appeals to the virtues of rural stability and community, by the seventeenth century the discourse of improvement emphasized a new morality of thrift and property. Thus complaints about the conversion of tillage to pasture saw it as an unnatural threat to the moral ideal of an arable commonfield community: conversion to sheep walk would lead to moral decay through idleness and a decrease in charity. The greatest threat to the conventional order was 'enclosure', a term used in a very broad sense by contemporaries ranging from the imposition of private property rights to engrossing and the decay of tillage. By the end of the sixteenth century the opposing argument was gaining currency: that self-interest and individualism were positive forces in the countryside. Even Thomas Tusser encouraged his readers to 'folow profit earnestlie' in 1573. These ideas were further developed in the succeeding century, by agricultural authors and others, so that by the Restoration there is plenty of evidence that a new moral order was in place.

The implication throughout the book is that this change in attitude was a response to a changed economic order, in crude terms that it was an ideological response to the replacement of a 'moral economy' by agrarian capitalism. However, unlike, for example, the work of E. P. Thompson, the relationship between ideology and the economic structure of farming is not explored. While extracts from contemporary literature are woven together to construct a plausible argument, they are left rather in the air, devoid of an economic and social context. Thus, from the viewpoint of an agrarian historian, there is little that is novel in this book. One question it does raise is the issue of chronology. McRae argues that a new ideological order was in place by the Restoration, whereas Thompson's arguments were applied to the eighteenth century. Almost twenty years ago Keith Tribe compared the agrarian literature of the late seventeenth century with that of the mid-eighteenth, concluding there had been an ideological shift which he saw as evidence of the establishment of an agrarian capitalism. The opportunity is not taken to explore this apparent contradiction since Tribe's work is not mentioned nor included in the bibliography.

Despite these limitations, the range of examples in the book makes for interesting reading, and on occasions offers new insights into contemporaries' understandings of their world.

MARK OVERTON

MARTIN W. DOWLING, *Tenant right and agrarian society in Ulster, 1600–1870* (Irish Academic Press, 1999). xi + 388 pp. 1 map. £42.50 (hbk); £18.95 (pbk).

To most British agricultural historians tenant right in its most basic form is fairly simple to understand. It was the compensation that was paid to the outgoing tenant for the unexpired value of his own investment in the land, recognizing that this year's labours and applications of manure, and other inputs, may not be realized until after the tenancy ends, in which case the new tenant enjoys the rewards. It revolves around the unexhausted improvements which incoming tenants enjoyed as a result of the husbandry of the outgoing tenant. This was a purely economic relationship. In Ulster there developed over the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries what was known as the 'Ulster Custom' of tenant right. Whilst it embodied an important economic relationship, it was also a symbol of the property rights of the tenants, and this was crucial when it was tested and scrutinized in the nineteenth century. In its economic form Dowling likens it to the traditional tenure system practised in England under the system of beneficial leases, but with one important difference. In the English case the incoming tenants paid the landlord a high entry fine, or if already tenants they paid a high renewal fine, and subsequent rents were set below rack, competitive or Ricardian rent levels. In Ulster, it was the outgoing tenant who received the lookalike entry fine, not the landlord. This amounted effectively to the selling of leases at a tenurial level below the landlord, and represented one of the most important means by which capital circulated.

All of this can be modelled in purely economic terms. Dowling recognizes this but also argues that it represents many of the contradictions in the wider Irish landlord system, which eventually exploded in the land wars of the late nineteenth century. Hitherto, historians have concentrated on the end result, the land wars and the resulting tenurial adjustments that took place. To do so, Dowling argues, is to miss the historical setting that grew over nearly three hundred years. It was the tenants, not the landlords, who seemed to control the property rights, and this at a time when commercialization, capitalism by any other name, was becoming the dominant mode of production more generally in many western European economies – 'the existence of custom [was] ... incompatible with agrarian capitalism' (p. 10). This rather different economic mode of production also had its own social mode of organization. Dowling explores this special, and narrowly located tenurial situation (though it, or its lookalike was not entirely confined to Ulster). He reviews both the customary tenure that prevailed in pre-colonial Ulster, and also the colonial plantation system that developed. Initially, at least, this made null and

void all customary and communal property rights, and introduced a leasehold system instead. Yet out of this situation there then arose in the seventeenth century this Ulster Custom of tenant right, carrying with it all the ambiguities of property rights. The origin and initial use of the terms and the words is somewhat obscure, as Dowling shows, but subsequently in the next three centuries both the recognition and the use of the term was subject to different interpretations according to customary and judicial views of the law. But it was not until the land issue in Ireland became an important political football after about 1830 that these customary and judicial interpretations came out into the open, and the imprecision of the custom and the possible invention of tradition by agrarian society were severely tested in public enquiries and land based laws. This is a long and dense book based on an intimate and detailed knowledge of over sixty landed estates, but for the patient reader it will offer rewards that will further confirm that Ireland is someplace else.

MICHAEL TURNER

JOCELYNE FINBERG, *Exploring villages* (Sutton Publishing, 1998; first edition 1958). xii + 252 pp. 8 plates; 60 figs, £14.99

Reissued here with a brief introduction by Trevor Rowley, Jocelyn Finberg's classic text still remains as fresh and vibrant as when it first saw the light of day in 1958. Inevitably some of the remarks about the origins of villages being rooted in the Anglo-Saxon settlement have become outdated as a result of the past forty years of archaeological investigation, yet the general notion of the village being a reflection of the triumphs and catastrophes of national history remains. Fields, farms, hedges, schools, churches and their close inter-relationships are all highlighted in a book which continues to be a key work for those interested in the history of their home community. Readers of this *Review* will be especially fascinated by the descriptive writing (who, these days, would describe the oolitic limestone as lying 'across the breast of the land like a garter ribbon?') and the richness of detail; of the carving of king posts, the arcane operations of the village ale-tester, and the reason why few village churches face precisely due east. It is deliciously done and this reissue, illustrated extensively with Finberg's own pen and ink drawings is deserving of a wide readership.

At the time of the first edition the problem of rural depopulation was of major public and official concern. Reflecting on my own childhood at the time, the countryside certainly seemed a very quiet place. Bikes could be safely ridden, roadside picnics comfortably eaten, car journeys undertaken for pleasure and unlocked

churches visited with ease. Yet to my juvenile eye there always seemed to be plenty of village shops to buy sweets (and later that most perfect of pleasures, the cigarette) on one's tramps and rides around the East Midlands, while there was no shortage of people about. Nor too, was there any shortage of buses, seen by Finberg as being one of the answers to depopulation, in the sense that they could allow the country person ready access to the town without actually having to live in it. Readers of less than thirty who travel on the (rare) rural buses today will reflect with interest on her description of the service in the 1950s; '... the atmosphere of happiness and good humour which pervades its progress, crammed with housewives, schoolchildren and workers ...'.

Recent surveys suggest that the English village, largely divorced from its organic link with the surrounding farmscape, is rapidly becoming a dormitory whence issues each morning a stream of vehicles headed for the cramped car parks of the nearest town. The farm within the village has disappeared; its barns converted, its pond filled in and its rick yard a protected play area surrounded by a 'close' of cunningly-contrived houses pathetically straining for antique effect. Perhaps for the young the immediate post-war village was a rather boring place to be, with the village hall and playing-field offering little beyond the most innocent of pleasures. Yet, as the timely republication of Jocelyne Finberg's book reminds us, it still retained the vestige of a soul, and the ghostly footfall of the medieval craftsman and the yeoman copyholder could just be remotely discerned. Post-modern students of rural community development would do well to read Finberg and reflect upon the notion of reviving the English village as a vibrant economic unit based upon localism, craftsmanship, and a view of the land which perceives virtue in how many members of the community a farm can support rather than its net productivity per hectare.

R. J. MOORE-COLYER

SIMON REES, *The Charlton Hunt: a history* (Phillimore, 1998). xvii + 288 pp. Illus. £35.

If 'hunting with dogs', as the ill-bred description goes, is to be banned, it is perhaps fitting that what claims to be the oldest regular fox hunt in the world should attract another history to add to the older and more aristocratic accounts. Simon Rees is a retired consultant from Barts and the Royal Brompton Hospital with a weekend cottage in West Sussex, and what he lacks in the insider knowledge and aristocratic connections of previous chroniclers like the Earl of March and Earl Bathurst he more than makes up with his boundless enthusiasm for pursuing the lives of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Charlton notables as well as the foxes they were

after. Among the hounds, horses, and foxes which throng this book, there are most rewarding sketches of the strenuous activities of the cream of the nobility on and off the hunting field, of their pranks and their mistresses, so that if one judiciously skips the naming of couples of hounds, this book may be used as a quick reference to the coupling of various lords and ladies. The selection of stories is exceedingly rich. There is the romantic, as when the heir to the Earl of Tankerville pursued a butcher's daughter from a ball in Newcastle across to Rotterdam and back again, concealed in a barrel on her ship, marrying her at Jarrow on landing. There is the brutally practical, as when the future first Earl of Tankerville justified his seduction of his wife's younger sister remarking, 'I married the elder sister expecting to find a maiden's head; but not finding it, I resolved to find one in the family if any be left.' Or there is the uncannily modern, as when the bigamous Duchess of Kingston, already married to the Earl of Bristol, firmly went about topless in society, declaiming her abhorrence of mock modesty.

All these and many more besides had some connection with the Charlton through their hunting menfolk, and the juicy bits from their life stories enliven the accounts of the breeding of hounds, the memorable great runs, the spectacular accidents in the field, and the most gory kills which are the meat of normal hunt histories. For most readers the couple of pages in Raymond Carr's *English fox hunting* (1976) devoted to the Charlton probably contain all they wish to know about the hunt, but the information in them is not entirely accurate. For those with an interest in the ways in which hunts were organized, managed, and financed, Rees gives a clear, detailed, account of how the casually run affair of the early eighteenth century led to the disastrous killing of 14 sheep by the pack which was allowed to escape, causing the aristocratic hunters to take control of the pack into the hands of an exclusive club in 1738, a fashionable oligarchy which ran the hunt, built a banqueting hall, the Fox Hall, for feasting after the chase, and whose members acquired or built hunting lodges for themselves in Charlton village. For a short while, until about 1750, this club hunt was the height of fashion and membership was eagerly sought and carefully controlled. Then interest began to flag, young aristocrats found other countries and other prey to hunt, and the Charlton was transformed into the Goodwood Hunt, managed and financed by the Duke of Richmond, until that in turn petered out early in the nineteenth century. The hunting cottages in Charlton village disappeared, but the Fox Hall survived, rather dilapidated, to be taken over and restored by the Landmark Trust in 1979, used, apart from its normal life as a holiday cottage, for the annual dinner of

the Charlton Hunt which has been re-formed as a dining club. Hence this book, by one of its keenest members.

F. M. L. THOMPSON

JOHN GASCOIGNE, *Science in the service of empire. Joseph Banks, the British state and the uses of science in the age of revolution* (CUP, 1998). vii + 247 pp. 27 illus. £40.

It was Francis Bacon who coined the term 'Knowledge itself is power'. To judge from this detailed examination of the man and his influence, it was Joseph Banks who most evidently saw – and made work – the connections between science, political power and the interests of the early modern British state. The two men and their worlds were connected. Gascoigne sees Bacon's emphasis upon the utility of science and, more particularly, the work of the early Royal Society, as providing 'the beginnings of [that] British "science policy"' (p. 16) which Banks was so profoundly to shape, even if the two men differed in their belief in the essentially humanitarian ends to natural philosophy (Bacon), and in the role of science as a means to extend national interests (Banks).

Gascoigne here presents Banks as a sort of ultimately well-connected courtier and man of political influence. What we are given is not alone a portrait of one man's authority in promoting and sanctioning science in the British interest. It is, additionally, an institutional history of the nature and of the making of the British state and of those socio-scientific bodies – such as the Privy Council Committee for Trade, the Board of Agriculture, the Admiralty, the East India Company, the African Association, the Royal Society and many more – which acted to co-ordinate British interest in science and to engender and sustain both the idea of Empire and the practices needed to extend Britain's imperial reach. The strength of this clearly-written and thoughtfully-illustrated book rests in the ways in which Gascoigne brings together the personal and the political: in his description of Banks as a scientific lobbyist and in his portrayal of the political make-up of late-eighteenth century London as a metropolitan centre that was both small enough for men of science and influence to know one another, dine together and serve on institutions together, yet one rapidly growing as a centre of imperial calculation in ways which increasingly demanded specialist understanding and particular means of intervention. Gascoigne stresses the importance of associational politics and of the ethos of public service in the interests of Britain and sees important connections between the philosophy of improving one's own estate – Banks was, of course, an influential landowner having inherited the Revesby estates in Lincolnshire in 1761 – and managing Britain's overseas interests so as to reap the best return. Science served empire, then. But science was also a matter of

gentlemanly practice and of individual scholarly concerns that transcended national and even international politics, as Gascoigne shows in discussing Banks's endeavours to keep open the lines of scientific communication even in times of war. In those terms, it was important to keep science away from politicians. At the same time, the slow shift from gentlemanly virtuoso to professional 'scientist' that Gascoigne charts for Banks and other natural philosophers was mirrored in the halting creation of a 'professional' civil service geared to serve the nation and the expanding empire but not to know the science.

To some degree, however, the emphasis here upon the personal and the political obscures the very things to which Banks and others were directing their attention: science and empire. 'Science' is treated here rather holistically (as, to an extent, it was by contemporaries), yet it is clear, too, that differences were recognised between, say, taxonomic botany, the commercial value of mineral deposits and the benefits of agricultural chemistry. It is unclear, for example, how far knowledge of science as a process as well as of particular branches of learning within and of Britain by the late eighteenth century was, as it were, 'transported' to the colonies to be used in managing estates and mines there. And how far should we think of the science-empire nexus working the other way?: that science in Britain drew first its intellectual and second its political authority from an increased understanding of specimens and observations from far distant outposts of empire? What, more exactly and in those different places that made up the British empire, did the connections between empiricism and imperialism demand?: trust in natives' knowledge or dismissal of it?; collection at the 'margins' but corroboration only in the 'metropolitan core'?; reliance upon exported classificatory schema to make sense of the encountered natural diversity or a preparedness to think anew?

To have treated of such concerns would have made for a much bigger book, of course, and Gascoigne has in his other writings engaged with just such questions. But readers other than this one, whilst being alike greatly informed by the splendid treatment of Banks and of the political and institutional bases to science in the service of the British state, may also want to know more than we are told here about the complexities of that empire and of that science Banks and others so dutifully served.

CHARLES W. J. WITHERS

CHRISTINE HALLAS, *Rural responses to industrialization.*

The North Yorkshire Pennines, 1790-1914 (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999). x + 348 pp. 16 figs; 6 maps. £32.

The publication of an economic history of a rural locality is a relatively rare event and much to be welcomed. In this instance, Christine Hallas analyzes changes in the

Pennine dales of Wensleydale and Swaledale between 1790 and 1914. Some experiences were shared with other British upland areas, while others were specific to the local physical environment or arose from proximity to the burgeoning industrial centres of northern England.

Dr Hallas' premise is that a full understanding of historical change requires meticulous analysis of every facet of the economy. Following an overview of recent work and attendant hypotheses relating to countryside changes in Britain, and a brief description of the environment of the two dales in the nineteenth century, the core of the book comprises chapters on landholding and farmholding, livestock, animal produce, extractive industries, textile industries, transport and population movements. Each chapter is a self-contained essay (several are modifications of published articles), with only occasional cross-references to other parts of the book. Every conceivable source has been exploited for the numerous tables and graphs, with the aim of providing a precise factual basis for describing the changes through time in terms of output or monetary values. Sometimes the determination to find appropriate statistics displays an ingenuity that stretches credulity. In the final chapter, the various strands are brought together and an attempt is made to evaluate how changes in the contribution of each element modified the total economy.

Three sub-regions are recognised. Swaledale depended on lead mining for its prosperity during the first half of the period covered, but the industry's subsequent decline led to much out-migration and a new emphasis on store cattle production. Upper Wensleydale was relatively inaccessible before the railway arrived in 1878 and its main sources of income were cheese, butter, wool spinning and knitting. Later, textile activity declined and liquid milk became the major source of income. Lower Wensleydale, always the most accessible of the three sub-regions, had a more varied economy throughout the century.

Dr Hallas set herself the difficult task of providing a balanced account of the evolution of a local economy where several industries interacted, each playing a significant role at different times and in different sub-regions. The resultant book will be valued for its orderly approach and comprehensiveness, though certain of the interpretations may well be disputed. Those with an interest in the locality are particularly well-served and no doubt the volume will be used for years to come as a stimulus to further study, both of the economy itself and in cognate fields such as demographic history. For instance, the industrial trends described could underpin a detailed analysis of outmigrants in terms of their age, sex, family status and former occupation. Those more interested in

wider aspects of the changing rural economy of Britain might profitably start with the concluding chapter before dipping into relevant earlier sections. The very full bibliography will be appreciated by all.

JUNE A. SHEPPARD

MARGARET ROAKE (ed.), 'Religious worship in Kent: the census of 1851' (*Kent Records*, 27, 1999). liii + 460 pp. 9 plates; 7 maps. £34.50 incl. p & p, from Kent Archaeological Society, Ashton Lodge, Church Road, Lymping, Folkestone CT18 8JA.

This book on Kent joins an ever-growing collection of volumes, normally but not exclusively concerned with individual counties, featuring transcriptions from the original returns of the 1851 census of religious worship.

On Sunday 30 March 1851, for the first and, as it turned out, last time, questions were asked about the religious make-up of Great Britain as part of the decennial census. The population census itself took place the following day but, on this Sunday in March, Mothering Sunday, at every place of worship a person in a position of responsibility was asked to complete a census form. The actual returns vary slightly between three denominational groups. The Church of England returns requested financial details relating to the living for example, whereas nonconformist returns did not ask for this information. The Society of Friends, or Quakers, were not asked to supply information on seating but simply the dimensions of their meeting houses. At the core of the religious census were two sets of information – statistics relating to seating and statistics relating to attendances. Seating information was divided into free, appropriated (or 'other') and standing room in each place of worship (with the exception of the Quakers as mentioned above). Attendance data were more complex. Attendances were to be divided between morning, afternoon and evening attendances. Information on numbers of Sunday scholars (Sunday School attendees) could also be recorded, as could data relating to average attendances over a specified period over the previous few months.

The census of religious worship has its problems as a source for the scholar. Because it is unique there was no opportunity to learn from previous mistakes, as happened with the population censuses which were honed from one census to the next. Further, its aims were slightly muddled, as were its results. Hence, we cannot assess the number of actual attenders at worship, merely attendances. In addition, there was no compulsion to complete the returns so missing returns, returns that were in fact never completed, can be a problem. None the less, the religious census is a valuable and powerful resource that deserves more attention.

The bulk of this book is devoted to detailed transcriptions of the returns made by each vicar, priest, minister or other responsible person extracted from the forms provided by the enumerators. The transcriptions, which stretch to over 390 pages, have been standardized to some extent and supplemented with additional useful information for each parish in which a place of worship was located, such as parish area, housing data and population figures from 1801 to 1851 for every census year. All these data have been extracted from a table contained in the 1851 published population census. In addition, and again usefully, religion statistics at registration district level for Kent have been reproduced from the published Registrar General's Report. Also, the results of the 1902–3 *Daily News* survey of religious attendance in London are reproduced for those areas which fell into Kent. Following a pattern established for most other county transcriptions of the religious census, there is a fairly short scholarly essay which serves as an introduction to the Religious Census and its manifestation in Kent. Accompanying the essay are seven maps.

Overall, many hours of work must have been spent transcribing the returns and adding supplementary information. Kent is not small; the registration county encompassed 444 parishes and almost 1,000 returns. More examination of this painstakingly collected resource would have been welcome, particularly more rigorous quantitative analysis. The religious census, although it includes comments from those completing the proformas, is essentially a statistical source. Perhaps, however, a volume such as this is not the place to carry out such an analysis. Finally, it would be valuable to release the transcribed returns in a machine-readable form, perhaps on a disk or CD-ROM. The Economic and Social Research Council's Data Archive at the University of Essex would, I am sure, welcome this data-set for preservation and dissemination.

PAUL S. ELL

Scottish Farm Buildings Survey, I, East Central Scotland (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, 1998). 24 pp. Illus; II, *Orkney* (RCAHMS, 1998). 27 pp. Illus. No price given.

These two slim A4 fascicules are the first published results of the Scottish Royal Commission's national farm buildings survey. The preface outlines how a rapid survey of over 3000 steadings (about ten per cent of existing farms) was a preliminary to the more detailed examination of fifteen small areas, chosen to represent the range of agricultural regions in Scotland. The surveys of farmsteads in east central Scotland and Orkney are presented in the publications under review, and fascicules will follow, we are promised, for the remaining regions.

The preface makes clear the objective behind publication: the regional fascicules are intended as a guide to the archive gathered during the surveys and held by the National Monuments Record of Scotland. The ultimate goal is to use the 'representative national record of Scottish farm buildings' collected in the fifteen regional studies to provide an overview of national development.

The volumes contain useful and well researched introductions to the areas and very brief summaries of the farm buildings. Some building types, in particular the grain-drying kilns of Orkney, and the common use in both areas of mechanical power for processing, are of great interest. For the agricultural historian, however, these volumes are not the means to investigate these and other aspects of agricultural buildings in any detail, for descriptions are minimalist. Some photographs and a number of Graham Douglas's wonderful survey drawings are included, but like the text these merely whet the appetite. The fascicules do enough to demonstrate that important evidence for agricultural, technological and architectural change has been collected, available to the historian in the form of the raw survey data listed in these publications, but the material deserves full exposition in the promised national synthesis. The delivery of this overview alone will allow a judgement about the value of the survey to different facets of Scotland's history.

COLUM GILES

BOB SMYTH, *Forest people and places* (Sutton Publishing, 1998). x + 118 pp. Illus. £9.99

The Forest of Dean has been well-served by its historians and memorialists. Cyril Hart's scholarly studies, along with the works of Ralph Anstis and others, are complemented by the fictional and autobiographical writings of Humphrey Phelps and Winifred Foley to produce a very substantial body of literature for so small a corner of England. But then, the Forest of Dean is a very special place, its complex geology, varied scenery and often unusual history lending it a peculiarity enjoyed by denizens and visitors alike. This volume, however, is not a history, but little more than a series of rather slight pen-portraits of contemporary 'characters' or, according to the blurb, 'outstanding characters'. I'm not entirely certain what defines a 'character', outstanding or otherwise, but there is little about this lot to cause the pulse to race or the nerves to jangle.

Maiden ladies making pottery, discontented publicans, vicars with a mission, fairground organ enthusiasts, retired professors dabbling with local history, and goodness knows how many Foresters, Deputy Surveyors, Verderers, Gavellers, and Rangers all flit briefly across the pages. And how very respectable they seem! Where

are the descendants of the poachers, deer-stealers, enclosure rioters and others representing the profound and honourable traditions of subversion associated with Dean? Does a subversive tradition disappear within two or three generations, or are the true unsung subversives joyfully reading this book and filling the gaps between Bob Smyth's rather bloodless lines?

In this celebration of local people there is little of interest for agricultural or economic historians. Several of the larger houses, including the Speech House itself, are the subjects of thumbnail histories, but potentially interesting aspects of contemporary forest life such as the communing of five thousand sheep within its present bounds are dismissed within a couple of lines. Here surely was an opportunity to link together past and present management practices and to consider the social tensions inevitable in the communing tradition. Colleagues who have eschewed late night spirituous liquors in favour of more anodyne concoctions will be interested to learn that the 'Malt Shovel' at Ruardean was where the brothers William and James Horlick (1844-1921) experimented with the beverage which bears their name. That they failed to raise capital locally to develop the product and had to go to the U.S.A. for the purpose probably rebounds to the credit of the men of Dean!

R. J. MOORE-COLYER

KEN HOWARTH, *Oral history: a handbook* (Sutton Publishing, 1998). ix + 214 pp. Illus. £25

Ken Howarth was a pioneer of organized oral history and he remains one of the most active practitioners in Britain. His achievement in building up the North West Sound Archive, and then keeping it functioning as a public service through the 1990s must command enormous respect. This book thus forms a communication from the sharp end, and no-one is better qualified to give advice on consultancy and on privately funded projects. There is also a good deal of material on the related subject of use in museums. It probably completes the transformation of the literature on British oral history as a methodology which has occurred since the mid-eighties. Paul Thompson's seminal work was then the only one generally available and accessible, but we now have several recent titles from a variety of perspectives. It is hard to see the need for any more for some time, and a handbook of practice would have been the perfect last stone in the arch.

There is a great deal of interest in here along those lines, with a reproduction of specimen copyright clearance forms and the Oral History Society's ethical guidelines; guidance on equipment to use, especially for those thinking of trying video; useful addresses and

explicit lists of topics and interview questions; and so on. The bibliography is very short, however, and there are few references in the text to published work that has arisen from oral investigations. Howarth also does not seem to have decided if he was writing a true handbook or a more general study, and some determined editing would have vastly improved the book's usefulness to the potential oral historian. The structure is obscure, with thematic chapters that are heavily and hierarchically divided up under clear subject headings, but the arrangement is idiosyncratic, and topics can only be reliably located through the comprehensive index. The sections are rarely complete in themselves as well. Thus, a subsection on artificial light for video recording, headed 'Lighting the Scene', is located logically in the chapter 'Oral History on Video', but within the section 'Preparing the Questions', and it is only six lines long. Another snippet lies lower down the same page under 'Recording the Interview', but most of the (very sensible) practical advice, adding up to a full page, is actually to be found two pages earlier as part of 'Equipment', with no distinguishing sub-heading. Several important sections on the nature and purpose of oral history lie buried in illogical locations with no headings to direct the reader, and here the index is of no help.

There is a great deal about the North West Sound Archive, but only as fragments, and it seems a lost opportunity that the lessons learned from the creation and operation of this institution have not been chronicled in a more organized manner for others to learn from. It is also disappointing that though it is lavishly and well illustrated with photographs, there are hardly any sections of oral testimony, and the many brief descriptions of projects rarely give a real sense of what was achieved. A lively section on role-playing within schools stands out precisely because it is anchored by a reasonably lengthy quote, and has a detailed description of the use made of that quote by teachers and pupils. Finally, while some sections are simply lists of key words associated with a topic, others are argued out in conventional prose though apparently no different in purpose.

Despite these weaknesses, it stretches the definitions of the discipline as most academics envisage it and forces some hard thinking about where to draw the boundary that divides oral history from general oral investigation, or if a boundary should exist at all. Oral history is enthusiastically championed as a tool for industrial training and in the management of firms, as well as recommended for more usual educational and community initiatives. Howarth encourages the general public to get involved, but he also sees interviewing as an increasingly professional activity with its own ethos, and closes with an appeal for a regulatory organization. All this is very

useful now that the heady days of national government funding for projects via unemployment relief are just a memory, and local government funding via libraries and museums is dwindling fast. The mass of material collected over the past four decades still lies largely untapped, and is all too often in danger of being lost or destroyed. Oral history has not managed to embed itself in the practice of either academic or non-academic history as it once seemed likely to, but this book contributes to maintaining an awareness of its potential.

STEPHEN CAUNCE

JIM WILKIE, *An illustrated history of tractors* (Ian Allan Publishing, 1999). 128 pp. Illus. £18.99.

Books about tractors come along at fairly frequent intervals. Ever since Philip Wright's *Old farm tractors* in 1962, there has been a steady stream from specialists in this field such as the late Charles Cawood, Michael Williams and Nick Baldwin. This is therefore the latest in a long line so it is not easy to be original, even in the title (Robert Moorhouse's *The illustrated history of tractors* appeared in 1996). There is a solid market amongst enthusiasts and collectors for this kind of material, not least as birthday and Christmas presents, so as the last one fades away another one soon comes along to take its place.

Jim Wilkie's contribution is a decent addition to the list. As the title suggests, it is the illustrations that really count and here there are plenty of them, very sharply reproduced, and with detailed, informative captions. One suspects most readers would treat the book essentially as a series of annotated photographs and in that sense it works well. The actual text follows a familiar path, tracing the story of tractor development from the Ivel onwards, and concentrating primarily upon the machines themselves, their specifications and manufacturers. Thus the spotlight shines solely on this one piece in the jigsaw. The wider agricultural context, in which tractors were both an indicator as well as an instigator of change, is mostly left undisturbed, but this is common to the genre which is probably not, in any case, the right form in which to tackle it.

ROY BRIGDEN

Elsewhere and General

EVA CRANE, *The world history of beekeeping and honey hunting* (Duckworth, 1999). xxii + 682 pp. Tables; Illus. £85.

Neither bees nor honey have attracted much attention from agricultural historians (there have been no articles on bees in the *Review*). Yet until the early nineteenth century honey was a cheaper source of sweetness than sugar made from sugar-cane, whilst the honey bee was

also a provider of beeswax, and alcoholic drinks, of which mead was the best known.

This is a quite remarkable book with over 600 pages of text and a bibliography of 42 pages. It is lavishly illustrated with photographs, sketches and maps, and is a pleasure to read and handle. The internet cannot compete with books as well produced as this! It is also remarkably comprehensive; it is truly a world history, dealing with bees and their products in all the world's regions, from the earliest evidence – cave art – to the present. The width of interest is formidable ranging from the ownership of bees nests in the Americas and Oceania (pp. 114–115) to the bee in religion (pp. 601–603), although the bulk of the book deals with the history of the techniques of bee-keeping.

There have been honey bees for 50 million years, and the collecting of honey from nests in the wild was practised by early man, and continues to the present day. Honey-hunting was practised in every continent, each with its own traditional methods, perhaps the most unusual being in parts of Africa where hunters were assisted by a bird, the Honeyguide. But honey collecting declined with the adoption of the hive. These were in use in Egypt at least as early as 2400BC and were used by both the ancient Greeks and the Romans. Their hives were horizontal cylinders, but in the deciduous forests of northern Europe upright logs were preferred. In the west timber was scarcer and hives were woven from wicker. Eventually groups of hives – apiaries – became the norm, sometimes in walls, on rock faces and in specially built houses.

There seem to be few people who do not like sweetness, but honey came with a penalty: bees sting, so protective clothing has had to be used. In Europe the head was covered with a hood from the fifteenth century and gloves were used at an even earlier date. In medieval Europe criminals were sometimes executed by being stung to death, and occasionally bees were used as a military weapon. The crucial advances in protection came in the mid-nineteenth century, with the use of brimmed hat and veil.

As Europeans spread around the world in the sixteenth century they took with them hives of European honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) which had a far higher honey output than *A. cerana* in Asia or the stingless *Meliponinae* of the tropics of Africa, Australia and the Americas. Improvements in beekeeping were very slow, although interest in rational beekeeping increased from the 1660s. But the most significant improvement was the introduction of the movable frame hive, invented in the United States in 1851 by the Rev. L. I. Langstroth. In earlier hives it was difficult to remove honey without breaking the combs of beeswax in which the bees secreted it. Langstroth overcame this and his invention spread rapidly to

Europe and elsewhere. Improvement in the bees themselves was much slower to occur, not least because so little was known about them. Before 1586 it was not realized that the ruler of the nest was female, and only in the 1770s was it shown that the queen mated. Attempts at artificial insemination were made in the 1790s, but the technique only became practicable early in the twentieth century. Thereafter, queens' produce could be purchased to restock or commence a hive.

Honey is the best known of the products of the bee, and is still widely consumed in Europe, although the leading exporter is China. Honey has of course lost its importance as a sweetener to sugar, which is now far cheaper. In England honey was one-twentieth the price of sugar in the fifteenth century, half the price in 1700; but by 1850 a pound of sugar was a quarter of the price of honey, and the latter is now seven times the price of sugar. Beeswax has also lost much of its market for making candles and as a polish, whilst mead, once consumed more than beer or wine in parts of Europe, is now a rarity. In South America the alcoholic drinks made from honey have been displaced by those made from the juice of sugar cane. But bee-keeping of course has not disappeared and remains not only as a commercial enterprise, but the passion of numerous amateurs, who will gain knowledge and pleasure from this splendid book.

DAVID GRIGG

L. T. EVANS, *Feeding the ten billion. Plants and population growth* (CUP, 1998). xiv + 247 pp. 32 figs. £35 (hbk); £11.95 (pbk).

Lloyd Evans follows up his earlier wide-ranging and comprehensive survey of crop evolution (*Crop evolution, adaptation and yield*, CUP 1993; reviewed in Volume 46 of this journal, 1998) with an equally magisterial but more explicitly historical account of human:plant relationships. The book is structured around successive billion additions to the human population, which clocked six billion in the autumn of 1999. Each billion addition after the attainment of the first billion (c. 1825) is given its own chapter, which means that the recent developments in plant science are given more space than the earlier. Four chapters cover the period from the dawn of agriculture to the early nineteenth century. The first chapter, 'Timebomb or Treadmill?', contrasts Malthusian pessimism, founded on the assumption that population growth is a dependent variable, with the optimism that stems from Boserup's vision of population growth as an independent variable, driving productivity upwards.

This is a fine book, but not totally unproblematic. Evans shares the assumption, prevalent at the time the book was being drafted, that 'a world population of at

least 10 billion is almost inevitable by the latter half of the twenty-first century' (p. 2). In fact, the consensus now is that a stable world population may well be reached at no more than 9 billion (i.e. half as big again as at present) in 100 to 150 years time. Second, one wonders about the book's target audience. Those teaching introductory courses in agricultural science degree schemes may find the book suits their needs provided they are prepared to take a more population-focused approach than at present. For introductory courses in geography degree schemes, such as I teach, the population focus poses no problems, but the amount of rather heavy genetics and plant science does. For my course, the book therefore currently has the status of 'strongly recommended but with reservations'. It would be a pity if the book were to fall between specialist stools, for it is well written, thoroughly researched, and highly informative, and deserves to succeed.

JOHN R. WALTON

ANNAMARIA POZZAN, *Zosagna. Paesaggio agrario, proprietà e conduzione di un territorio tra Piave e Sile nella prima metà del secolo XVI* (Treviso: Edizioni Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche / Canova, 1997). 203 pp. 1 map. Lit. 28,000; GIANPIER NICOLETTI, *Le Campagne. Un'area rurale tra Sile e Montello nei secoli XV e XVI* (1999). 2 vols, xxxi + 566 pp. 140 tables; 1 map. Lit. 65,000; MARIA GRAZIA BISCARO, *Mestre. Paesaggio agrario, proprietà e conduzione di una podesteria nella prima metà del secolo XVI* (1999). xix + 223 pp. 45 tables; 1 map. Lit. 28,000.

For the last ten years, the Benetton Foundation has sponsored the study of the rural history of part of the Venetian hinterland. This is a vast research project founded on the 1542 tax inquiry (*estimo*) of the Treviso district, under the supervision of Prof. Gaetano Cozzi and Dr Danilo Gasparini. Since the series was first reviewed in Volume 44 of this journal (1996), the three volumes (numbers 5 to 7) reviewed here have appeared.

Around 1380, the Venetian nobility and wealthy merchants began to acquire lands in the countryside around Treviso and to establish political dominion at the expense of the local nobility and communes. The movement towards land ownership became more deliberate in the first half of the sixteenth century, both as an investment and as a defensive response to rising food prices. This process altered the features of the Treviso region and started a wave of rural rebuilding similar to that identified in England by W. G. Hoskins (see especially Nicoletti, pp. 320 ff.). Brick peasant dwellings were built, as well as water and fustian mills along the newly designed irrigation canal, the Brentella. In the Campagne the country residences of the better-off from Treviso and

Venice dotted the countryside, and ten per cent of the total area was devoted to walled gardens and orchards. Yet the main feature of the rural landscape were the enclosed fields and meadows studded with regimented rows of trees draped with vines (the so-called *piantata* of the northern Italian agrarian system) (Nicoletti, I, p. 37 ff.). Both private and communal woods supplied oak and other timber to the arsenal at Venice. Only trivial amounts of land were left uncultivated.

This man-made landscape, the result of changes since the 1450s, maximised returns to both peasant and aristocratic farming. Small farms (*poderi*) were the dominant features of this agrarian system throughout the whole area. Only small variations appeared around Mestre and Zosagna in response to local circumstances, whilst in the territory between Venice and Mestre enclosures, gardens and commercial orchards were the key feature of the landscape. In the upper and lower Zosagne vast areas remained under bogs, fens and natural pastures where cattle brought from Hungary to supply Venetian consumers via the Rialto meat market were grazed.

These researchers support the findings of earlier volumes in the series that many farmers were either sharecroppers or tenants who paid rents mainly in kind (41 per cent in Mestre according to Biscaro), or in money and kind. Owner-occupiers were very few in these areas (occupying about 15 per cent of the total area in the Campagne according to Nicoletti). The size of the average farm, rented or owned, was between one and five hectares. In the Campagne, probably the best farmed area of the Treviso district, farms around one hectare outnumbered the rest. By 1542 most of the countryside had changed hands, with city dwellers, local burgers and noblemen owning about 60 per cent of the farmland (Nicoletti, I, p. 63 ff., Pozzan, pp. 113–14). Industrial buildings, including paper and fustian mills, were sought by non-local investors seeking to take advantage of Venice's markets. As in many other Italian and European regions, locals were left with a minimum of the regional resource.

All three volumes offer a vast amount of information, drawn from the 1542 tax inquiry and similar records, which adds to that presented in earlier contributions in the series. There are plenty of facts about tools, crops, cattle, rural buildings, and so on. Nicoletti's study is particularly valuable, since it offers deep insights into important details, such as the management of a large estate (Santa Maria dei Battuti Hospital in Treviso, I, pp. 111 ff.), animal husbandry (pp. 127 ff.), and a peasant family's budget for 1462 (pp. 224 ff.). He also dedicates a whole chapter to the business activities of the Fontana brothers (pp. 239 ff.), who emigrated from Bergamo and were active in Venice in the early decades of the sixteenth

century, but later moved to Treviso where they built a fortune as ironmongers, land and property owners, grain merchants and moneylenders.

MAURO AMBROSOLI

L. M. CULLEN, *The brandy trade under the ancien régime: regional specialisation in the Charente* (CUP, 1998). xvii + 284 pp. 3 maps; 1 fig. £45.

Louis Cullen's study of the brandy trade has been a twenty-year labour of love, beginning, like so many research projects, from a modest detour from his original path, the lifetime study of the Irish mercantile community in France. The outcome is a demanding book, and one employing an extraordinary range of archival sources to plot the rise of brandy production and trade, roughly from the later seventeenth century, shifting mercantile organization and ultimate markets, and the development of specialized regions of production, and distinctive products. It also makes a significant assault upon the conventional history of brandy and its viticultural base, and upon the classic Labrousse historiography linking wine and the background to the Revolution.

Several striking themes recur in this study, the first of which is the overwhelming dominance of market forces, and of the capacity of producers in provincial France, to switch output in the face of demand mediated through merchant houses. Modest farmers, often disparaged in British historiography, demonstrated a readiness to switch towards the premium good, wine for distillation into cognac, first under the all-powerful mercantile organization of La Rochelle, and, from the 1720s, increasingly through larger and multi-centred markets, including Tonnay-Charente, Jarnac, and for the lesser goods Bordeaux, with Bayonne the outlet for Armagnac. Brandy was not, in Cullen's analysis, the marketable product for those trapped in zones of poor viticulture, as in the conventional historiography: rather they switched, at least in the Cognac, from the production of high quality sweet white wine for extra-regional sale, to growing the folle blanche, the grape that yielded a thin acidic wine ideal for distilling. Agrarian historians may find apparent technical inversion a surprising outcome of commercialization.

The second grand theme is that of 'otherness', in the Huguenot and foreign families that came to dominate the early trades of La Rochelle, and who, like so many in the Bordeaux wine trade, came to dominate the mature export trades of the middle and later eighteenth century. From the early Augiers through the Delamains to Martell and Hennessy, many of the principal négociants were local protestants, or other outsiders, the last two respectively, Guernseyman and Irishman. Such was the strength of this that the local self-improving clan, the

Otards in the later eighteenth century, claimed Scottish ancestry through a spurious genealogy, and proved their case by spelling the name, on occasion, 'O'Tard'. Cullen's close analysis of familial and mercantile linkages provides a detailed picture of the trading system and its family links.

The reasons, of course lay in the importance of brandy as a premium export good, heavily demanded by Angleterre, the recorded destination for much of these exports. French trade records cover the whole of the British Isles. Ireland thus took a major role in the brandy trade as both merchant and consumer, until, after the 1760s, England predominated. For much of the period of expansion, after 1720, it was London-based demand that ruled, not least because London importers seem to have been absolutely reliable issuing houses for bills, making the London bill the premium instrument in Paris as well as the Cognac. Though not closely focused upon the agrarian history of this region, Cullen's book thus offers much to interest the student of marketing and trade, and their implicit backward linkages to the fields.

Cullen also addresses the classic Labrousse model of the wine trades, seeing the 1760s not as a plateau from which prices cascaded with catastrophic impact in the 1780s, but rather as a peak, unrepresentative of the second half of the century, in which a more realistic assessment would stress the development of the claret trade, like that of brandy, by a mercantile community characterized by 'otherness'. Both products boomed in the 1780s, both met standards of quality, strength, and colour demanded by distant, largely British, markets, and both thus illustrated the niches available in eighteenth-century Europe for well-made premium alcoholic beverages.

Cullen's book covers the details of manufacture, and describes with care the phasing of development and the ebb and flow of trade fortunes. He also explores the demanding complexities of bubble-tests and hydrometers, the concomitants of interregional and international trade, especially as state revenues attached increasingly to the strength of produce after mid-century, the structure of the industry, and its presence in French domestic overland and river Seine trade. If Prof. Cullen's preface appears apologetic about the time taken for this study to reach fruition, its significance as a French study with major international comparative dimensions, makes that wait worthwhile, and the range of archival sources used to create his analysis, makes the delay readily understandable. This book may make little of viticulture, but it is of fundamental interest to the agrarian historian interested in product development and market responses in early modern Europe.

J. A. CHARTRES

PETER MCPHEE, *Revolution and environment in southern France. Peasants, lords, and murder in the Corbières, 1780–1830* (Clarendon Press, 1999). x + 272 pp. 7 tables; 1 fig; 4 maps. £45.

As the title suggests, this book rolls two histories into one. On the one hand, it is a history of the Corbières subregion, the hilly hinterland of the Mediterranean plain to the west of Narbonne, spanning the years of the French Revolution. On other, it is a history of shifting land-use and environmental change which carries a broader message for historians of rural societies in the modern period. There is no real tension between the two stories because the environmental theme emerges directly from the spatial analysis. Such is the quality of the case-study evidence, indeed, that the author is even able to illustrate his arguments at the level of individuals, individual families and individual communities. This is where the 'murder' episode referred to in the title fits in. It is not gratuitous, and serves rather as an emblem of the sort of tensions that can be unleashed when root-and-branch political change overlaps with – and complicates – the process of economic restructuring.

The opening chapters of the book are conventional inasmuch as they set the scene, introduce most of the actors who will have a role to play later on, and narrate the history of the Revolution in this little known and little studied part of rural France. They will be of interest chiefly to specialist historians of the French Revolution, although these pages also prepare the way for the discussion of the larger agrarian issues which lie at the heart of the book. The author depicts the economic crisis afflicting the area during the final decades of the ancien régime, and draws attention to the continuing vigour of seigneurialism in the villages of the Corbières. The crisis stemmed largely, it seems, from the vicissitudes of the woollen textile industry centred on Carcassonne. As markets were lost and production declined, the traditional pastoral use of the stony hillsides or garrigues of the Corbières was thrown into question. Poor peasants started to clear the land in order to grow cereals and vegetables for their own consumption or, increasingly, in order to plant vines and to replace thereby the dwindling income from cottage industry. But this would set cultivators and pastoralists on a collision course. Clearance also initiated a process of environmental degradation, and it raised the awkward question of who actually owned the garrigues. Was it the seigneurs or the village communities?

Chapters five, six and seven will be of most interest to readers. They are solidly researched and in some respects path-breaking. Here the author combines an unrivalled knowledge of the history and ecology of the Corbières with a longer time-frame. As a result he is able to

penetrate to the heart of the disputes about land that set so many of the inhabitants of these villages at loggerheads. We find whole communities (the rich as well as poor) participating in the land grab, and then manoeuvring with remarkable skill, and not a little complicity from higher authorities, in order to keep possession of their cleared plots. We find seigneurial and ex-seigneurial families transmitting from one generation to the next their sense of hurt and outrage at the gains achieved at their expense during the years of the Revolution. They, too, manoeuvred and strutted at each turn of the political tide, in one instance with fatal consequences. All of this takes place against a background story of a dislocating rural economy, and mounting official concern at the environmental consequences of unchecked deforestation.

The forces in play were not negligible. According to the Napoleonic prefect, the acreage of cultivated land in the department of the Aude increased by 20 per cent during the Revolutionary decade, essentially as a result of the activities of peasant clearers. In the Corbières the figure must have been higher still, the author calculates; in which case this little known corner of the province of Languedoc provides the historian with a signal opportunity to explore and measure the accelerating effect of political revolution on agrarian change. The first point that the author makes is that the shift in land-use cannot be confined to the Revolutionary decade alone, whatever contemporary observers might have supposed. What was the cleared land used for, he then asks? This is a critical question, for a firm answer would help to shed light on both the innate tendencies of the 'peasant revolution' of 1789, and the subsequent evolution of the region towards vine monoculture. The author believes that the rural revolution in the Corbières provides a clear example of what has become known as the 'voie paysanne' thesis, that is to say small holders exploiting the post-Revolutionary land settlement in order to indulge in petty commodity production.

The demonstration, while persuasive in some respects, is not totally convincing. For, on the author's own evidence, the Corbières as a whole did not convert to vine production. Map Four, drawn on the basis of cadastral land-use data for the early nineteenth century, shows that the substantial switch occurred only in villages situated along the eastern and southern perimeter of the Corbières; in villages, that is, with good road access to urban markets. What were the small peasants who had seized and cleared land elsewhere in the Corbières doing with their plots? The author does not really address this question, with the result that the case for 'a significant shift in the economic strategies of many of the communities of the Corbières' (p. 176) is left dangling rather unsatisfactorily. Presumably such peasants were

practising neo-subsistence forms of husbandry which would scarcely place them in the van of agricultural change in the nineteenth century. But if the defence of peasant entrepreneurship on the morrow of the Revolution is somewhat lopsided, there can be no doubt that the author greatly enhances our understanding of the pressures impacting on the regional infrastructure during this period. He shows that the exodus from the pastoral economy and dependence on textiles – in the eastern Corbières at least – was taking place far earlier than is commonly supposed. The struggles of these villagers against sundry landlords and flockowners therefore helped to prepare the way for the viticultural revolution that would transform the landscape of lowland Languedoc.

P. M. JONES

SAMUEL AMARAL, *The rise of capitalism on the Pampas: the estancias of Buenos Aires, 1785–1870* (CUP, 1998). xviii + 359 pp. 67 tables; 65 figs; 7 maps. £40.

Estancias and their owners occupy much space in the iconography of Argentina. For example, as this monograph reminds us, the Argentine version of the board game 'Monopoly' is called 'Estanciero'. Landownership and power are firmly linked in the popular mind in Argentina, where the performance of the ranching sector has been a topic of much polemic in debates about national development, especially since the Second World War. This book casts its vision to a much earlier time. While not ignoring the political dimensions, it seeks the economic rationale for the development of ranches in Buenos Aires from the beginning of economic expansion towards the end of the eighteenth century through to the advent of improved rural technology. If estancias offered 'a vast and productive field to an active and far-seeing man', as one observer had it in the 1870s, much the same can be said of Samuel Amaral's scholarship on the topic. Here is economic history rich in research effort and in substance.

This book deals with a period for which we still have much to learn and it shows the paths to further research. The author has combed a broad and international set of sources, including probate records and travel accounts, in his effort to clarify the internal workings and territorial expansion of the estancias. Organized in four parts, the book begins with an analysis of the broad working conditions of the estancias. This is followed by sections dealing with the conditions of production and of human action – issues of labour and management. A final portion deals with the results of all of this human effort on the grasslands, through the placing of ranch products into the markets. For Amaral, the capitalism in his title has less to do with any stage models than the increasing prevalence of market forces.

Amaral's study contains major research achievements. He demonstrates that the ranches in Buenos Aires were fundamentally profitable even at the end of the eighteenth century, before the full impact of north Atlantic markets was experienced in the Río de la Plata. He clarifies the forces of expansion in the rural system; for example, the area grazed by cattle had increased at least fourfold between 1800 and 1850. The book is also useful for grounding many of the recent discussions in Argentine rural historiography, where some arguments have seemed far removed from the reality of operating systems. It identifies the marked seasonality of patterns in the management routines and hence in the demand for labour. Amaral is especially good at the reinterpretation of familiar sources. An example is his discussion of the analysis of ranching around the opening of the nineteenth century by the Spanish polymath Félix de Azara. Bringing ancillary data and his skill with handling numbers, Amaral extends knowledge of feasible profitability rates. His findings push these downwards, heightening our respect for human achievements on the pampas. Profit took effort. For example, his discussion of ranch management letters from the 1820s (Chapter 9) gives concrete evidence of the obstacles to profit identified earlier in the study.

This book shows considerable strengths and has much to offer the careful reader. I was struck especially by its use of quantitative data. However, I do have some reservations. Firstly, the reader needs more maps. Territorial expansion is a major theme of the early sections of the book. Maps analyzing regional change would enhance understanding far more than those the author provides, which serve mainly to locate individual properties. The only guide to general locations in the book is an interesting historical map, which has reproduced poorly in printing, not, alas, an isolated editing slip. Also, the coverage of themes is at times uneven. For example, the chapter on the physical environment is devoted almost entirely to thistles. Amaral is convincing and interesting on their influence in shaping rural routines but he provides little analysis of other biophysical elements, including fire and water. In the chapter on markets, jerked beef, identified as 'one of Buenos Aires's leading exports', receives only a paragraph of discussion (p. 281).

While the book is emphatically economic history, it would benefit from a closer knowledge of methodology in the ancillary discipline of historical geography. The 'still life' depictions (p. 101) of estancias in 1820 and 1850 stand close to H. C. Darby's technique of cross-sectional comparison. Amaral's very limited knowledge of historical geography is clearly revealed when he misinterprets the work of Patricio Randle, a leading exponent of

'geografía histórica' in Argentina, as 'geographical history' (p. 12). While he accounts for the extensive nature of the estancia system, intensification through technology receives less adequate treatment. The seeds of technological change are played down, perhaps a consequence of the constant effort to push social and political issues aside in order to uncover the economic workings of the estancias. But, the interfaces between the world of economic rationality and those of society and politics could use closer elaboration. For example, when the politician Valentín Alsina was 'asked' (p. 144) to prepare the draft for the Rural Code in 1862, whose interests did he represent? The innovation of early legal reform on the pampas surely involved more than economic determinism stemming from changing ranching practices.

Britain's significance in the later agrarian development of Argentina is widely known to readers of this journal. While not one of Amaral's research themes, his book provides useful insight into the impressive depth of the British connection with ranching improvements before 1870 – pioneering of sheep and alfalfa, high profit rates from model properties in British hands, even vain attempts to develop machinery aimed at thistle removal on the grasslands.

Samuel Amaral's book merits careful attention and should find its way to the shelves of all those interested in Argentina, or in ranching more generally. His study will undoubtedly serve as one of the important foundations for further scholarship on the rural economy of the Plata during the first half of the nineteenth century.

STEPHEN BELL

JAMIE L. BRONSTEIN, *Land reform and working class experience in Britain and the United States, 1800–1862* (Stanford UP, 1999). ix + 372 pp. £35.

In both Britain and the United States land reform was an important component of popular politics in the first half of the nineteenth century. This is paradoxical in view of the marked political and economic differences between the two countries. Britain was already a highly urbanized society, with a large industrial working class which was excluded from the franchise. Landownership was concentrated in the hands of a small elite, and the high value of land made the farming life an unrealistic aspiration for those without substantial capital. The United States, by contrast, remained a primarily rural society, in which white adult males of all classes enjoyed the vote. Not only was land less expensive, but much land still remained unoccupied.

Bronstein demonstrates that despite these differences, the land reform movements in the two countries used similar arguments and methods. In both countries, the claim that land reform would act as a 'safety valve', removing

excess labour from industry and so raising wages, was linked with hostility to factories. Other arguments (religious, patriotic and gender-based) were also closely comparable. Land reformers in both countries defined themselves against powerful liberal middle-class movements: the Anti-Corn Law League in Britain, and abolitionism in the United States. Shared organizational features included non-working class leadership, extensive use of the press and a rich mix of supporting social activities.

These striking similarities can be explained by a common intellectual heritage deriving from thinkers such as Paine and Spence, by mutual influence through personal contact and through the press, and by a greater degree of shared experience than has previously been acknowledged. The shadow of the factory hung over American as well as British workers: the independent status of artisans was as much threatened by the 'market revolution' in the United States as by the industrial revolution in Britain.

However, the British and American land reform movements did differ in one important respect: their composition. The author's innovative case study of subscriptions to the Chartist Land Company in the cotton textile towns of Cheshire and Lancashire demonstrates that at least a quarter of all subscribers came from these towns. The National Reform movement in America drew support from factory workers as well, but artisans, tradesmen and farmers were equally important. In the context of the differing political traditions of the two countries, this contrast was to have decisive consequences. By presenting itself as the paternalistic protector of an unenfranchised and easily duped working class, the British state was able to close down the Chartist Land Company on the pretext of rescuing the subscribers from O'Connor's delusive promises. In the United States, however, the National Reform movement's demands for free land for settlers and for homestead exemption from distraint for debt resonated with American political tradition. As a non-extreme demand made by a broadly-based movement of enfranchised citizens, land reform could not easily be dismissed. Modest success was the ultimate result: in 1862 the Republican Party passed the long-awaited Homestead Act.

What is the value of Bronstein's comparative perspective? Firstly, the similarity between the rhetorical and cultural forms developed by the British and American land reform movements strengthens the claim that popular politics in the first half of the nineteenth century was shaped as much by continuities of political discourse as by socio-economic factors. Secondly, the relative success of land reform in America draws attention to the narrow class base of land reform in Britain, its close association with extreme radicalism, and the entrenched

strength of the British state as reasons for the failure of British land reform.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the book for agricultural historians is its demonstration that in the 1840s land reform created a ferment of excitement amongst British industrial workers. Land reform was not backward-looking in 1840s Britain: we now know that industry was by this time neither sufficiently prevalent nor benign to make a partially land-based solution irrational. But it remains unclear whether it was negative experience of industrialism or positive experience of land which popularized land reform. Bronstein's case study of the north-west cotton textile towns unfortunately does not explore whether subscribers were ex-rural migrants, nor what degree of access to land they were able to achieve in and around their home towns. The author's urban focus also precludes engagement with recent work on rural Chartism.

There are, inevitably, some questionable statements (it is simply wrong to describe the allotment movement as 'Tory' in the 1830s and 1840s, for example). But this remains a deeply researched and conceptually sophisticated work, which significantly advances our understanding of land reform on both sides of the Atlantic in the first half of the nineteenth century.

JEREMY BURCHARDT

ALAN R. H. BAKER, *Fraternity among the French peasantry. Sociability and voluntary associations in the Loire valley, 1815-1914* (CUP, 1999). xviii + 373 pp. 65 figs; 23 photographs. £45.

The representation of the peasant by nineteenth-century observers and subsequently by historians and geographers has been extremely varied. However, in recent years images of technical conservatism and general 'backwardness' have increasingly been displaced by more 'optimistic' views, at least in terms of assessments of the productivity of small-scale farming. Alan Baker sets out to dissect another 'myth', that of the peasant as 'a sturdy individualist', lacking any sense of community. He does so on the basis of a detailed analysis of the chronology and geography of the establishment of voluntary associations in the department of Loir-et-Cher, selected because of its internal diversity, straddling as it does the frontier between the 'two Frances' – that of the north and east with its nucleated villages and open fields, and the south and west with its hamlets, dispersed farms and enclosed fields. To this is added a comparison between his own findings and those of historians and geographers working on other regions.

Peasant caution is explained in terms of risk avoidance and placed alongside a willingness to develop new co-operative strategies in the struggle for economic survival.

The Revolution had posed an individualistic liberal challenge to traditional collective practices, and, together with improved communications, market integration and the development of 'capitalism', promoted change on a scale never before encountered. In particular, Baker highlights a turning away from religious reassurance towards secular forms of 'risk management'. A range of 'instrumental' voluntary associations was created which provided material benefits and generally eased the process of adaptation to social change. Membership of these organizations allowed peasant activists to develop organizational and leadership skills and provided a means of exerting pressure on government officials. The greater confidence of peasants in their ability to control their own lives resulted in a 'revolution in attitudes', which promoted politicization and 'peasant empowerment', a reinforced sense of community and increasingly of 'class'. Voluntary associations were thus, Baker insists, important 'instruments of acculturation'.

A series of chapters focus on particular forms of association, on local insurance societies – small, self-regulating, based upon mutuality and providing means of protecting the buildings and livestock, which were the farmers' most valuable assets, through the socialization of risk; mutual aid societies, usually thought of as an urban phenomenon, but which by the turn of the century provided relief and medical assistance in around half of the department's communes, as well as imposing new standards of socially acceptable behaviour; voluntary fire brigades; anti-phylloxera syndicates from the 1880s; and agricultural associations, which existed in about one in six communes nationally by 1914. These offered facilities for the collective purchase of machinery and chemical fertilizer, and for the diffusion of best practice, and frequently possessed an informal political agenda.

Baker maintains that by neglecting anything other than the agricultural syndicates, which developed late in the century, historians have underestimated the earlier importance of collective solidarity within rural communities. The period from the mid-1840s to the mid-1860s, and not just the 1880s and early 1900s, was extremely fruitful in the creation of voluntary associations. The explanation provided is complex and stresses the limitations of a 'straightforward functionalist, fundamentally economic' approach as well as one which seeks to relate developments to the emergence of a more permissive legislative-administrative framework. Cultural and political factors, discourses which favoured fraternity, also mattered, as did the historical traditions of mutual and reciprocal assistance represented both by collective agricultural practices and religious fraternities. The approach of the geographer is particularly evident in the mapping of associations in relation to the existence

of a 'critical mass' of people and networks of information. The basic model is one of 'hierarchical spatial and social diffusion'. However, although voluntary associations were especially likely in the larger rural centres they also penetrated into smaller communities. The members of these overwhelmingly male-dominated associations were likely to be the small farmers – especially vigneron – particularly exposed to the forces of change. Bourgeois professionals, members of the rising class of rural notables, nevertheless, often took up leadership roles particularly as the scale and complexity of organization grew and state regulation (in return for subsidy) required a greater formalization of activity.

The essential focus of Baker's attention is the 'instrumental association'. He deliberately chooses to neglect the more diffuse informal sociability promoted by markets, fairs, the church, community and family and the more organized and 'expressive' musical and recreational groups. This self-denying ordinance is both a strength and weakness of the book. It allows him to concentrate, very effectively, on previously neglected spheres of activity, but at the same time decontextualizes them and makes it difficult to assess their importance 'as part of the broader phenomenon of sociability'.

ROGER PRICE

JUDITH PALLOT, *Land reform in Russia, 1906–1917. Peasant responses to Stolypin's project of rural transformation* (Clarendon Press, 1999). xv + 255 pp. 1 table; 4 plates; 11 figs. £45.

In 1913, Fedor Volkhov, a peasant from Tver' province, sought permission to acquire the title to his strips in the open fields in hereditary, rather than communal, tenure, and to consolidate them into an *otrub* (an enclosed farm) under the provisions of the Stolypin land reform. His plans were overtaken, however, when his village commune decided to undertake a community-wide enclosure of all their land. Volkhov complained to the authorities:

The peasants do not consider what the system of land-holding will be like after the land settlement; they try to carry out the land division in such a way that the end result will resemble the *obshchina* [peasant land commune]. They make sure that every household will have a parcel of arable and a parcel of meadow ... then woodland is left in common use and [some] pasture is left in common ... This is not all. It can happen that the outfields are not included in the division because none of the peasants will willingly accept it ... so it ends up that each household receives land in two or three places ... [T]he

result of all this is not a reorganization of the land but its disorganization (p. 189).

Many communes reacted in similar ways to what they saw as the threat of individual households' separating. They were acting to prevent the loss of parts of their land, to retain control over meadows, pastures, woodland and other resources held in common and, indeed, to retain as much as possible of their existing arrangements. Other communes took steps, including intimidation, to prevent members from breaking away, or tried to undo enclosures by removing boundary markers and symbolically re-possessing the land.

Those peasants who, in spite of the hostility most faced, did seek to separate from their communes had a variety of motives. Some feared losing out after some of their fellow-villagers had broken away. Others saw opportunities in separating. Under the communal and repartitional land tenure that prevailed in much of central Russia, households that had lost members, for example through death or the departure of married sons, also lost entitlements to shares of the communal land. It made sense, therefore, for such households to use the reform to acquire the full titles to all their existing land before parts were taken away from them. Likewise, households with disproportionate shares of better quality land had an incentive to separate. A number of households acquired the titles to their land to sell up and leave their villages for a city or resettlement in Siberia. Only a minority of peasants, however, sought to take advantage of the reform in order to modernize their farming methods and become the 'independent, prosperous husbandmen and loyal citizens of Stolypin's imaginings' (p. 251).

Pallo's explanation for the peasants' responses to the reform lies in the gap between the reformers' conviction in the incontrovertible benefits of enclosure and 'farm modernization', compared with what they saw as the 'backward' traditions of the 'ignorant' peasantry (discussed in Chapter 2, 'The land reform as administrative utopia'), and most peasants' equally strong beliefs in the efficacy of the customary ways they held and cultivated their land. The analysis in Chapter 3 of the advantages to the peasants of 'open fields, scattered strips, and repartitions' develops McClosky's well-known argument. It occurred to this reviewer that if anyone involved in the Stolypin reforms was 'ignorant' and 'backward' it may not have been the peasants. The author concludes: 'Conceived as a broad measure to modernize peasant farming and create a loyal peasantry, the final verdict on the Stolypin Reform must be that it was too narrowly conceived to be able to deliver this result' (p. 247).

This conclusion, which contradicts the more positive

views of many earlier commentators, is both plausible and, in the view of this reviewer, convincing. The book is based on considerable research carried out over many years in the vast body of printed and archival sources generated by the reform. The author is equally persuasive in her interpretations of the aims and behaviour of both reformers and peasants, and is careful to locate her work in the contexts of much of the latest empirical and theoretical work in these areas. Any criticisms of the book under review are relatively minor. As a historical geographer, the author naturally pays considerable attention to spatial variations at both regional and micro-levels. Nevertheless, the implication throughout that Ukraine and other areas are 'regions' of 'Russia' cannot be left without comment. The instruction to local officials

quoted on p. 39 that 'no angle on a farm boundary ... should be more than forty-five degrees' should surely read 'less than' (see the plan of a model village after enclosure on p. 51). At a more prosaic level, the absence of a bibliography and the provision of only a very short index are to be regretted.

Nevertheless, the considerable strengths of the book under review far outweigh any weaknesses. It nicely complements and significantly revises much of the recent work on the reforms, such as that of David Macey, George Yaney and P.N. Zyrianov. In particular, the notion that many peasants in the Russian Empire responded to the Stolypin reforms in the ways the authorities hoped is no longer tenable.

DAVID MOON