

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

N. M. HERBERT (ed.), *The Victoria history of the counties of England. A history of the county of Gloucestershire, IX, Bradley hundred. The Northleach area of the Cotswolds* (OUP for the Institute of Historical Research, 2001). xxiii + 298 pp. 42 plates; 22 figs. £85.

The part of Gloucestershire north-west of Northleach is one of the most attractive and interesting parts of the Cotswolds. Apart from the small market town of Northleach, it consists of rural parishes, almost entirely dependent upon farming. Stone quarrying was important, but only one major quarry remains open. The sixteen parish histories in this volume provide much useful detail on its agriculture.

Numerous Roman villa sites in the valleys indicate intensive early settlement. The Domesday Survey and evidence from the major ecclesiastical institutions which dominated the district, reveal the importance of arable farming during the early middle ages. Following the farming recession of the fourteenth century, it was sheep which became the major source of wealth. The numerous deserted hamlets and shrunken villages show the depopulation which followed the change to large-scale sheep farming. At the bishop of Worcester's manor of Withington in 1299, 56 tenants were recorded with some 400 acres of arable and there were at least five subsidiary hamlets. By c. 1500 the village was reduced, only one hamlet remained; the others were deserted or reduced to a single farmstead, and 27 tenements were in the lord's hands. In their place a flock of more than 1,000 sheep grazed.

The history of Northleach reflects the fortunes of the district, and is fully described in this volume. Northleach church provides an object lesson in the wealth which wool could bring. Its size and the splendour of its architecture reflect the prosperity of the woolmen, and their brass memorials are decorated with sheep, wool-sacks and shepherds' crooks. Much of the wool was exported. The brass of Thomas Bush (died 1525) proudly announces that he was a merchant of the staple of Calais. Other merchant families such as the Midwinters and Forteyes supplied wool to London, Calais,

Flanders or to Italian merchants. It was John Fortey (died 1458) who paid for the rebuilding of the nave of the parish church.

Northleach was established as a new borough and market by Gloucester abbey in c. 1220, with the classic layout of a large market place, surrounded by burgage plots. It prospered during the middle ages and developed a sophisticated system of borough government. Later, it declined in importance, although in 1791 it was chosen by the prison reformer, Sir George Onesiphorus Paul to be the site of one of his new prisons. The building now houses the Cotswold Collection, a rural life museum.

The volume traces the transformation of the landscape brought about by enclosure. Parliamentary enclosure began at Farmington in 1714 when the two arable fields covering 1,730 acres, together with much of the downland, was enclosed. Another ten parishes were subject to parliamentary enclosure during the period 1760 to 1820. Enclosure was followed by the construction of the many miles of drystone walls which remain such a characteristic feature of the area. Amalgamation of farms followed, and arable farming once more became important, providing employment for many labourers. Several farms of 1,000 acres or larger were created, each employing 50 or more workers.

The light land of the Cotswolds was badly affected by the agricultural depression beginning in the 1870s. A consequence was that field sports became and remain a major provider of employment. Nonetheless, numerous manor houses bear witness to the continuing prosperity of the gentry families, although many have depended upon wealth created elsewhere. Interesting early views of many of the houses are included in this volume. Some estates remain, notably Lord Vestey's Stowell Park where the demesne farm comprises more than 4,000 acres, employing farm workers, gamekeepers, drystone wallers, forestry workers, sawmill operators and gardeners.

As well as providing the usual detailed account of all aspects of local history from manorial descents to church life, this well-illustrated volume is notable for the story of the dramatic swings in the fortunes of farmers on this part of the Cotswold Hills.

J. H. BETTEY
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G. A. J. LOXTON, *Ston Easton perambulation. A history of a Somerset village on Mendip* (Snowdrop Publishing, Ston Easton, Bath, BA3 4DF, 2000). xiv + 185 pp. Illus. £14.95 incl. p&p.

Ston Easton is a small Somerset village on the north side of the Mendip Hills, on the road from Bristol to Shepton Mallet. It is notable for the fact that a remarkable quantity of documentary evidence survives concerning its economic history. Throughout the later middle ages the manor formed part of the widespread estates of the Augustinian abbey of Bruton, and then passed into the hands of the Hippisley family who retained possession until the twentieth century. This book has been written after many years of research on the Bruton abbey and Hippisley papers in the Somerset Record Office, and it contains much of interest for agricultural historians. There is considerably more information about latemedieval and early-modern land tenure and farming practice than is found in many local histories, with detailed analysis of manorial surveys, rentals, court rolls, bailiffs' accounts and inventories. The author's practical farming experience makes his comments on these subjects particularly interesting.

The Hippisleys arrived on the manor in 1525 when John Hippisley, yeoman, was granted a lease of the demesne and became rent collector for the abbot of Bruton. The family was thus well placed to obtain possession of the manor from the Crown in 1544. Thereafter the Hippisleys rose rapidly in wealth and status through dealings in monastic land and by profitable legal practice. During the eighteenth century they built an elegant mansion at Ston Easton, demolishing part of the village and diverting the main road in order to create a landscaped park. The carefully-preserved family archive provides a rich source for the history of the parish and manor, with much on changes in tenure, enclosures, amalgamation of farms and modern farming developments. These changes are illustrated by numerous maps, plans and illustrations. Many other aspects of the history of Ston Easton are explored in this well-researched study which is of more than local interest.

J. H. BETTEY
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HAROLD FOX, *The evolution of the fishing village: landscape and society along the south Devon coast, 1086-1550* (Leicester Explorations in Local History 1, Leopard's Head Press, 2001). xviii + 208 pp. 6 tables; 15 illus; 11 figs. £13.50 from Explorations, Centre for English Local History, Marc Fitch Historical Institute, 5 Salisbury Road, Leicester LE1 7QR.

Writers on the history of British marine fisheries are often pilloried for ill-defined approaches, parochial

romanticism, and ignorance of larger settings for their subject (as, for example, by R. Robinson and D. Starkey in Poul Holm *et al.* (eds) *The North Atlantic fisheries, 1100-1976: national perspectives on a common resource* (Esbjerg: Fiskerei- og Søfartsmuseets Forlag, 1996)). Harold Fox's study of medieval fishing settlements on the south Devon coast is a successful contribution to reversing this condition. In exemplary fashion, Fox integrates his own close archival and field research with the regional economic history laid out by especially Maryanne Kowaleski and Todd Gray. His findings will assist regional specialists in rural history and the broad study of medieval European fisheries, notably as the latter examines changing balances between subsistence and commercial, part- and full-time, and rural and urban fishers.

This is a work of local history. Fox wants to learn how a genre of place – the specialized fishing village – came into being along the coast between the Exe estuary and the Tamar. While some late medieval fishers there lived in port towns, most fishing activity was rural. Coastal and estuarine fishing sites known since Domesday Book had much increased in number by the thirteenth century, when lords of the land and foreshore mainly exacted cash charges, not fish, from the catchers. Fish from coastal Devon were distributed in large quantity well into the West Country interior and preserved fish likely shipped elsewhere through Exeter or other ports. Three unusual sources permit close observation of the rural fishery: early fifteenth century fish tithes at Woodbury were mainly paid by small holders fishing on a small scale; a 1578 rental from Kenton identifies more than fifty shoreline storage structures ('cellars') used by fishers in a parish without coastal dwellings; a series of especially fourteenth century customals from Stokenham depicts a well-organized collaborative mullet fishery based on shore cellars. These cellars were then replaced by (or rebuilt into) waterside housing during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, producing densely built, unplanned villages without agricultural resources.

Fox is reluctant to link the rise of fishing villages to a brief warmer interlude (c. 1450-1530) during the transition to the 'Little Ice Age' or to an ephemeral improvement in coastal security after official end of the French war in 1475. He rather connects settlement change to the strong late medieval economic growth of the entire southwestern region, arguing that industrial and commercial prosperity generated a now-classic mechanism of demographic increase. Notably surplus rural population found economic opportunity in full-time fishing to serve rising domestic consumption and an export demand earlier supplied more by town-based distant-water fishing.

Fox's explanation for appearance of specialized fishing

settlements in south Devon at the end of the middle ages is cogent but perhaps facile, resting in part on unarticulated and less than fully convincing assumptions about fishing as an ecological and economic activity. Fox too easily dismisses questions of technology and marine ecology I think integral to his study, largely limiting treatment of fish populations to an alphabetical tabulation of varieties certain texts list as purchased or consumed, and technical matters to brief mention of seines, fixed nets, weirs, and boats. Yet the habits and seasons of these creatures necessarily shape their availability to human capture and the various methods entail different capital and labour requirements and impacts on fish populations. A broad international literature treats uses and consequences of all fish-catching techniques, traditional and modern. Especially during a period of recognized climatic change, Nature must be considered a potential historical player, not just dead stage scenery. Nor are late medieval and early modern price relations of fish to be assumed *a priori*, for different varieties and degrees of freshness or preservation fit quite differently into consumption patterns based on both wealth and culture (taste).

Fox eventually compares full-time rural fishing in south Devon and elsewhere in late medieval England, so correcting the mistaken belief it had more recent origins. Fox could also have found support beyond England's horizons. Some of the Devon fishers' Norman and Breton competitors may have become full-time specialists by the late fourteenth century. On the Flemish coast, the fishing village of Walraersijde was established during a regional economic boom of the thirteenth century and moved to a new site – recently excavated and reconstructed – after shoreline changes in the fifteenth. Norwegian peasant fishers, who supplied nationally-significant commercial exports from seasonal huts throughout the high middle ages, established specialized settlements after 1450. Harold Fox's findings now belong with these. His work deserves careful reading and emulation.

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JAMES P. TOOMEY (ed.), *Records of Hanley Castle, Worcestershire, c. 1147–1547* (Worcestershire Historical Society, new ser. 18, 2001). xxxvii + 194 pp. 2 maps. £20 from Robin Whittaker, Worcestershire Record Office, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP.

As all medieval historians are aware, to find a real concentration of sources for a single person, family or settlement is relatively unusual. The manor of Hanley Castle, in the wooded part of Worcestershire, is one of these comparative rarities. The core of the material is the Lechmere collection at Worcestershire County Record Office, from which nearly three hundred deeds from the

late thirteenth to the mid-sixteenth century and a small number of court rolls feature in this volume. This is supplemented by manorial accounts, Inquisitions Post Mortem and subsidy rolls from the Public Record Office, and deeds from other collections, notably the British Library. Dr Toomey's assiduous pursuit of Hanley documentation and this carefully edited calendar have put historians of medieval England from a variety of fields in his debt. The most immediate interest of this profuse collection, as Christopher Dyer notes in the general editor's preface, is as a source for the 'ordinary inhabitants' of this 'large and important parish', and as exemplification of many of the types of source for villages and villagers in this period. Although the documents assembled here are regrettably sparse for the period of colonization in the twelfth and thirteenth century, the story of Hanley's expansion and of the growth of its hamlets can still be told in outline from Domesday Book and from the evidence of deeds, placenames and topography. For the later centuries there is a much greater density of material, from which we may learn, for example, about the villagers and their families, their obligations to their lord (and, after the Black Death, the weakening of these), the location of their tenements and messuages, the local economy and land market.

But we can also learn about the lords of Hanley. As its name implies, there was a castle at Hanley, owned for most of this period first by the Clares, then the Despensers, then the earls of Warwick, and finally the Crown, and it was also the administrative centre for Malvern Chase. Indeed, a significant contribution to this collection is made by Hanley Hall, the estate of the hereditary chief foresters of Malvern, whose surviving archive came to the British Library, via the Lords Beauchamp, the new owners of both manor and office from 1479. (There is incidentally quite a lot more to be said about this change of ownership, some of it recounted in this reviewer's work.) As ever, the historian of the estate economy of the laity is frustrated by the lack of account series but it is possible to see from this collection how much can be learned all the same from the very full extents that sometimes accompany IPMs, from court rolls and from deeds, especially when, as in this instance, the occasional account survives. Sadly, however, there is only one from the high-farming phase and that, though full and informative, dates from immediately after the fall of the younger Despenser when the estate's economy may have been unusually affected by outside events. But the appetite is whetted by the editor's reference to a household account for 1409–10 when the Duke of York, a temporary owner, lived at Hanley, and to further material for the younger Despenser in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls and Memoranda Rolls.

If Dr Toomey's handling of history, historiography and source material is slightly less assured for the world of the owners of the castle and their associates than for that of their tenants, historians of both lords and tenants should take serious notice of this volume.

CHRISTINE CARPENTER
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KENNETH WITNEY (ed.), *The survey of Archbishop Pecham's Kentish manors, 1283-85* (Kent Records, 28, 2000). lxxxii + 390 pp. 2 maps. £35.

Publications of this nature were once commonplace. These days they are rare. The Kent Archaeological Society is to be congratulated on the publication of a volume that is in every respect a memorial to a vanishing civilization. Kenneth Witney, who died in 1999 and about whom Dr Thirsk writes movingly in her foreword, was a perfect representative of that civilization: the distinguished amateur. After a lifetime spent serving his country, Kenneth Witney devoted his retirement to the service of scholarship. The medieval history of the county where he lived was what this Oxford history graduate studied with a commitment of the heart as well as of the mind. He had begun exploring Kent as a schoolboy and 'from walking tirelessly over the countryside' he came to know and understand its landscape as well as he came to know and understand its historical records. His mastery is evident in a long introduction. Read him on mills, for example; note his succinct comments on the appropriateness of the timing of the Survey; give ear to a description of the Kentish system of land holding that begins by calling it so felicitously 'exceptionally disorderly'; and ponder at length the authoritative conclusion only a local historian of the Kenneth Witney sort is entitled to give having studied a document as complex and intractable as the Survey for years on end: Kent 'had progressed well beyond the rustic stereotype of mediaeval England to something altogether more enterprising and vital, better able to withstand the looming threats of overpopulation and of badly deteriorating weather'. The scholarship under review here is the very opposite of the often superficial and sometimes slovenly history professional historians are currently obliged to come up with. Their universities demand productivity; their careers require it. What history wants comes in a distant third. Mr Witney's edition of Archbishop Pecham's Survey is the opposite of all this. It is a meticulous labour of love not a meretricious demonstration of self-esteem. The love is both for history itself and for other historians, and not only local historians, as the Survey is an invaluable source for any historian interested in the medieval economy of England. Here is history as it ought to be, not because it has been impeccably and intelligently

done, nor because it is enlightening and illuminating, but principally because it is altruistic; history, in other words, for the sake of others. The edition of the survey, we need to remind ourselves, is a translation: a laborious task undertaken for the benefit of historians who do not have Latin, which in this day and age includes almost all of us. There is also an exhaustive glossary, a helpful bibliography, and four useful appendices, including one of 'Significant Festivals and Saints' Days', and another of a contemporary digest of the Survey, 'The Lambeth Summaries', introduced by Dr Thirsk. The volume is a model of its kind, its near obsolete kind.

COLIN RICHMOND
Woodbridge, Suffolk

IAN KERSHAW and DAVID M. SMITH (eds), *The Bolton Priory compotus, 1286-1325, together with a priory account roll for 1377-1378* (Boydell Press, for the Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 154, 2000). viii + 636 pp. 2 maps. £50.

Since its publication in 1973, Ian Kershaw's book *Bolton Priory: the economy of a northern monastery, 1286-1325* has been a valuable resource for students of both monastic economies and the agrarian history of Yorkshire. Of the twelve Yorkshire houses of Augustinian canons, Bolton was the only one to be located in the Pennines, and in the management of its upland estates it adopted practices associated particularly with the Cistercians, who had secured control of great tracts of the Dales. The principal source for the 1973 book, the compotus of the priory for 1286-1325, has now been published, together with a stray account roll for 1377-78. The mammoth task of preparing the text for publication has been undertaken by Professor David Smith, incorporating the earlier work of Dr Tim Cooper.

A substantial introduction analyses the accounting system, and there are many useful footnotes. An index running to 66 pages gives access to a wealth of detail about the management of the arable demesnes, vaccaries, manors, mills and lead mines, and the consumption of the prior and the household. However, Professor Kershaw's book, with its summary of the compotus and invaluable tabulations of the data, remains an essential companion to the new publication.

The period covered by the compotus is of particular interest in the history of both the priory and the region. It may be no coincidence that a new account book was begun in 1286, the likely date of the appointment as prior of John of Laund, who held office until 1331. The previous two decades had been marked by factional struggles and managerial inadequacies. In 1286 the priory was heavily in debt. Its affairs were gradually turned round, and its net income improved by the judicious purchase

in 1300–07 of the manors of Appletreewick in Wharfedale and Holmpton in Holderness, the latter becoming an important supplier of wheat to the priory. During the same period £300 was spent on securing the appropriation of the church of Long Preston, an investment which was recouped within five years.

Then came the years of disaster: the heavy and incessant rains of 1315 and 1316, ruining the crops except on the limestone soils at Malham, and triggering a sheep murrain which killed two-thirds of the priory's 3,000 sheep; and the Scottish raids of May 1318 and September 1319, which left a trail of destruction close to the priory. In the latter year some at least of the canons took refuge in Skipton Castle, and soon afterwards the priory was taken into royal protection and its material management entrusted to two laymen. When however, in October 1320, the archbishop of York asked other Augustinian houses to provide temporary accommodation for eight canons, he blamed the cattle plague which had broken out in the region as well as the Scots. The cattle herd, 496 in 1314–15, had been reduced to 31. It is clear that in the years 1315–21 the weather and animal disease caused much more damage than did the Scots. The economy of the priory never again reached the level of 1314, as the account roll of 1377–78 helps to demonstrate.

The lay brothers of Bolton were not numerous, between two and five in the years of the compotus with similar numbers in the 1370s, but they had a key managerial role, in charge of granges and stock. When one died the priory must have sought an expert replacement, not just any devout musclemán. In 1298 four vaccaries with between 19 and 29 cows each were let to laymen, in return for fixed renders of butter and cheese. Two were still held in this way, delivering calves also, at the dissolution. This was a system used on the Fountains estates elsewhere in the Dales in the later middle ages.

The milk of ewes, as well as cows, was used for making cheese. Oats accounted for 80 per cent of the corn grown on the priory estates or collected in tithe. The canons may have eaten wheat, but they had to drink oats, as nearly all the malt came from that source. Ian Kershaw wonders if a 'lupus' killed in 1305–6 may actually have been a wild dog, but wolves were found at this period in the nearby Forest of Rossendale.

The editors and publishers are to be congratulated on the production of this splendid volume.

BERNARD JENNINGS
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DEREK VINCENT STERN (edited and with an introduction by CHRISTOPHER THORNTON), *A Hertfordshire demesne of Westminster Abbey: profits, productivity and weather* (University of Hertfordshire Press, 2000). lviii + 256 pp. 31 tables; 32 figs. £29.99.

This fascinating study of Westminster Abbey's medieval demesne farm at Kinsbourne (later Harpendenbury) in Hertfordshire has been published as a memorial to Derek Stern, who died in 1993 having suffered from Crohn's disease for over thirty years. It is based on Stern's much-cited 1978 University of London PhD dissertation, and we are indebted to Barbara Stern for seeking publication of the thesis after his death, and to Christopher Thornton for revising the thesis and assessing its many qualities in light of subsequent work in an excellent introduction to this volume.

As a detailed case study of a well-documented demesne and an exploration of the interplay between economy and environment in medieval farming, Stern's thesis was innovative when it was first written and remains relevant and valuable today. It will be of interest not only to medievalists, but to agricultural, climatic, and economic historians in general, particularly as the records on which it chiefly relies (manorial account rolls) are unrivalled by other sources for English agriculture prior to the nineteenth century. Readers of this journal will also be interested to note the close proximity of Kinsbourne to the modern agricultural experimental station at Rothamsted and hence the potential for comparing the results of medieval cultivation with the renowned cropping trials at Broadbalk field.

At the heart of Stern's work is an exploration of manorial accounts as a source of weather evidence and as a record of financial profit. After addressing the possibilities and problems of using account rolls in these ways, Stern garners a wide range of direct and indirect evidence for weather conditions at Kinsbourne between 1273 and 1397, and then presents and discusses his rigorous recalculations of the profits of arable and pastoral husbandry for the periods 1286–1307 (when seigniorial farming in general was at its height) and 1362–97 (during which time the economy turned against direct demesne cultivation). No subsequent historian has attempted to emulate this sort of analysis in such a comprehensive fashion, though it undoubtedly produces significant insights into a wide range of topics. These include the changing balance between customary and hired labour, the factors influencing the decision eventually to lease the demesne, and even the variability in the apple harvest and cider production. By providing much of the raw data on which this analysis is based, the book is also an invaluable resource. For example, the section on weather includes tables of 'proxy data' such as ploughing

dates, yield ratios and livestock mortality rates as well as a compilation of explicit meteorological references, while a complete year-by-year breakdown of the data on profitability forms one of three substantial appendices.

The pattern that emerges from Stern's overall profit index reveals two particularly striking features which run counter to the orthodox chronology of demesne cultivation: first, profits at Kinsbourne suffered a severe collapse in the early years of the fourteenth century; and second, the demesne was, on average, more profitable after the Black Death than it had been in the years 1286–1307. Trends in arable and pastoral productivity tell a similar tale, corn yields for instance falling around 1300 and recovering to a much higher level in the later fourteenth century. The factors which determined these unusual trends are considered in the conclusion. In Stern's view, environmental conditions certainly played a part, with productivity seemingly depressed by drought at the turn of the fourteenth century and later raised by the shedding of inferior arable land. Yet, despite his interest in unravelling the nature and impact of external factors such as climate, Stern was also sensitive to the role of management and administration in medieval agriculture, and he indicated that these may in fact have been of greater significance in the long term. For example, he linked the fall in profits in the early fourteenth century to administrative weakness and internal conflict at Westminster Abbey, and suggested that improvements in central administration help to explain the performance of Kinsbourne after the Black Death.

Stern was convinced that the traditional approach to medieval agriculture, based on aggregated information relating to a series of farms, should be complemented by intensive local studies. In the last twenty years, the extensive methodology has been taken to a new level with the trend for constructing quantitative 'national' overviews of certain aspects of demesne farming. But extensive and intensive approaches to this subject are illuminating in different ways and the need for a balance between them must not be overlooked. By 'probing for fundamental clues, rather than simply enumerating facts' (p. 7), and by relating local detail to broader issues, Stern's work provides an excellent example of a case study and the insights that can be gained from it.

DAVID STONE

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JANE WHITTLE, *The development of agrarian capitalism.*

Land and labour in Norfolk, 1440–1580 (Clarendon Press, 2000). xii + 361 pp. 40 tables; 11 figs; 6 maps. £45. This rigorously intelligent book re-examines a fundamental question in modern historical writing: what were the origins of capitalism? Its empirical core

comprises an intensive study of the Norfolk manor of Hovingham Bishops between 1440 and 1580, supplemented by study of the wider region. The rural economy of late medieval Norfolk was unusually precocious, characterized by dense population, extensive wage dependency, significant rural industry, early commercialization, and a highly fluid land market. Combined with the quality of her own research, this extreme local context enables Jane Whittle to make a major intervention into debates over the origins of agrarian capitalism. Pre-eminently, this work is a study of grand historical processes rather than of a particular place. Although Norfolk historians will find this book rewarding, it owes its methodology and style to the austere traditions of historical sociology rather than the warm, localist humanism of W. G. Hoskins.

The book's ambitions are expressed in an opening chapter which surveys interpretations of the origins of capitalism. Whittle gradually nudges the reader towards her own post-Marxist perspective. In particular, she batters Robert Brenner's Marxist emphasis upon social conflict between lord and tenant, which Brenner presented as the primary cause of early capitalism. Instead, Whittle proposes 'a model in which peasant economy and society merges into capitalism'. For Whittle, the advantage of such a perspective lies in its recognition 'of the disjointed nature of development, the fact that elements such as types of labour and the relation of production to the market are not necessarily connected'. The emergence of agrarian capitalism is therefore presented as a silent, protracted and undramatic process, unconnected to local-political conflicts. In contrast to Brenner, manorial lords are seen as relatively weak. Instead, the trading and farming activities of wealthier villagers are interpreted as the motor which drove economic change.

Subsequent chapters examine manorialism, the land market, social differentiation, and the changing material circumstances of servants, labourers, and rural artisans. Outstanding aspects include a contextualized discussion of local enclosure disputes; an impressive discussion of serfdom; an important assessment of the relationship between migration, landlessness and social polarization; and a highly original discussion of the regulation of wage labour. Most impressive is the detailed reconstruction of the material circumstances of the rural poor, and the compelling evidence of their mid-sixteenth century immiseration. Finally, Whittle illuminates the potential for social and age conflict within the village, stemming from the concentration of wealth and power amongst landed, middle-aged tenants, at the expense of younger, poorer, migratory labourers.

This is, therefore, a bold work that represents economic history at its best. As such, it is worth arguing with.

Like all historians, Whittle is limited by her source material. This comprises a selection of manorial documents, taxation records, wills, parish registers, churchwardens' accounts and quarter sessions records. This deep but narrow source base enables the scrutiny of the internal life of the village but has less to say about the politics of lord/tenant relations. Although the manorial records illuminate the diminishing value of seigniorial dues, only rarely do they hint at the local-political arrangements which underpinned the manorial system. For one fleeting moment, however, such arrangements impinge upon Whittle's evidence. While discussing the inability of the lord of Hevingham Bishops to extract substantial entry fines from the tenantry, Whittle points to the inclusion of an agreement between the lord and tenants in the 1543 roll. This unusual document leads her to conclude that 'the tenants must have objected, and possibly taken their case to the royal courts'. Seigniorial weakness, presented elsewhere within the book as a product of impersonal economic change, seems therefore to result from social conflict. Yet Whittle does not pursue her insight. Although she passes comment upon the famously 'litigious nature' of the Norfolk commons, Whittle makes no use of the rich records of litigation between Norfolk tenants and their lords at the central courts. Had she done so, she would have found that the seigniorial interest was not quite the paper tiger that she describes. This was certainly apparent to the commons of early Tudor Norfolk. The most eloquent testimony to the Norfolk gentry's continuing enthusiasm for aggressive (and often effective) seigniorialism is to be found in the hostility shown by the 1549 rebels towards their local rulers, and in their proposals for the near-abolition of the manorial system. Although Whittle's book contextualizes the contradictions within rebel politics, its operating assumptions leave it unable to explain the powerful conflicts between gentry and commons within this region. After all, if manorialism really was so weak, why did Norfolk's rich farmers make common cause with the otherwise marginalized village poor against their superiors in 1549? For all its depth, this book does not fully persuade. Instead, it presents a strong case for one side in a continuing argument.

ANDY WOOD

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L. A. BOTELHO (ed.), *Churchwardens' accounts of Cratfield, 1640-1660* (Suffolk Records Society, 42, 1999). xi + 177 pp. 1 table; 3 illus; 2 figs; 3 maps. £30.

One can never have enough churchwardens' accounts, although of editions like this there are too few. Those printed here cover the years from 1640 to 1660, from the eve of the Civil War to the restoration of Charles II

and are the loose individual accounts of each of two wardens, rather than the more common collated summaries. Cratfield is a small parish in east Suffolk, a few miles west of modern Halesworth, comprising the village of Cratfield and several outlying greens characteristic of the county's wood-pasture region. This is cheese and pig country and, in times of scarcity, the parish was obliged to import grain for distribution to its poor as an extra to its own church fields, or to supplement the income of its poorer farmers, as in 1654 due to the 'cheapness of cheese and butter', or in 1656 due to 'the cheapness of comodities'. Nevertheless, this was an independent, prosperous and yeomanly parish with a population between two and three hundred people, attenuated manorial lordship, and a diverse range of occupations. But, as in many parts of England there was also a large group of labouring poor, perhaps as many as fifty to seventy people, who had neither access to tiny acreages of smallholding, nor even to woodland resources other than occasional doles of firewood from the guildhall. Local governance was in the hands of the vestry under the leadership of its leading inhabitants. The Cratfield wardens were responsible not merely for the maintenance of the church, but for the management of the parish purse and the distribution of poor relief. Their accounts provide an especially full and clear view of the community during an important period of wider social, religious and political crisis.

In one respect parishes like Cratfield were independent, isolated and self-sustaining moral economies, practising elaborate patterns of care in the community. The family of Joseph Smith, poor through several generations, received money and cash loans in their 'truble', 'distres' or 'great extremity', but also did odd jobs to supplement their meagre incomes. Other poor were in their turn paid for simple medical care of the family. Engrossment of land and the development of a market-centred economy, Cratfield's engagement with the wider world, which accounted for its poor, was not within the warden's responsibilities, but the community's engagement with its region and the nation appear clearly in other ways. Poor relief rose markedly in the 1650s but Cratfield also continued to relieve those who crossed its borders, some with parish briefs or parliamentary certificates, all carrying sombre tales of fire, loss and destruction. In 1654-5 the two wardens relieved four Irish women and 20 children, 14 dispossessed Irish settlers, 23 Irish people with certificates and two Irish men and two women with briefs. Those with briefs and certificates received more, but one suspects that few went away empty-handed. Poverty never pressed so hard that the parish sought to forget its place in the world. Cratfield's world-view, whether commercially based or not, was parliamentarian and

moderately reformist in religion. In the aural calendar, bells rang for the king's restoration in 1660, annually on 5 November, 'powder treason day', and weekly on the day of an endowed sermon. The accounts are full of payments for maimed soldiers and other obligations which reveal the parish to have been ready to move beyond ordinary civil obligations. In 1645 the parish made up the rate for the Scots, approvingly called 'our well affected bretherin'.

Lynn Bothelo's introduction provides a concise summary of the economic, social, religious and political context of the accounts, and stands on its own as an essay on early-modern Cratfield. The volume contains a useful glossary, an appendix of biographical notes based on a full parish reconstitution, and separate indices of persons, places and subjects.

PHILIP MORGAN
Westminster College, Missouri

ROSS WORDIE (ed.), *Enclosure in Berkshire, 1485-1885* (Berkshire Record Society, 5, 2000). xxxvi + 250 pp. 3 maps. No price given.

As one who has long argued the need for detailed studies of the enclosure process at county level, it is hardly surprising that I should warmly welcome this addition to the slowly growing body of such literature. Though it is not quite the unique study which the general editor implies in his foreword, it is certainly an unusual and extremely valuable one. The scale is ambitious, covering the period from 1485 to 1885 for the whole of Berkshire and Dr Wordie has, inevitably, had to be selective. As he notes in his introduction, he has taken advantage of the existence of a number of major printed sources, notably a transcription of the 1634 glebe terriers for the county, the work of Beresford and Hurst on deserted villages, and Tate and Turner's surveys of parliamentary enclosures, to provide a framework upon which to hang the results of his own documentary searches. He has also, as he freely admits, based the volume largely on material from the Berkshire Record Office, with only limited exploitation of the resources of the Public Record Office. Nevertheless, the detail and coverage is impressive.

The introduction covers the definition of 'Berkshire' to be used in the volume, pointing to the difficulties in establishing a precise acreage upon which to base subsequent calculations of enclosed and open areas. It offers a detailed commentary on the problems of interpreting the various source materials, and the likely accuracy of the results drawn from them. There are brief comments on the validity of some of the academic controversies over enclosure. Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, Dr Wordie attempts to put detailed figures to the enclosure process for the county as a whole, breaking them down

into different time-periods and dividing them between parliamentary and non-parliamentary means.

The main bulk of the volume consists of a parish-by-parish survey, laid out in standard format. Each parish begins with a comment on whether there was a medieval park or deserted village, has a statement on the enclosure situation as revealed by the 1634 glebe terrier and a comment on any parliamentary enclosure which affected it. Interspersed with these are sections covering any relevant documentation or other evidence which throws light on the open or enclosed status of the area during the intervening periods. There is a specific entry for any surviving records of non-parliamentary enclosure, and a conclusion which attempts an overall picture of the enclosure process in the parish concerned. Dr Wordie uses the opportunity to revise some of the estimates of parliamentary enclosure for Berkshire given by Tate and Turner, updating their record of the availability of awards, correcting some minor errors, and offering more accurate estimations of the acreages involved. He also takes care to distinguish between the total amount of land affected by the various acts and orders and the amount of open or common land which they actually enclosed, an issue which has often been the cause of confusion and dispute in studies of enclosure.

One can, of course, always demand more, or raise quibbles about the details of such a project. It seems odd that there is little reference to later glebe terriers, given the importance rightly accorded to those of 1634, and one wonders whether the maps and documentation associated with the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 might have thrown light on the later situation. However, within the inevitable constraints imposed by the need to pack details of a whole county within a small volume, this presents a highly detailed and impressive account. Dr Wordie is to be congratulated on his achievement, and I would personally hope that it might encourage others to replicate such a survey elsewhere.

JOHN CHAPMAN
University of Portsmouth

WILLIAM ELLIS, *The country housewife's family companion* (1750) (with an introduction by Malcolm Thick) (Prospect Books, 2000). 420 pp. 2 illus. £30.00

This facsimile of a book published in 1750 has an informative introduction by historian Malcolm Thick (the introduction is available on-line on the publisher's web site at www.prospectbooks.co.uk, a site which also has other interesting material.) It is one of several facsimile editions of texts likely to be of interest to historians of agriculture, social life and food. As the introduction to the book points out, Ellis wrote in a rather breathless style, but as it is based on the personal experience of the

author as a farmer and trader over fifty years, it has a certain authority in spite of (or even because of) the style. Read this book, or at least browse in it, for explicit detail about eighteenth-century trade, agriculture and social life. However, there are valuable insights here into social position, food, work and consumption, and the book is as valuable for these as for the explicit detail.

There is a great deal about social position; sometimes this is explicit because Ellis carefully specifies whether he is addressing gentlemen, yeomen, farmers, labourers or servants. Sometimes it is implicit, such as in the commentary on many of the recipes. Writing about staple foods (bread, pies, fruit, meat, cheese and so on) is aimed at the whole of the population from gentlemen to labourers' wives. The different social groups are presented as eating the same kinds of dishes but a food hierarchy emerges from his comments. The better-off will be able to add to the basics (like puddings, pottage and so on) such extras as cream, eggs, dried fruit, spices, herbs and pepper. Apple puddings are regarded as an excellent staple food for farmers and labourers, but puddings with other fruit and spices (like gooseberries or plums) are appropriate for the better-off. He approves of oatmeal, which is portrayed as preserving 'the lives of millions of people in sound health'. And he approves of milk porridge which 'is much in use from the lord to the peasant'. On the other hand, he does not approve of the poorer sort substituting a 'tea breakfast' for porridge because this is both too expensive and 'unwholesome'. He does, however, expect the families of gentlemen and yeomen to have a 'tea breakfast' and recommends some breads and other food for this. Yet this is not just a conventional view of social distinction, with one sort of food appropriate for the rich and another for the poor. It is firmly rooted in a humane concern for the well-being of all levels of society, and especially those who have to do heavy manual work. There is the implication that, although there was a potential for everyone to have enough to eat, the household had to be properly managed and that farmers and labourers needed to be careful to get as much out of their food as possible, making small amounts of meat go a long way with vegetables and especially potatoes for example.

There are valuable descriptions of the use of various utensils in the kitchen and dairy but attitudes to consumption in general are implied. Ellis warns against buying staple foods in shops because he thinks these items over-priced. So it is better to keep pigs than buy bacon from a butcher; better to bake your own bread than buy from a baker. He also warns that you should not give your children or servants the opportunity of being corrupted by buying in a shop where there might be gossip.

LORNA SCAMMELL

University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne

M. E. TURNER, J. V. BECKETT and B. AFTON, *Farm production in England, 1700-1914* (OUP, 2001). xii + 295 pp. 34 tables; 33 figs. £45.

Michael Turner, John Beckett and Bethanie Afton (henceforth TBA) are among the most prolific and talented historians of English agriculture. No team was better qualified to tackle the sources that form the basis of *Farm production in England*, their second monograph in four years. That the dividend is so meagre this time is therefore both revealing and disappointing. TBA's hope, shared by many (including those master-historians E. L. Jones and E. J. T. Collins), was that an exhaustive study of surviving English farm records would produce enough data on crop yields, seeding rates, labour inputs, carcass weights, and so on, to 'say something positive about long-run change in farm production and output' (p. v). With the help of a 'substantial' grant from the Leverhulme Trust, TBA accordingly trolled the archives and constructed a sample of nearly one thousand farms of varying size and range. That sounds like a lot of farms and a lot of work, but in the end it was not enough.

The accounts used here include both those of estate and tenanted or owner-occupied farms. The sample is clearly non-random, and although every county in England is represented, in regional terms it is biased towards the south and the east. Much more troublesome, however, is the extreme sensitivity of so many of TBA's findings to the inclusion or exclusion of one or two observations. The database is simply too thin for robust generalizations about trends. Not even the staple of the historiography, corn yields, is immune; the inclusion of a single farm increases TBA's estimate of average yield per acre by 5 to 10 per cent between 1730s and 1770s (pp. 128-132). The estimates of carcass weights are even more inconclusive. In the case of sheep, including 'exceptionally large animals' in some years produced high dispersion around the mean and 'the concentration of sales from specific locations' largely influenced the trend. The average weight in the third quarter of the nineteenth century is dominated by sales from a Northumberland farm (pp. 184-5). The analysis of cattle weights produced another 'salutary exercise in how much we still do not know, and may never know, about some of the basic parameters' (p. 194). In this case different farms take turns in influencing the trend and it is impossible to control for breed or age. The authors had 2,236 pig carcass weights to work with, but here too 'outliers' (if, indeed, they are outliers) plague the analysis. The peaks in the mean weights of hogs and porkers during the French wars are 'illusory and formed entirely from sales from a farm in Swallowfield in Berkshire' (p. 204-5). And so on. Overall, such examples hardly inspire confidence in the results regarding trends in mean crop yields and carcass weights,

and TBA's candid commentaries on the figures and tables in Chapters two to six too often read like cautions against making too much of the figures. And it turns out that trying to infer the spread of techniques and process innovations from farm records is more frustrating still: such shifts are documented 'but not in a meaningful statistical way' (p. 228). References to breed were rarely given, for example, when animals were sold for slaughter (pp. 98–9). Nor are farm records much of a guide to movements in labour inputs and productivity (pp. 64–5).

Given all this uncertainty, TBA's interesting assessment of the timing of the English agricultural revolution owes more to traditional political arithmetic than to fresh, definitive output and productivity series. Even with information on crop yields and animal numbers, estimating output is problematic: in their absence precision is hopeless. TBA seek to salvage something from their data by producing a 'new index' of labour productivity for the 1750–1850 period (p. 227). However, two components of this index – Tony Wrigley's estimate of the rural population, and estimates of the aggregate wheat acreage by James Caird and the late Jim Holderness – are the stuff of old-fashioned political arithmetic. TBA's own contribution is an estimate of agricultural output proxied by farm record-based estimates of the trend in average wheat yields (net of seeding). Their finding that the real action was concentrated on the post-1800 period owes more to shifts in acreage and labour input than in yields. The much faster increase of England's population c. 1800–50 certainly implies accelerated productivity change on the land after c. 1800 (pp. 223–4), but this point owes little to TBA's farm records.

Farm production in England is a book that had to be written. Coming from such expert historians, it is useful though sobering testimony to the limitations of farm accounts as a systematic guide to aggregate trends.

CORMAC Ó GRÁDA
University College Dublin

JOHN E. ARCHER, *Social unrest and popular protest in England, 1780–1840* (CUP, 2000). vi + 110 pp. £19.95 (hbk); £7.95 (pbk).

The general editor of this series, prepared for the Economic History Society, could not have identified a more judicially-minded expert in the field than the author of this useful introductory synthesis aimed at students approaching the subject for the first time. He opens with an historiographical introduction, with some wise observations on sources and methods, and rightly attributes the growth of scholarly commitment to the topic to the seminal works of that 'triumvirate of British marxists', namely Eric Hobsbawm, George Rudé and above all Edward Thompson.

Archer divides the volume into chapters on agricultural, industrial, political, and finally policing protests; the last addresses a subject which many more recent authors of studies of protest have, in some senses perhaps ironically though legitimately, proceeded to. Archer argues that the intervention of authority, magistrates, constables (and later the expanding professional forces), special constables, and both the volunteer and professional armies, against rioters, was as likely to provoke greater disturbance as dispersals. Food riots, often said to be the most common form of mass mobilizations, at least before 1815, have a chapter exclusively devoted to them, another testimony to Thompson's massive legacy, in this case his legendary identification of the 'moral economy' of 1971 vintage, revisited at even greater length in 1991. Finally, Archer takes a brief look at whether cumulative developments constituting the well-established intensification of protest movements across this period at any time constituted a 'revolutionary challenge'. This chapter is by far the shortest in the book, and one might ask if under five pages suffice. Nevertheless, for a short work of synthesis, which does not eschew exploring however briefly the many debates which have developed between contributing historians, this comprises a packed agenda.

On occasion, Archer comes to some judgements on those debates. The attempt by a generation of economic historians to dispose of the classic Fabian argument – a thesis initially rooted more in considerable contemporary commentary than in archival evidence – of the dispossession and resultant poverty deriving from parliamentary enclosure, Archer concludes, proved in vain. Likewise, the so-called 'compartmentalist' school of historians, which perceived no overlaps between for example various categories of rioters, machine-breakers, trade unionists, and populist democratic activists, rightly gets short shrift. Archer tends to play down, rather than up, the seminal developments in the 1790s in the shadow of the French Revolution and the war against France, at least in the context of whether they constituted a watershed. If he is correct in identifying continuities, this does not exclude analytical perceptions of a watershed in the nature of protest, holistically experienced. For example, Archer exudes some sympathies to Thompson's identification of a revolutionary political dimension to the ostensible industrial orientation of Luddism in its classic phase, and is even more sympathetic to more recent identifications of strains of political protest with the Captain Swing quasi-insurrection of late 1830. Conversely, and very surprisingly, this volume is Linda Colley free; loyalism receives a brief mention in the context of the 'Church and King' riots in the early nineties, but there is no sustained mention of the populist loyalism

(or patriotism) she has portrayed as a key development during these decades.

On occasion, readers with a specialism in the subject might wonder at times if Archer's concentration might have wandered as he no doubt re-read the scores of secondary sources synthesized here. Some factual errors creep into most historical works, though one is surprised that the weekly government publication, extensively studied by Thompson as it contained transcripts of those anonymous threatening letters (for the discovery of their authors rewards were offered), is not the *Weekly* but the *London Gazette*. And, on occasion, this reader was forced to pause and say, did author x really (and on one occasion did I) say that, to find out on checking that a seemingly accidental misrepresentation of parts of an argument has occurred. Finally, given the numbers of volumes containing essays by different writers in this area, it seems rather otiose to reference the editor(s) of these volumes rather than the specific author.

ROGER WELLS

Canterbury Christ Church University College

WILLIAM COBBETT, *Rural rides* (edited by IAN DYCK) (Penguin, 2001). xxxiv + 525 pp. 2 maps. £8.99.

Rural rides is, arguably, Cobbett's most enduring legacy to posterity, despite the fact that he composed for publication around 30 million words. The first Penguin edition came out in 1967, and was reprinted eight times by 1985. It was edited by the famous Canadian literary figure, George Woodcock. This new edition is edited by a very appropriate historian, and relatively recent author of an important major study of Cobbett, namely *William Cobbett and rural popular culture* (1992). Professor Dyck essentially reiterates that volume's basic thesis in his 26 page introductory essay, illustrated with various quotes from a range of Cobbett's publications, notably his famed *Political register*, which appeared weekly between 1802 and his death in 1835. The various rides were first published spasmodically over several years in the 1820s in this principally political and polemical organ. Cobbett re-published them, as a book, in 1830. Woodcock wrote of Cobbett's 'great accounts of rural life', and if nobody could fault that description, a considerable amount of essentially descriptive material was non-too subtly used to underwrite Cobbett's ideological positions. For example, he held – with some justification – that the condition of the labouring masses was invariably better in woodland than cornland regions, though in the *Rides* he exaggerated woodlanders' visible superiority. But then, Cobbett's penchant for exaggeration is proverbial.

Dyck has also included the two rides omitted in Cobbett's consolidated volume, namely from Petersfield to Kensington, and from Kensington to East Everley,

occupying 32 pages. In his note on the text, Dyck observes that it is unclear why they were left out in 1830. However, although the latter ride was dated 21 August 1826, it contained a short allusion to incendiarism, with the observation that while the press teemed with hostile reports of its secretive instigators, nobody bothered to enquire into their motives 'for ... they must have a motive'. Quintessentially, Cobbett insisted that arsonists' motives should be explored, and the 'grounds of such motive' removed. And, from 1828, Cobbett openly warned of an impending countryside revolt, which of course came to pass with the notorious Swing quasi-insurrection of 1830. Although Dyck observes that Cobbett's motives for excluding these rides are 'not clear', the assumption surely must be that the reference to incendiarism might prove problematic, as it was the topic's coverage in the *Register* of 11 December 1830 which led directly to his prosecution for seditious libel in the following year. This reviewer is a little unhappy at Dyck's presentation – in the introductory essay – of Cobbett going down to the south-east, 'taking his place among the village workers' as Swing erupted. This refers to Cobbett's truncated lecture tour to Kent and East Sussex between 10 and 26 October 1830. Whilst there had been some previous incendiarism and a few instances of the destruction of threshing machines in Kent, the principal mobilizations occurred after Cobbett's return to London, not commencing in East Sussex until 30 October. The fact that Cobbett did return, abandoning part of his intended itinerary, was his probable response to collapsing order in Kent, possibly in hopes too of pre-empting self-anticipated arrest. If so, the ruse succeeded.

Dyck additionally provides a list of Cobbett's principal writings, and a bibliography, including his published correspondence. This edition also contains a more substantial section of notes on the text than that edited by Woodcock, and some (mostly) brief details on the many contemporaries, friends, foes, and Cobbett's promiscuous range of individuals targeted in the text. Both categories are very helpful, and not just for readers unfamiliar with the details of the historical context. However, this reviewer was surprised to be informed that the third Earl of Egremont was a Whig, rather than a Tory paternalist, and an idiosyncratic one at that, who refused, in his capacity as Lord Lieutenant of Sussex, to elevate Anglican clergymen or Whig squires to the bench. His near neighbour, the fifth Duke of Richmond, was a Tory, though Dyck's emphasis on the Duke's hostility to parliamentary reform, to the exclusion of the fact that he was in Earl Grey's Cabinet which piloted through the 1832 Reform Act, is a little odd. The Acts attributed to the influence of William Sturges Bourne MP, were in fact the two of 1818–9. If the first of these

was designed to increase the powers of 'ratepayers' over vestries and their poor-law relief policies, its provision for plural voting was deliberately rigged to increase the influence of greater at the expense of lesser ratepayers. The second statute, as Dyck observes, promoted the appointment of salaried overseers of the poor, parochial officials whose cost-cutting *raison d'être* made them unpopular with claimants, and subjected to repetitive denigration in the pages of the *Register*. Though there are no examples in the *Rides*, there are a few well-deserved and archetypal Cobbettite swipes at Sturges Bourne himself.

ROGER WELLS

Canterbury Christ Church University College

F. M. L. THOMPSON, *Gentrification and the enterprise culture. Britain, 1780-1980* (OUP, 2001). vii + 200 pp. 3 tables. £25.

Through the 1980s and 1990s F. M. L. Thompson and W. D. Rubinstein sparred with each other across the pages of learned journals and books over the question of whether businessmen bought land and, if so, how much, where and why. Both contestants appeared to have vacated the ring through exhaustion rather than any obvious conclusion to the contest, or at least that was how it looked until Thompson's Ford Lectures, originally given at Oxford in 1994. No longer content simply to trade acres with Rubinstein, Thompson came out of his corner determined to take on all-comers, among them Martin Wiener, Correlli Barnett and Margaret Thatcher. Blaming the ills of the post-1870 British economy on the transfer of resources from business into land is, in Thompson's view, unhistorical, inaccurate and a misrepresentation of what actually happened.

The book opens with a wide-ranging discussion of contemporary and later views of the transfer of wealth from business to land. Thompson calls to his aid Defoe and Adam Smith, Cobden and Bright, as well as an array of more recent commentators, to fill in the background against which he wishes to paint in his aristocrats and businessmen. Chapter Two looks at the contribution of aristocrats to enterprise, and concludes that there was no single culture. Some men were frivolous and wasteful, others were entrepreneurial and forward thinking. Nor is this surprising. Next, in Chapter Three, Thompson moves to the question of entrepreneurs as aristocrats, and returns to the long running debate conducted with Rubinstein about who bought what and whether they were gentrified as a result. He proceeds to demonstrate that a great many fortunes were at least partially invested in real estate. Thompson turns in Chapter Four to the related question of what happened to businessmen who converted their hard-earned fortunes into landed estate. After a spirited critique of Wiener's viewpoint, including

a discussion of what entrepreneurialism really was in the nineteenth century, Thompson concludes that families who transferred part or all of their fortunes into land showed 'no harmful effects on their immediate or longer-term entrepreneurial capacities'. Movement into land represented 'a badge of entrepreneurial success and symbol of the penetration of the upper class by cultivated businessmen' (p. 97). In turn that raises an additional question of what they did with their money apart from buying land. Were they like James Morrison, the draper, who left £4-£6 million and reputedly never gave away a penny in his life, or Sir Henry Tate, who founded a gallery as well as making Golden Syrup, but left rather less money at his death?

Thompson saves his strongest punches for Wiener's theory that businessmen who divorced themselves from their business to become gentrified landowners lost the will to make money, and that consequently the British economy was sacrificed on the altar of their landed ambitions. Of course businessmen enjoyed traditional gentry pursuits, notably foxhunting, golf, and horse-racing, but Thompson finds it impossible to decide whether the hunting Rothschilds and deer stalking Besses were more or less successful than the non-hunting, non-shooting William Lever and John Ellerman. In any case, some of those who were 'non-hearties' spent their time and money elsewhere, notably in art collecting where Thompson detects a pattern of investment which bore little relationship to the style of aristocrats and gentry. The real divide, he suggests, was between those who ostentatiously enjoyed themselves, and the Evangelical and dissenting businessmen who opposed all self-indulgence, but who have tended to be held up as good entrepreneurs by contrast with their self-indulgent brethren. In business terms the divide, he suggests, is mythical. Thompson also dissects Wiener's argument that whatever the cultural, religious and sporting divide within the business world, the unity of the group was created in the common educational experience of the public school which, however successful in educational and personal terms, had the unfortunate side effect of killing off the industrial spirit. Thompson argues that it was the professional classes who patronized the growing number of public schools and reformed grammar schools, and that only 20-25 per cent of business leaders had a public school education: consequently 'the capacity of the combined force of the classics and the public school ethos to kill off the industrial spirit has been much exaggerated' (p. 129). Thompson concludes that there were too few ex-public schoolboys in charge of businesses for them to influence the course of British business more generally. But of course it may just be that there were few leading businessmen because ex-public

schoolboys had taken their skills elsewhere, thus lending credence to Wiener's argument. Nevertheless, there is enough in this discussion for us to accept Thompson's conclusion that it is 'inherently absurd' to link economic decline in post-1870 Britain to the gentrification of businessmen. In his view, the real culprit has been government, and if so the public-school-educated cabinet ministers (the great majority in the twentieth century) were presumably responsible for 'dispensing, consciously or unconsciously, the anti-industrial prejudices they were supposed to have imbibed' (pp. 141-2).

The idea of a haemorrhage of talent from productive into unproductive employment, and with it the long term decline of British business, does not seem to Thompson to make sense. This should come as a great relief to any successful modern businessman concerned that the purchase of a country mansion will mean the end of moneymaking for him, and the certain collapse of his public-school educated son into indolence and despair. The British economy did not founder on the rocks of business-gentrification; on the other hand, the new super-rich come from the music world – Thompson cites Andrew Lloyd Webber and Paul McCartney – and football, so perhaps the entertainment industry and the Premiership should watch their backs!

J. V. BECKETT
University of Nottingham

RICHARD WILSON and ALAN MACKLEY, *Creating paradise. The building of the English country house, 1660-1880* (Hambledon and London, 2000). xviii + 428 pp. 21 tables; 134 illus; 5 figs. £25.

Richard Wilson and Alan Mackley's detailed study of the social and economic forces surrounding the building of the English country house between 1660 and 1880 provides a rich feast for historians of the countryside and the landed elite. The task they set themselves is vast and complex. The book covers entirely new houses, but also rebuildings, and deals with both extant houses and many long since demolished. It approaches the task from two directions: through a series of case studies of individual houses and areas with well-recorded histories, and a sample of all country house building in six geographically-dispersed English counties. After setting out the problems and methodologies, it covers the cultural and intellectual drives behind house building, highlighting both the Grand Tour and English country house visiting as vital stimuli to those who made the decision to build or rebuild and the designs they chose. Successive chapters then cover the changing relationship between the landowner and an embryonic architectural profession, and the general costs and control mechanisms of the construction process.

In an important chapter about the pattern of building, the authors show that there were three main periods of building activity nationally; from the later seventeenth century to 1730, from 1770 to 1800 and from 1850 to 1880. However regional patterns varied enormously. Northamptonshire saw the rebuilding of country seats at only one third of Suffolk's rate. Norfolk and Gloucestershire had a high rate of build in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, while Suffolk and Yorkshire were much more active in the later eighteenth century. Patterns varied also according to the size of landed estate, with owners of smaller and medium sized estates most active in the mid-nineteenth century. Most importantly, it was a rare thing for a landed family to build a house. Only one in ten heads of family did so, and on average only one house was started every year of the period in the six sample counties. In any given county there could be many successive years without a single new project being started. Most decisions to build were linked to individual family circumstances.

A chapter on the cost of the English country house follows, showing that houses invariably cost more than estimates and contracts allowed for, and were sometimes hugely in excess. Houses were always insured for far less than their cost, and the balance of expenditure between the house shell (case) and fittings and decorations was roughly half and half. The cost of building rose over the period, particularly in the eighteenth century, but the rise was much greater for the largest houses than for more modest gentry seats. On the basis of extrapolation from their sample, the authors estimate that national country house building and rebuilding during the period 1770-1800 absorbed £3.8m, as compared with Watt's estimate of £2.5m invested in cotton mills in 1797, and the estimated £2.15m cost of the first waves of canal building between 1755 and 1780. Gentry building works were an important, if random, local source of employment, with significant impact on trade nationally. The penultimate chapter uses a series of case studies from elite, middling, and smaller landowners to show that country house builders paid for their works in widely different ways. Building times varied enormously. The Earl of Carlisle at Castle Howard paid for his vast design from income over forty years of building, and his mausoleum was not completed until seven years after his death. Holkham was also built over a long period, largely from an increasing estate income. By contrast the Thelluson house near Doncaster was completed in two years, and fitted out in a further two in the 1840s. Most house builders either used windfall money from a dowry or inheritance, or judicious sales of land to finance their expenditure in addition to some part of estate income. Few were ruined by the process. In concluding, the authors point out how

important dynastic vision was in carrying through the building of an impressive country seat, and what a poor investment in economic terms it always was.

This book significantly deepens our knowledge of country house building and revises existing ideas about the timing and dynastic processes involved. Additional light on patterns of building might have emerged from a comparison with more general indicators of the national building cycle, for instance those derived from the early land registry. The problems of gentry absence from the countryside and its relationship to building tends to be looked at as a late eighteenth-century phenomenon. However Bishop Wake's visitation returns for another six county sample show it was widespread c. 1710 – and even reports one gentry house being built which local people never expected to see occupied. The immense richness of the case studies means that inevitably they are occasionally over-compressed and a little breathless. Nevertheless, this important book is enjoyable to read, delightfully illustrated and produced, and combines substantial and innovative scholarship with a very reasonable purchase price.

JOHN BROAD
University of North London

J. R. WORDIE (ed.), *Agriculture and politics in England, 1815–1939* (Macmillan, 2000). vii + 260 pp. £45.

This collection of essays has as its organizing principle the gradual decline of the landed interest in the years after 1815. However, the range of subject matter is much wider than this might imply and the themes of the individual essays do not always fit easily with the overall plan. After an introduction by the editor, the book begins with two essays on the corn laws. Ross Wordie looks critically at just how significant they were in terms of the agricultural economy of early nineteenth century, and concludes that contemporaries may have been misled in their impressions of who suffered most from the retention of the duties after 1815. Michael J. Turner writes on Thomas Perronet Thompson, an independent radical thinker whose active years as a repealer in the mid-1830s helped to lay the foundation of the Anti-Corn Law League. Subsequent essays carry the book into other territory. Jeremy Burchardt looks at attempts to legislate for allotment provision between the Swing riots and the 1870s. He concludes that the contribution of legislation was negligible, but that this was because landowners considered allotment provision to be a moral duty rather than a legislative necessity. Presumably it could equally be argued (although Burchardt does not think so) that a landowning parliament simply did not want to be saddled with legislation which might tie its collective hands. David Martin examines the extent to which the

landed interest gradually conceded ground during the nineteenth century, thereby helping to ensure its survival into the twentieth century.

The last three essays tackle issues in the post-1880 period. Ewen Green writes interestingly on how and why the Conservatives gradually abandoned the farmers in the years between 1880 and the First World War. Jonathan Brown shows how the National Farmers Union moved in the inter-war period from being a campaigning group looking to gain influence over government policy, to become an ally of the Ministry of Agriculture. Indeed, in 1938 Major Reginald Dorman-Smith, a recent President of the NFU, was appointed Minister of Agriculture. Finally, Clare Griffiths contributes a fascinating essay on visions of agriculture put forward by socialists in the inter-war period. She argues that most were 'remarkably conservative', with strong emphasis being placed on maintaining medium-sized farms and (much against expectation) no obvious desire to increase Whitehall interference.

Each of the essays is well worth reading, and I was particularly impressed by the contributions of Green and Griffiths, but the book has clearly had a chequered history. Originally planned as an all-Reading production, two of the contributors left the University before it was finished, one contributor had to be recruited from elsewhere, and one of Reading's leading agricultural historians proved to be 'too deeply committed to other ventures' to write his promised paper. But where the personnel come from is perhaps less important than the way the book does, or does not, work. In the end, despite Wordie's valiant effort in the introduction to pull the various themes together, this remains a book of loosely related essays rather than a series of clearly focused arguments addressing a particular issue within agricultural history.

J. V. BECKETT
University of Nottingham

ROGER J. P. KAIN and RICHARD R. OLIVER, *Historic parishes of England and Wales. An electronic map of boundaries before 1850 with a gazetteer and metadata* (History Data Service, UK Data Archive, University of Essex, 2001). 243 pp. £12.95.

Even if as agricultural historians we do not always have reason to map our data, I wonder if there are many of us who could or should map our data, or in fact have mapped them. And for how many has the map unit been the parish whether in a county study, regional study, or sub-county or sub regional study? My earliest work involved the distribution and density of parliamentary enclosure in Buckinghamshire, and thirty-some years ago just about the only user-friendly, off-the-shelf base

map available to me was one provided by the local authority in their planning department. If only electronic means had been available, if only digitization has been invented, if only I was thirty years younger and starting all again! But it is never too late, and behind the scenes in a number of places over the last several years enormous strides have been made to provide base maps that historians can use because they reflect the basic areal unit that we often employ. This is precisely what Kain and Oliver have provided. The boundaries now published roughly equate to 1851 census parishes and are derived from various sources, but principally the tithe maps and pre-Ordnance Survey large scale maps that are available. Apparently the tithe and parliamentary enclosure maps alone cover about 85 per cent of the ancient parishes of England and Wales. Technically the task accomplished has been enormous, not least in solving scaling and planimetric surveying differences between different maps. The bottom line is that employing the OS 1:63,360 New Series map sheet as the base, the authors have produced an electronic version of pre-1850 parish boundaries set within their geographic as distinct from registration counties, but including also townships and a variety of other local administrative areas. In total it covers over 18,000 places in England and Wales. A short review cannot do justice to the technical input to this database, but the substance of this particular book is a short introduction to the projects that culminated in the final database, and an abbreviated but full hard-copy index of the places on the electronic map. Instructions for acquiring the CD-ROMs of the maps can be found at hds.essex.ac.uk. Unfortunately, the CD-ROMs were not part of the review package and therefore cannot be evaluated here.

MICHAEL TURNER
University of Hull

CHRISTINE HALLAS, *In sickness and health. Askrigg Equitable, Benevolent, and Friendly Society, 1809–2000* (York: Sessions, 2000). xi + 103 pp. Illus. £6.50

When I was a young boy I was sometimes trusted to walk a couple of miles to pay my father's subscription to The Ancient Order of Loyal Shepherds. It always puzzled me why a coal miner should belong to an organization with such a strange name. It seemed archaic, but in fact both the national organizations and the numerous local friendly societies continued to play an important role long after Lloyd George introduced old-age pensions and health insurance and even after the creation of the National Health Service. One of the strengths of Christine Hallas's interesting account of the Askrigg Society is that it portrays a local institution that still flourishes and which plays an important role in the local community. The Society currently has 118 ordinary members and

67 honorary ones. The foundation of friendly societies in the eighteenth century, especially during the 1790s, and their expansion in the nineteenth century has attracted a lot of recent work, and rightly so, for by the end of the nineteenth century the combined membership stood at about 4 million. The organization of such societies, from the level of subscription to the amount of benefit payable at times of sickness and upon death, is generally well known.

The Askrigg Society was an efficiently-run organization that played an important part in sustaining its members during a period of rising population, followed by unemployment and considerable out-migration. In the 1890s the local vicar claimed that, since its inception, the Society had spent over £10,000 on benefits and not one of its members had ever had to claim poor relief (though Dr Hallas shows that his audience knew of at least one example to the contrary). But the Askrigg Society played a much wider role than the relief of poverty. Dr Hallas demonstrates that from the beginning the occupational profile of its membership has virtually mirrored that of the upper Wensleydale community. Labourers, servants and unskilled workers amounted to 37.4 per cent of new members in the second half of the nineteenth century, but the majority were farmers and skilled workers and a few were professionals. The reason for this wide membership becomes clear when we turn to the description of social activities. The Society met in the club room at the Kings Arms at Askrigg, where the landlord was a honorary member. In the early days the 'spending allowance' for alcohol at the quarterly meetings was seven shillings; as beer cost only a few pence per pint this was a generous allowance for the 40 or so attenders. The annual feast days rivalled the Whitsuntide Sunday school processions of the north of England as great communal events. Old photographs from other small towns and villages show that Askrigg was not alone in having a grand parade behind the Society's banner, led by the local band. The special church service was not to everyone's taste, for the Society frequently fined members 2s. 6d. for missing the sermon, but the dinner, afternoon sports and evening entertainment (including monologues, we are informed) marked these occasions, together with trips to the seaside, as the great events of the year. The role of the Society as a focus for local social life explains its continued popularity and the willingness of so many honorary members to pay their subscriptions.

DAVID HEY
University of Sheffield

PHILIP CONFORD, *The origins of the organic movement* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2001). 287 pp. £14.99

This will undoubtedly become the key work of reference for those wanting to discover more as to the origins of the organic movement. As the author explains, organic farming was not so much about rejection, as about the positive acceptance of what he calls 'the natural order and the intention to work with its laws'. Everything hinged on obeying 'the Rule of Return', whereby the fertility of the soil must be maintained by encouraging the presence of humus. Cultivation was designed to establish a virtuous circle. Humus created healthy crops, whose properly-composted remains replenished and enriched the soil content.

Although farming had always been organic, its self-conscious advocacy was not required until the mid-nineteenth century, and the promotion and industrial production of artificial fertilizers. Only then was there conscious need to warn of how monoculture, through dependence on such aids as chemical fertilizer, would lead to soil exhaustion and increased vulnerability to crop pests and diseases. Far from such warnings being heeded, an alliance of commerce, industry and government had provided, by the mid-twentieth century, both the will and capacity to transform the countryside. Conford traces how the most important strands of the organic school were brought together in a coherent philosophy by the 1920s. That school applauded the protection given to farmers from the vagaries of free trade, under the Agriculture Acts of 1947. It was, however, deeply unhappy as to the underlying assumption that efficiency was to be measured by output per man, as further encouraging a mechanistic view of the soil as an inert material, which could be goaded by chemical whips and spurs into ever-increasing productivity. As Conford perceives it, such calculations on the part of 'progressive agriculturalists' were the compelling force behind large-scale mechanization. My own memories of the Hampshire Downs in the early 1950s are of the pressures exerted by the labour force, and of the profits being made by farmers, that enabled them to invest in the combine harvester, corn pits, driers and silos. Whilst 'armchair' organicists might regret the brutal overturning of what they are pleased to see as 'a natural order', those I worked with were saddened that such qualitative improvements to their working lives had not come early enough to prevent the crippling injuries to their backs and bodies generally.

As President of the Soil Association, Jonathan Dimbleby writes, in a foreword, of how Philip Conford's 'exercise in historical retrieval' will provide a better understanding of the origins of what has become one of the most compelling campaigns – a cause whose time

has finally appeared. There are accounts of Sir Albert Howard and the other servants of imperialism, who emphasized the relevance of 'traditional native culture' to industrial nations. A chapter highlights the contribution of Rudolf Steiner's biodynamic farming, where 'homeopathic doses of cow-horn based sprays' were claimed to enhance fertility. Chapters outline the organic movement in America, the remedies advocated by such fascist polemicists as the Earl of Portsmouth for tackling the perceived decline in rural life, and such ventures as Vitamin Cafes, the first health food restaurants. As an extension to his earlier paper in this *Review* (46 [1998], pp. 197–210), Conford illustrates how such advocacy as that of Philip Mairet and the *New English Weekly* was about much more than agriculture. It became a critique of the underlying assumptions and values of an industrial society and of the culture of secular modernity. It urged a re-think of Western civilization's relationship with the natural world, within a Christian context.

Philip Conford is anxious to emphasize both the scientific credentials of the organic movement in the sense of providing 'a coherent ecological philosophy', and the linkages between its earliest activities and the outcry prompted by the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent spring* in 1963. As he writes, it would be completely wrong to conclude organicists were anti-science. From their perspective, it was the proponents of industrialized farmers who were not proper scientists, since they failed to see the ecological connections of natural phenomena. The task of 'true' science was to increase understanding of the laws which God had imposed on nature, and to learn to work with them for optimum productivity. Given such a professed outlook, it is surprising that there was so little contact between such pioneers of the concept of 'sustainability' and those, say, engaged in the science of ecology and nature conservation. Was it a case of deafness on the part of the world at large? More specifically, was there such competition between the different lobbies struggling for the ear of government and the public that each chose to ignore the message of the others, even where there was common cause to be made? Or did the muted force of the organic movement simply arise from its own inherent shortcomings?

Philip Conford recognizes that his wide-ranging and highly readable account provides no more than a much needed stimulus to further exploration of the organic movement, within the context of the presumptions and fortunes of other relevant interest-groups. As further anecdotal recollection, I was reminded of an incident that occurred shortly before the British publication of *Silent spring*. Lady Eve Balfour, the leading figure in the

Soil Association, pressed Kenneth Mellanby, the director of the Nature Conservancy's Monks Wood Experimental Station, to commend and publicize the Association's organic compost. It would have been quite a coup, given Mellanby's career in medical and agricultural research, founder principal of University College, Ibadan, Nigeria, and now head of the research station pioneering UK research on the side-effects of pesticides on wildlife. Out of curiosity, a chemist at Monks Wood analyzed some of the bags of compost left by Lady Balfour in Mellanby's office. They were found to consist of dried sewage-sludge. The concentration of lead and other 'nasties' was 'quite dangerous'. Any close association with the 'muck and magic' school would have added to the Conservancy's difficulties of convincing agricultural scientists of the credibility of its own scientific discoveries as to the environmental impacts of 'the chemical revolution' taking place on Britain's farms. Neither the Nature Conservancy nor the conservation movement generally could have any truck with 'muck and deceit'.

JOHN SHEAIL

Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Monks Wood

JOHN MARTIN, *The development of modern agriculture. British farming since 1931* (Macmillan, 2000). xvii + 236 pp. 33 tables; 2 figs. £47.50.

The historian who ventures to survey the agriculture of the second half of the twentieth century at present is perhaps brave or foolhardy (and the same might be said of the one who reviews the result). Assessment of the period is at an early stage. Few books have been written. There is B. A. Holderness, *British agriculture since 1945* (1985), while Michael Tracy's study of government and agriculture in western Europe takes the story up to the late 1980s. Now John Martin dons the garb of the intrepid pioneer.

He at once strikes out on his own path. Where many would confine themselves to the years since the Second World War, John Martin begins his survey in 1931. The changes in government policy towards agriculture following the abandonment of free trade make this, he believes, the real turning point and the place at which we must start if we are to understand modern British agriculture. In tones not dissimilar from those of the historians in the 1960s and 1970s who started to look again at the Great Depression of the late nineteenth century, he argues for a reassessment of the 1930s. The portrayal of the decade as one of general agricultural depression does not stand up to closer scrutiny, he concludes.

The 1930s heralded an interventionist system of state assistance and protection (p. 23). From the Wheat Act and marketing boards through to the Common Agricultural

Policy and the epidemics of BSE and foot and mouth, there is little in which the state has not been involved. The history of modern agriculture, therefore, must have the role of the state as a principal theme. It is not a simple story. There is much continuity, for example in the Ministry's broadly production-centred approach. But some of the elements of continuity are more apparent than real. Governments have continually talked of promoting an efficient agricultural industry, while at the same time trying to pursue other social, economic and fiscal ends that have not always been compatible. Alongside this there have been major shifts in public – and political – attitudes and perceptions about farming and farmers. In the 1940s a grateful nation thought farming was good, a vital part of the economic and social fabric. Fifty years later, there is downright hostility to farmers from a large part of the urban-dominated political elite.

All of this is covered with admirable conciseness. Therein, however, lie the main problems with the book. At the beginning there are rather self-conscious claims to be challenging received views. At the end of it all, though, one is not quite sure just how much ground has been broken. We have been asked to reassess the 1930s. In scrutinizing the food production campaign of the Second World War John Martin gets into his stride, and finds wanting the line passed down to us from the official histories. Thereafter, however, he settles down to a less ambitious account, treading a path through the complexities of public policy, the restructuring of the agricultural industry, scientific and technological change, the emergence of the concerns for landscape and the environment. It is a good clear account, marred at times, unfortunately, by many failings in copy editing, but with so many of the issues having to remain undeveloped, becoming at times rather simplistic.

There is a price to be paid for pioneering, then. We have here an introduction to a complex subject, a stalking horse almost, while there will be working and reworking for years to come. Its conciseness makes this book valuable for students. Such a pity, then, that it is priced beyond their pockets. Maybe there will be a paperback.

JONATHAN BROWN
University of Reading

LAWRENCE ALDERSON, *Rare breeds* (Shire, fourth edition, 2001). 40 pp. £4.50; PETER and JANE HANSELL, *Dovecotes* (Shire, second edition, 2001). 40 pp. £4.50; ANDREW HEATON, *Duck decoys* (Shire, 2001). 40 pp. £4.50.

With this trio of volumes, Shire Books remain on the top of their form in producing beautifully-illustrated and elegantly-produced handbooks dealing with rural

artefacts and activities which are often accorded little more than a footnote elsewhere. Lawrence Alderson, whose work on genetic conservation will be well-known to readers of this *Review* and whose book *The chance to survive* is the standard work in the field, is himself a practical farmer and offers here what is essentially a list and brief description of endangered breeds of farm livestock in Britain. Alderson tells the usual story of the decline of native breeds, but gives little genetic rationale for their conservation – which may be obvious to agriculturalists and geneticists, but less so to the general public who tend to buy these books at country fairs, agricultural shows and other bucolic extravaganzas. Perhaps within the forty page limit he thought it more important to fill his space with those well-groomed images of rare (and not so rare) livestock breeds whose familiar faces peer beguilingly from each page.

The descendants of *Columba livia* who flock Trafalgar Square and live in noisome disharmony in many of the cities of Europe are among the most quarrelsome and disagreeable of birds. Compared to the noble wood-pigeon, a fine sporting bird and impossible to domesticate, the urban pigeon is a poor creature; lascivious, sly and contemptible. Yet its antecedents, if carefully managed, offered an important 'living larder' from medieval times until the early nineteenth century, besides providing valuable dung, pillow feathers and other useful by-products. Management of pigeons revolved around the dovecote, to which Peter and Jean Hansell lovingly and enthusiastically devote their attention in this second Shire volume. Whether built of rubblestone, brick, flint, half-timbering, mudstone or weatherboarding, dovecotes and pigeon lofts are invariably charming and engaging structures, reflecting local building techniques and the glorious English vernacular tradition. They are, in a sense, the very exemplars of the richness of regional variety. Always striving for visual effect, dovecotes are of beehive construction, circular, square, rectangular or, by the eighteenth century, hexagonal or octagonal with classical features, and have hipped roofs, gables, pinnacles and finials with all manner of decorative embellishments. With their interiors fitted out with up to two thousand nesting boxes of one sort or another, dovecotes often complemented the design of stables, outhouses and farm buildings and, in many cases, in the form of classical temples with ornate cupolas or castellated neo-gothic follies, were integral parts of the composition of a parkland landscape. Besides discussing the architectural qualities of surviving (and reconstructed) dovecotes, the Hansells consider both the husbandry and economic significance of the structures and provide a valuable gazetteer of locations. Any man who has kept an allotment in proximity to a pigeon-fancying neighbour will

understand the resentment felt by farmers and others towards the seigniorial fortunates whom feudal privilege allowed to own a dovecote. Those who feasted on pigeon, however, remained largely unconcerned until 1800 when a tax was proposed to limit the numbers of dovecotes. But by this time there was little point in closing the stable door; the horse had long bolted and pigeon keeping for the table was going into decline.

Although pigeons make splendid eating, they are highly indigestible and I recall my grandmother's rather gloomy observation that daily consumption of pigeon could lead to death within a month. Duck, while rather on the fatty side, is at least reasonably digestible and as such was a valuable contribution to diet in the past as it is today. People had eaten duck in prehistory and by medieval times wildfowling had become a well-practised craft with ducks being attracted by feeding and by the use of a wide range of traps of varying descriptions. By the sixteenth century, however, as Andrew Heaton tells us in this brand new Shire book, a further degree of sophistication was brought to the quest for the duck. This was in the form of the duck decoy, a device originating in Holland, the word itself deriving from a conflation of *eenden* (ducks) and *kooi* (cage). From points of origin in south Lincolnshire and Essex the duck decoy spread throughout England. Essentially the decoy comprised a pond or lake from which several curving ditches, tapered along their lengths, left the pond to be terminated by detachable tunnels in which the birds were caught. Each ditch (or 'pipe') was covered with a hooped sisal or hemp net. Readers of this *Review* who have engaged in the wholly felicitous pleasure of shooting duck will know that these rather stupid and inquisitive birds will respond to a predator at the water's edge by swimming towards it, yet remaining at what they judge to be a safe distance. This particular foible was exploited in the management of the decoy. Thus a series of reed screens and other devices were located alongside each 'pipe' and matters arranged so that a dog was run in and out of the screens to be followed by the unfortunate ducks which worked their way into the final tunnel to have their necks wrung by the decoyman. Heaton describes the origins and operation of the decoys in some detail, considers their role in the economy of the landed estate, reflects upon the conservation value of some of the remaining decoys, and explains the influence of land drainage and the development of the breech-loading shotgun on the decline of the decoy. Acknowledging the contribution of Sir Ralph Payne Gallwey's, *The book of duck decoys, their construction, management and history* (1886), Heaton carries the subject forward in this most welcome addition to the Shire series. The standard decoy dog, the *kooikerhondje* is probably familiar to Colonel Hancock, author of *Old*

working dogs, although most of my readers will probably not have come across the breed, yet still be capable of pronouncing its name! According to Heaton (and I quite believe him) ducks could be fooled by any fox-like dog, or even a stuffed fox attached to a long pole and operated by an active small boy. Another alternative was to secure any old dog and deck him out with a fox-skin coat and brush. Now that I would really like to have seen!

R. J. MOORE-COLYER
University of Wales, Aberystwyth

Elsewhere and General

International Medieval Bibliography, 400–1500, Volume 33 Part 1, January–June 1999 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000). xlviii + 476 pp. Current annual subscription for two issues €314 (hbk); €289 (pbk). Also available on CD-ROM and online. Further information from www.brepols.net.

This volume of the *International Medieval Bibliography* for the period January–June, 1999 contains 57 titles under the heading 'Daily Life', 29 under 'Demography', 47 under 'Economics – Rural', and 55 under 'Local History'. In many cases there are brief notes on what each piece is about. All the titles so classified could alternatively be found in the General Index or the Author Index, and there are numerous cross-references between sections. This is accordingly, as usual, a very user-friendly bibliographical aid. The index entry under 'Agriculture' gives 43 items, ranging in time and space from Pictish horses in Scotland to thirteenth-century Egyptian peasants. The volume could save tracts of time in searching recent literature. Its accuracy is not flawless; among authors I know personally I find 'LOMAS, Thomas' instead of 'LOMAS, Richard' (no. 1461 and index), 'RICKMOND, Colin' instead of 'RICHMOND, Colin' (no. 4694 and index), 'WARD, Jennife' instead of 'WARD, Jennifer' (no. 4971 and index). However, a scattering of such errors is to be expected in a work with this quantity of detailed bibliographical information, and the general level of reliability is high. Given that the volume covers only six months, its usefulness is inevitably enhanced by its being part of an ongoing series. In a single volume of this sort there will not be a lot to find on any given research topic. Nevertheless the size of the volume is impressive. Not all the titles listed in the volume were published within the six month period on the book's title page, but 501 titles represents a formidable amount of new learning.

RICHARD BRITNELL
University of Durham

S. R. EPSTEIN (ed.), *Town and country in Europe, 1300–1800* (CUP, 2001). xi + 343 pp. 13 tables; 17 figs. £45.

This volume of fourteen essays by fifteen different authors surveys the relations between town and country in eleven different European countries or kingdoms between 1300 and 1800. It is an ambitious enterprise in less than 350 pages, but all writers help by summing up their conclusions, and the editor at the outset picks out the common themes and the major lessons. The chronological span of the individual essays varies: that for Sweden covers 1450–1650, the Polish commonwealth, 1350–1650, Germany, surprisingly, only 1350–1600 (did an author fall by the wayside?), Castile, 1400–1650, France, 1550–1750, but Holland and England are allowed two essays each (England by James Galloway and Paul Glennie), and Italy is divided between north and centre and the kingdom of Naples. The Austrian and Czech lands are covered in one essay by two historians moving back and forth over a vast and highly differentiated territory – a heroic effort, though it leaves the reader bewildered. Switzerland is a welcome inclusion by Martin Körner; Scandinavia is represented by Robert Sandberg writing on Sweden only; Norway and Denmark are omitted.

The editor at the outset surveys current trends of argument when summarizing town/country relationships. It is usual these days to treat towns as the dynamic movers, creating a demand that stimulated the agricultural population to respond and encouraged their specialization. He is fully aware of the pre-existing pattern of political power which established, or held back, the emergence of towns between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. It allowed very different regional and national strategies after 1500 when town and country contacts tightened, commercial markets for food expanded, and industries spread into the countryside; latent tensions hardened, and conflicts of interest emerged ever more clearly. But the essays show how many different solutions were found, and no actual wars broke out between the parties. The editor surveys the recurring themes, though these are expressed at an oppressively high level of conceptual generalization. Some of the essayists, constrained by their allotted space, write in a similar vein.

Legal and political rights, limiting the economic freedom of towns to shape their relations with the country, feature prominently in all essays. But for the rest, agricultural historians will find the strong urban viewpoint disconcerting; it takes it for granted that farmers will respond to the stimulus of the towns, but will not show initiatives of their own. Little attention is paid to the social structure in the rural areas, where forceful, as opposed to negligent or absentee, lords could make all the difference to the energy and opportunism of farmers. A different flavour suffuses the essay by Marjolein 'T Hart, however,

writing on the Dutch republic and enlivening her text with cogent examples. She also accommodates more than one rise and decline in the economic ventures of town and country, checking the assumption of continuity in the main drift of events between 1500 and 1800; for example, at one time migrants moved into towns, at another they saw a better chance in the country. Körner writing on Switzerland also reminds us of the existence of 'peasant republics' which enjoyed a freedom not found in feudal regions. Yet the final picture is an unbalanced view of town/country relations that needs to be set alongside that presented by in Tom Scott (ed.), *The peasants of Europe* (1998). That showed the shrewd perceptions of opportunity seized by canny farmers: they embarked on the growing of diversified foods (especially vegetables and fruits), and they adopted with alacrity the production of more wool, flax and hemp, whereby former peasant cloths (new draperies) turned into an extraordinary variety of fashion goods for townfolk. The achievements of townsmen were matched by the ingenuity of countrymen. Tom Scott's book, in fact, is so interlocked with this one, it should have prompted much more curiosity about the farmers' exploitation of economic circumstances affecting both town and country. As it is, the background is barely sketched in beyond vague references to an economic depression in the seventeenth century and reviving populations after 1750, though it was that 'depression' which greatly diversified both economies.

A short review cannot do justice to the many comparative insights offered by this volume. The contrasts between, say, English and Polish, or Swedish and Italian experience prompt deep reflection on the relative roles of taxation, feudal authority, urban elites, geographical situation, and the culture of peasantries in determining town/country relations. A multitude of factors operated simultaneously to different ends. The thought also occurs that historians may shift their angle of vision somewhat as we ourselves observe a changing relation in the quality of life between town and country, and perhaps come to see the past in a different light.

JOAN THIRSK
Hadlow, Kent

BAS J. P. VAN BAVEL and ERIC THOEN (eds), *Land productivity and agro-systems in the North Sea area (middle ages to twentieth century). Elements for comparison* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999). (CORN Series 2). 382 pp. 109 tables; 58 figs. €63.

The CORN project (Comparative Rural History of the North Sea Area) is funded by the Flanders' Science Foundation, co-ordinated by Eric Thoen, and involves leading agricultural historians in Britain and the continent. The volume under review is the first of seven

scheduled to appear. It is an appropriate beginning, for it follows a trail blazed by another leading agricultural historian in the Low Countries, Slicher van Bath, who pioneered the comparative study of agricultural productivity. Van Bath collected information on the yield per seed sown across Europe from the middle ages to the nineteenth century. He concluded that farmers operated at a uniform, low level of efficiency in all the countries he studied. There was little improvement on most of the continent before 1800, but England and the Low Countries experienced agricultural revolutions that propelled them to a much higher level of efficiency by 1800.

How well has Van Bath's interpretation stood the test of time? Van Zanden raises this important question in the final essay of the volume. The greatest contribution of the collection are the essays, mainly in Part I, by Dejongh and Thoen on Flanders, Van Bavel on the Netherlands, Béaur on France, Overton and Campbell on England, and Priester on Zeeland that bear on Van Bath's thesis. These pieces critically discuss published local studies on the history of yields as well as presenting some new evidence. What emerges is a mixed picture of productivity performance in the high middle ages with some places reaping only low yields (10 hectolitres per hectare for wheat) and a considerable number realizing high yields (20 hl/ha). Yields slumped in many of the high yielding areas after the Black Death. Increases towards 20 hl/ha were widespread in southern England, north-eastern France, and the Low Countries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

A fascinating feature of the volume is the way different authors try to explain the fall in yields in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and their subsequent rebound. Was it population decline leading to less intensive cultivation? Or was it changes in urbanization that affected demand? Or perhaps it is all a problem with the data? Much work is needed to sort out these possibilities.

Several papers carry the productivity story into the twentieth century. Collins's study of power sources and intensity in English farming is most intriguing.

The second part of the volume deals with 'agricultural systems'. This proves to be a slippery concept as the term is used differently by different writers. Bieleman urges the historian to think of agriculture as a set of interacting natural and social systems. The practical import of this is that crop choice is determined by prices – and thus distance from markets – as well as by soil type. Jessenne presents an intriguing map of agro-systems in northern France in the period 1750–1850. These systems reflect property distribution rather than prices. Thoen and Vanhauette explore the system of 'Flemish husbandry' with a comparative study of two villages in the mid-nineteenth century. They differ in land tenure – leasehold

was much more extensive in Meigem than in Dessel – and in access to market. While these differences explain some differences in farming, the major factor influencing cultivation in both was high population. But how could high population have these effects in a village where land was leased (not owned) and in places near urban labour markets where off-farm employment was available? Afton examines farming methods in the Hampshire downs in the nineteenth century. While the high prices of the Napoleonic Wars play a role in explaining technical change, it is the land itself that provides the unity for her story. Defining the farming system is at the discretion of the historian.

The final section of the volume contains two papers that take a more general view. Chevet takes up the question of aggregating output and argues that the nutrients withdrawn from the soil by the growing plants are a better metric than prices or calories. He aggregates French yield data with estimates of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, and calcium abstraction. The utility of this approach is seen in the maps he constructs of agricultural regions (defined in yet a different way!) in the Netherlands, Belgium, and north-eastern France.

In the final essay, Van Zanden asks how the research of the last thirty years affects Van Bath's interpretation of European agriculture. In Van Zanden's view, Van Bath is vindicated. A more sceptical conclusion, however, would emphasize the growing list of places reaping high yields before the Black Death. These high yields call Van Bath's framework into question.

ROBERT C. ALLEN
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ISABELLE DEVOS AND LIAM KENNEDY (eds), *Marriage and the rural economy: Western Europe since 1400* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999) (CORN Series 3). 292 pp. 51 tables; 68 figs. €55.

In 1965 the British demographer John Hajnal published a study entitled 'European marriage patterns in perspective' in a collection of now mostly forgotten essays edited by D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley, *Population in history*. Hajnal's study, according to Theo Engelen, one contributor to the present volume, 'may well be the most cited article in the historical demographic and family literature' (p. 273). He observed that a unique pattern of marriage had existed before 1940 in western Europe, west of an imaginary line drawn between Trieste and St Petersburg, characterized by a late age at marriage for both men and women, and a high proportion of persons who never married. He linked the pattern to the nuclear family system which made it necessary for a man to postpone marriage until he had secured independent

means of livelihood sufficient to support a family. This volume is devoted to an examination of the socio-economic and cultural background of what it calls familiarly 'the WEMP' (for Western European Marriage Pattern) in the North Sea area, which, judging from the contributions, includes the British Isles, the Low Countries, Scandinavia and Germany, but not France. Although one frequently asked question is when the pattern originated, the papers in this collection address mostly its evolution since the eighteenth century.

The debate centres on whether new patterns of employment, economic development, and the rise in standards of living affected the timing and intensity of marriage. There has been a great deal of speculation that the development of proto-industrialization (cottage industry using female labour in the production of textiles) and later the growth of employment resulting from the industrial revolution allowed earlier and more universal marriage among the lower classes. The welcome contribution of the papers in this volume is to go beyond the very broad generalization based on aggregate rates, to the testing of hypotheses in a series of local contexts, using multivariate techniques with individual data. In general, nuptiality seems to respond only very sluggishly to economic incentives, and age at first marriage is not the only variable involved, although it is the easiest to compute. The evidence is weak on the proportions ever marrying; it is almost completely absent on marriage dissolution and remarriage.

In case after case there is surprisingly little direct relationship between the growth of employment and the frequency of marriage. The explanations vary; many factors influenced the contracting of unions in sometimes conflicting directions during the modern era, operating differently by social class, and in urban and rural areas. In rural Scotland, according to Michael Anderson, landlords controlled employment and housing, and there was no latitude for earlier marriage. In late eighteenth-century England, according to Richard Smith, the growth of cottage industry seemed to have only compensated for women's loss of opportunities in animal husbandry, as grain production gained in importance. Other factors were the shift from living-in servants to day labourers as the dominant forms of wage labour, the substitutions that were occurring between male and cheaper female labour in textile production, poor relief and the institutional obstacles that existed in some parts of Europe to the marriage of paupers. Local studies often fail to control for the fact that when it is difficult to marry in a particular location, migration is an alternative, and eventually marriage may take place elsewhere. The importance of migration in providing marriage opportunities for young women from the countryside is clearly

illustrated by the work of George Alter on Verviers, a textile city in Belgium. Finally, higher incomes may resolve themselves in opportunities of marriage, but also in higher consumption and standard of living, so that the very prerequisites of marriage may have increased in step with economic growth.

The WEMP disappeared in the second half of the twentieth century, probably for cultural more than economic reasons. By the 1960s, the restraints to marriage had been lifted in all countries, and the age at marriage in European countries had largely converged to historical lows. In the 1970s, though, the story took a new turn in the direction of increased cohabitation, either prior to marriage, or instead of marriage. This part of the story is only briefly alluded to in the book.

A note of criticism on which to end: the book lacks a subject index.

ETIENNE VAN DE WALLE

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ROMAN GARRABOU, JORDI PLANAS and ENRIC SAGUER, *Un capitalisme impossible? La gestió de la gran propietat agrària a la Catalunya contemporània* (Universitat de Vic, Eumo Editorial, 2001). 271 pp. 34 tables; 9 graphs; 1 map. €20.

How well does the management of large estates in contemporary Catalonia fit into an Adam Smith/Arthur Young type model which equates modern agricultural development with entrepreneurial initiative, technological change and the substitution of capital for labour? This is the intriguing question posed by Ramon Garrabou, Jordi Planas and Enric Saguer in their challenging work which combines micro-history with the intricacies of Marxist theory. In particular, they are interested in the Leninist model of the so-called American path to economic development (an alternative to the better known English or Prussian variants), centred initially around the activities of small independent proprietors who were eventually to be differentiated into either large capitalists or wage labourers. This jointly-authored volume is the product of more than two decades of archival research and lively intellectual debate whose findings first appeared a series of conferences as well as in such journals as the *Revista de Historia Económica*, *Recerques* and *Noticiario de Historia Agraria*, mostly in the 1990s.

The new book is based on primary research in the archives of eight families – Sentmenat, Coll, Nuix, Bru, Negre, Maspons, Riba and Güell – whose estates were to be found in what are described as representative parts of the Principality, viz. Segarra, Urgel, Vallès, Baix Llobregat, Osona, Gironès and Empordà. Together the team has reconstructed the accounts of these large properties for most of the period 1821–1945. By large

properties, what is meant is estates of one hundred hectares and above – depending on the nature of the terrain – which were beyond the capacity for labour of a single family. They usually comprised a number of scattered farms (*fincas*), often accumulated over many centuries by aristocratic families, and organised around the traditional farmstead or *mas*. In a number of cases, the social origins of the large landowners were to be found in trade or manufacturing, while others were lawyers or pharmacists, predominantly urban in their make-up, who went on to set up agricultural colonies producing such items as poultry and dairy products for the growing market of Barcelona. What strikes the authors is the persistence from late feudalism into the Liberal era of traditional forms of management and cultivation, especially sharecropping (*parceria*) – of which Arthur Young did not have a single favourable word to say – as well as the limited extent of both technological change and the expansion of agricultural output before the green revolution.

The book offers its readers a systematic analysis of the main developments, with individual chapters on forms of tenancy, expenditure, income and profits. In the final chapter, the authors look at the different types of agricultural activity, not least those based on the use of wage labour, renting and share cropping. Their main conclusion is that, although Catalonia does not fit particularly well the English model to which one segment of large landowners aspired in the middle and late nineteenth century, the character and evolution of large estates were nevertheless progressively governed by the market, the close proximity of industry and wages. To my mind, this innovative book is well-written and tidily organized. It makes a useful contribution both to the complicated agrarian history of Catalonia and the wider debate on the evolution of agrarian capitalism.

JOSEPH HARRISON

University of Manchester

LUCIA BULIAN, *Asolo. Paesaggio, proprietà e credito nel territorio asolano del secolo XVI*. (Treviso: Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche / Canova, 2001). 212 pp. 25 tables; 4 maps. €15.50.

The borough of Asolo is placed in a favourable natural location between the rivers Brenta and Piave, in sight of Monte Grappa (a landscape familiar to many British soldiers who fought in Italy in 1917). The soil was profitably non-acid, even in the mountain pastures, offering a good chance for cultivation. Various well-known feudal lords, such as the Ezzelinos, the Carraresi, Giangaleazzo Visconti, and Sigismund, king of Hungary, rose to control Asolo's territory before it fell under Venetian dominion in 1412. Peace brought a flow of newcomers from

Bergamo between 1419 and 1509. Of 140 immigrants, at least forty were active in the wool trades. At the same time, the town made an attempt to gain the status of a city: the local councillors between 1417 and 1419 styled themselves *cives* (citizens). Although most of them were not rich, city status was confirmed by the Venetian government. In the 1450s, Venice granted the feudal tenure of Asolo to Caterina Corner in exchange for Cyprus, a private possession of the Corner family. A member of one of the major Venetian families, Caterina styled herself 'Queen of Asolo' and maintained close relations with the Venetian nobility. Their increasing numbers upgraded the lifestyles of many *asolani*.

Asolo became a centre of polite life and of humanistic studies. The building of Palladian villas followed. Larger landowners became a source of credit for local farmers. A thick network of credit relations connected most of the smallest owner-occupiers to the more substantial men. For instance, the Barbaro estate was the centre of a vast credit network. Loans were disguised as land sales, circumventing usury laws and reducing Barbaro's land-tax liability, while annual interest payments on the loans appeared in the accounts as rents. In this fashion, small occupiers survived the dearth of 1528–9. Other landowners preferred payments in grain and wine, but the essence of the loan contracts were the same. Therefore the real wealth of the upper landed class went underestimated in the tax returns, which registered holdings under the name of an 'owner' who was really a tenant and debtor.

Larger investors, such as members of the Rinaldi family, also rented very large shares of the common lands in the mountain of Asolo di Sopra. These pasturelands were farmed with shepherds who managed large flocks of sheep and some cattle, providing mutton and veal for the Venetian market and wool for the local textile industry. Asolo developed as the main centre of wool spinning and weaving in the Trevigiano, especially in the seventeenth century, and the linkage of agriculture and credit was key to the region's affluence. Investors from Bergamo, Treviso and Venice brought cash into the region, enabling the poorest peasants to survive as farmers and weavers.

Thanks to some painstaking research in notary archives, Bulian's research on Asolo reveals, more than other volumes in the series, the role of credit in agricultural practice. Tensions between the wealthiest members of the Venetian aristocracy, such as the Barbaro, and wealthy speculators in wool and cattle on the one hand, and the locals on the other were acute. Quarrels focused on the control of the town council and the management of communal lands. The agrarian landscape did not differ from other areas of Trevigiano districts. Intensely

cultivated *piantata* offered a variety of crops throughout the year. But a tradition of continuous cultivation had extended to the common lands, at the expense of local graziers and shepherds. The Venetian Republic tried to keep common lands open in the interest of sheep rearing. However, in 1561 the Council of Ten finally agreed that only one-third of communal lands in Asolo should continue as open pasture. Access to communal lands remained vital for smaller householders and probably retarded the final demise of the commons.

MAURO AMBROSOLI
University of Udine

MICHELE SIMONETTO, *I lumi nelle campagne. Accademie e agricoltura nella Repubblica di Venezia, 1768–1797* (Treviso: Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche / Canova, 2001). xii + 491 pp. €23.24.

The present volume is rooted in research begun almost fifty years ago by Marino Berengo (1955) and Gianfranco Torcellan (1966), who drew attention to the important role of local academies in the major cities of the Venetian mainland during the late eighteenth century. These academies were dedicated to the study of the agricultural questions that, in the eyes of many contemporaries, hampered the economic development of the Republic. Academies first appeared in such cities as Udine, Conegliano, Vicenza, Verona, and Belluno, but sooner or later every provincial city of the Venetian Republic, even in distant Dalmatia, had its own agricultural academy.

The movement began in Udine in 1762 thanks to the initiative of a wealthy merchant, Antonio Zanon, who was engaged in the silk trade in Venice. He soon joined forces with Count Fabio Asquini, a local landlord and entrepreneur, who was elected life secretary to the academy. The two friends began an active programme of innovation and investment in both manufacture and agriculture. Sometimes, academies grew out of former institutions dedicated to letters and philosophy. Here, as elsewhere in Europe, agriculture had become a fashionable subject in upper class circles. Some academies lasted a few years only, others until the end of the republic in 1797. Altogether some 1300 members participated. The records reveal the social origin of 1070 of them. Half were noble, and the rest equally shared between clergymen and commoners. One finds, in decreasing order of importance, lawyers, mathematicians, silk merchants, botanists, chemists and architects. A small group of eight tenant farmers and land stewards also took part. Although most academicians were dilettanti, they discussed agricultural matters seriously. Vicenza and Conegliano, situated in the best farming areas of the Venetian mainland, led the whole movement. Maize cultivation,

ley and meadow improvement, mulberry planting, and cattle husbandry were the most discussed topics. The movement encouraged the state to launch a general agricultural inquiry, directed by land expert, Pietro Arduino, who reported on the agricultural state of the Venetian *terraferma* in 1768. He drew attention to the poor state of pastures, cattle, and woods and to problems of flooding, land exhaustion, fallow management, credit provision and social unrest. Commons mismanagement, defended by local élites who rented the management of common lands and common rights, was a major restraint on Venetian agriculture. Eventually, Arduino became the first professor of agronomy at Padua University and a new body of magistrates were created to supervise agricultural reform (*deputati all'agricoltura*).

The present volume deals at a great length with the discussions, memoirs and prizes given to improve farming. One learns quite a lot about local agricultural writers, some of whom became better known in Venice thanks to the labours of enlightened journalists such as Francesco Grisellini, editor of the *Giornale d'Italia*, a compilation that has already been studied by F. Venturi and G. F. Torcellan. In the present study, a good deal of attention is given to the agricultural education offered to poor tenants and peasants by willing parsons, following the protestant model of local education. Although 'agricultural catechisms' were compiled for this purpose, very few parsons turned out to be qualified to instruct peasants in botany and agronomy.

The study is wide-ranging and exhaustive and will be useful to many scholars working on the period. However, the author is not very conclusive about the practical results of this movement and the reader still relies upon Venturi for an historical judgement on the reform movement in Venice. It would have been helpful if the pronouncements of Simonetto's eighteenth-century agricultural writers had been compared with a) the average agricultural practice of the time; b) the so called 'new agriculture' of the mid-eighteenth century; and c) today's agricultural science.

MAURO AMBROSOLI
University of Udine

JACQUES POUCHEPADASS, *Land, power and market. A Bihar district under colonial rule, 1860-1947* (Sage, 2000). 574 pp. 77 tables; 27 figs; 19 maps. £39.99.

The publishers are to be congratulated for bringing out this vast work, equivalent in length to at least three books. It is a translation of the author's *Paysans de la plaine du Gange* (Paris 1989). Though it does not seem to have been revised or updated for this edition, one should not quibble for it is a classic study, of unmatched detail and comprehensiveness. It treats a single district,

but as a 'context' rather than a 'unit' of analysis, and to the accompaniment of wide-ranging and sometimes definitive discussions of broad issues of agrarian history. It has much to offer not just students of south Asia, but any reader of agricultural history and development.

Pouchepadass makes a distinction between indigenous conditions and the academic 'norms of presentation' (terms, periods and so on), which are also largely those of the colonial record. Tenancy becomes a complex of social and political relations; the market a range of equally intermixed exchanges within the rural economy. Continuing environmental, social and religious conditions are shown to be influenced by rather than wholly subjected to colonial law and administration, commercialization, population growth, and so on. This sensitivity to historical meanings is at the heart of Pouchepadass's conclusions, often making them complex and nuanced.

He traces the physical environment, patterns of migration, and the advancing frontier of cultivation in circumstances of a relative abundance of land: this is both a universal and a particular story. Each soil type and crop has its careful place in the scheme, as do agricultural methods. Seed quality and fertilizers are given their due. The harvest cycle is richly described, with due allowance between areas, crops and seasons: so often in the historiography these important variations are ignored. Patterns of artificial irrigation are distinguished and explained, including the impact of state canals (a subject of much debate) which are shown to have been under-utilized, but to have contributed to a marked increase in commercial rice production and to a decrease in protective mixed cropping.

Pouchepadass's concern for meanings also informs, for example, his take on the difficulties of interpreting colonial statistics – as balanced a short statement as I have read – which then supports his unexceptional but unusually well-grounded conclusion that foodgrain production per capita rose before 1920 and declined thereafter, alongside a growth of population, a decrease in morbidity, and an increase in cultivated area but not in double-cropping. Between 1901 and 1961 male workers per hectare increased; yields (probably) and the average size of holdings both decreased; and, most importantly, the numbers of landless labourers grew. All this provides an account of progressive impoverishment and social and regional differentiation that is not unfamiliar, but told with extraordinary detail and sensitivity. New light is thrown on questions such as the possibly inverse relationship between productivity and size of cultivating unit, and on concepts such as underemployment and surplus labour. In the end, the vexed questions of technological stasis and productivity stagnation are answered in a word: 'power'.

That brings Pouchepadass to a masterly discussion of land rights, especially rents and other dues, and of the limits of both market and state interventions in the face of local power. Giving primacy to social relations, he notes contestations within agrarian society, but also (as I too have argued) how the local structures held out against capitalist, legal and bureaucratic interventions, or used them as new weapons in old struggles. Agricultural history and the study of economic development, he is saying, can only be understood in the round.

His study of commercialization exemplifies this method. He gives an excellent picture of the market insulation and dependence of so many agricultural producers; of the rationale of poorly integrated and often coercive pricing (where landlords owned markets and creditors bought crops); and of the depressed incomes and poor access to cash and other resources for the majority. In short, he probes the very imperfect competition in many of the factors of production, despite the preferences of the colonial state and its laws (often half-heartedly executed), Bihar's greater involvement in world commerce, and the emergence of markets in land and tenancies. His explanations include caste, bondage, custom, lack of information, and intermediary social and economic controllers (traders, rich peasants and estate agents). These are all things fully understood by many who study them, but curiously missing in most economic models, including those used by Indian colonial law-makers.

This book is a heavy antidote to history 'without facts' and also to purely technical or isolated studies (women, subalterns, crops, prices), though it has fully absorbed their insights. With Pouchepadass you need many quiet hours and a strong arm, but there are rewards.

PETER ROBB

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SIMON VILLE, *The rural entrepreneurs. A history of the stock and station industry in Australia and New Zealand* (CUP, 2000). xiii + 259 pp. 15 tables; 21 plates; 24 figs. £40.

Although perhaps not unique to Australasia, the stock and station agency was, as the author puts it, a quintessential phenomenon of the pastoral expansion in that region during the second half of the nineteenth century. Nowhere else did firms play such a key role in that expansion, initially from the 1830s confined essentially to woolgrowing, or come to provide so comprehensive a range of services to farmers. By the 1900s, firms engaged in this activity were among the largest in the Antipodes. Their emergence, was a response on the one hand to the small scale of pastoral holdings in relation to the size of

the market and, on the other, the distance to that market in the UK. The expansion of woolgrowing ever further into the interior enhanced the isolation of producers even from the ports of shipment on the coast. This was only mitigated to a limited extent by the spread of the railway and the telegraph.

Outstanding features of the activity were expansion through diversification, that is the exploitation of economies of scope and horizontal integration, the latter through internal expansion and acquisitions, as well as for a time in the early stages of development through inter-firm relationships. Most of what were to become the major agencies by the 1900s originated as importers of general merchandise, or as general auctioneers who came to specialize in livestock. The former activity brought involvement in transportation to farms and backloadings of wool for shipment to the UK. This led to involvement in wool brokerage. Through shipping connections and offices established in London, the agencies became sources of information for growers on trends in the market for wool. They additionally became a conduit for the supply of farm equipment, improved breeds of stock and other farming inputs. Through a presence in London they acquired access to relatively cheap finance to provide loans to pastoralists. Here the extent of local knowledge reduced the risk of default as compared with the banks. Later in the nineteenth century they became conduits for loans from colonial banks to graziers.

Until the 1880s and the emergence of agricultural cooperatives, the agencies had no effective competition. Even then the competition of the cooperatives was restricted by coverage, being confined to members, and by inability to enter the important area of loan finance to pastoralists. Although important in dairying, they played a minor role in the wool and grain sector. It is only in the twentieth century that the local banks began to eliminate the agencies as intermediaries between them and farmer borrowers. From the 1930s increased government intervention diminished their role with the establishment of statutory marketing bodies, beginning with grains and later extending to wool. After the Second World War, the position of agencies further diminished with the growth of agribusinesses capable of developing their own links with the market and access to finance, as well as the appearance of modern forms of media, such as radio, television and specialist periodicals. The heyday of the agencies was then in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the interwar period, the exploitation of diversification, in response to a generally depressed rural economy, as into the motor trade in the 1920s, was a failure. Some success was achieved in the travel business after 1945, on the basis of connections with

shipping companies and making travel arrangements for their employees and farmers. They were soon supplanted in this activity by specialist travel firms. In the 1970s and 1980s the remaining dominant firms were absorbed into conglomerates, before being spun off as separate entities with but a shadow of their former significance.

It is hard to do justice to this work within the space available. It provides a comprehensive account of a long neglected, albeit important institution in Australasian rural history. In that respect it is unlikely to be surpassed in the foreseeable future. The author sets the work well within the context of economic and other developments in the theory of the firm, while providing useful connections to the general economic history of Australasia for readers without an intimate knowledge of the area.

JOHN PERKINS

University of New South Wales

MARGARET DERRY, *Ontario's cattle kingdom. Purebred breeders and their world, 1870–1920* (University of Toronto Press, 2001). xv + 221 pp. 9 plates. £35.

In Canada, as in other modern industrial countries, agriculture accounts for a diminishing share of economic activity, falling from 40 to 20 per cent of GDP over the fifty years covered in this book. Change and absolute growth, rather than stagnation, were essential features of agriculture's relative decline. Margaret Derry's study of Ontario, Canada's late nineteenth-century agricultural heartland, focuses on the activities and contributions of breeders of pedigree cattle during a period of rapid change. In 1870, cattle farming in the province was widely regarded as subsidiary to its wheat culture, with fodder crops only displacing wheat after that date. (The rise of mixed farming is seen as a significant stimulus to Canada's fledgling agricultural engineering industry.) By 1890, Ontario farmers, tiring of the baleful effects of a volatile beef cycle on their returns, were turning in increasing numbers to dairying, serving an expanding export demand for cheese and the domestic market for butter. The heyday of Ontario beef lay in the 1870s and 1880s.

Viewing the history of Ontario agriculture during this critical half century through the lens of its pedigree cattle sector enables Margaret Derry to explore the multiple connections linking Ontario with Britain and the United States on the one hand and with the remaining provinces of Canada on the other. Ontario pedigree breeders, comprising both farmers for profit and hobbyists or amateurs, were drawn into supplying United States Shorthorn fashion crazes, at first for animals carrying the inheritance of Thomas Bates' Duchess tribe, and subsequently for Shorthorns showing a preponderance of red – a prejudice which condemned the fine, high-bred

bull calf Clarence Kirkdevington, which had the misfortune to be born white, to an unfulfilled life as show steer. However, the productive sector was also the breeders' target. During the 1880s, farmers in the American West preferred disease-free Ontario breeding stock to diseased American animals originating east of the Appalachians. Thanks to pedigree crosses, Shorthorn cattle from Ontario's commercial farms reached a quality sufficient to be shipped for fattening in Aberdeenshire, the home of improved Shorthorn beef lines, when falling steamship rates made this a possibility. In 1892, Britain suspended Canada's disease free status. This put an end to the trade in Canadian stores, though not to transatlantic shipments of cattle for immediate slaughter, which continued for some time though with increasing concern at the proportion exhibiting dairy rather than beef characteristics. Canada was unable to establish an inter-province trade in stores similar to that which had operated across the Atlantic.

The book explores many other themes which can only be touched on here: the contrasting treatment of pedigree stock in photographs and engravings; the emergence of a global regime of animal disease with free-trade Britain as its epicentre; the contrasting and competing practices of herd book registration in Britain, Canada and the United States; the English/French dichotomy in breed allegiances in Quebec; the impact of Toronto's centralized stockyards on Ontario's meat trade middlemen and butchers. All in all, it is a model study, and it is not too surprising to learn that the author's sure historical scholarship is built on the solid foundations of praxis. The jacket illustration bears testimony to the author's talents as a livestock artist. Those wishing to know more about her work as a cattle breeder should visit the enterprise's web site (www.poplarlaneholdings.com), where they will learn that the Derrys specialize in breeding Murray Greys, a breed well-adapted to climatic extremes and originating in a chance Australian encounter between an Angus bull and a Shorthorn cow.

JOHN R. WALTON

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WILLIAM M. DENEVAN, *Cultivated landscapes of native Amazonia and the Andes* (OUP, 2001). xxx + 396 pp. 5 tables; 83 figs. £70.

This is the first comprehensive coverage of a large body of scholarship which has been accumulating over the past forty years, on pre-Hispanic farming systems as evidenced in the visible landscapes of South America. It forms a milestone in this research, partly because it makes a complete collection of Denevan's own work, and partly because the stage of identification of relic landscapes, from photography and field investigation, is

coming towards an end. It should be remarked that this stage is not yet totally over: large areas of terracing have yet to be mapped in Peru and Bolivia, some of it covered in jungle today, and features such as water harvesting around upland basins and the ponds or *cochas* in these countries deserve closer inspection. But at least researchers are now aware of the extent of prehistoric landscape management, and much of the work is associated with Denevan and his colleagues.

The topics covered here link to the pioneering work of Carl Sauer, by looking at indigenous practices and systems. But Denevan does not attempt to examine Sauer's central question of the origins of farming and its diffusion in the Americas, and does not focus on ethnobotany, linking cultivated plant types to the development of farming. Much of his work is however exciting in that it covers new fields, where little was known prior to the 1960s.

In a way, this work is a kind of academic autobiography of Denevan, at least in terms of the published products reviewed in the book. Many of the studies used are his own, or those of a whole generation of students and former students at the Geography Department of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. The key areas of Peruvian terraces, raised fields around Lake Titicaca, and the swidden agriculture of the wet tropics, have all been studied in detail through Denevan's fieldwork, and these are central to the book. One area of great interest which is not within Denevan's direct competence is that of the irrigation systems, which are mostly on the Peruvian coast. This is understandable, because the irrigation was linked to the major civilizations of the coast, a major focus of archaeological endeavour, so that archaeologists have led most research on water management systems. But even here, the cover given in the book is excellent and up to date, with reference to many important problems of interpretation, and extensive bibliography.

As to the geographical coverage of the book, areas which are not covered in any detail are largely in Brazil and in the southern cone countries, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile. This may sound like a large piece of the continent, but none of these countries are noted for extensive or complex pre-Hispanic remains of farming systems. Only north-western Argentina and northern Chile, on the southern edge of the central Andean civilizations, have substantial areas of ancient water management and land improvement.

A large first section of the book is concerned with identification and classification of forms to be seen in the farming landscape; a necessary feature, because there is little agreement still over the English terminology for many forms, and the Spanish language names vary from country to country. After this come chapters which

include some of the most fascinating topics, and these benefit from Denevan's direct involvement in field study. In the lowlands, there is the question of how the rainforests were used by swidden farmers, and the findings of Denevan and others are that extensive, long term use was possible even when the forest had been apparently abandoned by cultivators. A central question in both lowlands and uplands is that of the drained fields and raised fields, of peculiar importance in a variety of physical situations through the Americas. In this matter, virtually nothing was known before the late 1960s, and many of the sites were abandoned by agriculturists long ago, their purpose forgotten by later people. Careful field study has revealed a great wealth of different types, much of the initial impetus coming from Denevan's work in eastern Bolivia and then in the area around Lake Titicaca. Another area of controversy and uncertainty is that of the terraces, covering huge areas in the central Andes, most of which seem now to be abandoned. Denevan covers the evidence for their history and prehistory, and links them to farming systems and crop types. For both raised fields and terraces, the question of abandonment is always present, and the book does cover the main theories, of climatic change, destruction through invasion and conquest, and changes in farming systems and crop types.

In general, Denevan takes a fairly impartial view on the debated questions, so that the reader can glean a fair idea of the arguments on both sides. The book is well presented, with copious illustration, especially diagrams which are important to understanding the nature of some of the little known forms. The bibliography is extensive and up to date. This book should be of value to a wide spectrum of social scientists and Latin Americanists, both as a text and as a reference source on its subject matter.

ARTHUR MORRIS
University of Glasgow

ROY HORA, *The landowners of the Argentine pampas. A social and political history, 1860–1945* (OUP, 2001). ix + 264 pp. £40.

By the 1920s the pampas were the source of almost half of South America's foreign trade, even though Argentina had only ten per cent of the region's population. Roy Hora's study, a revision of his 1998 Oxford University doctoral dissertation, examines the people who owned the land at the base of this geographical concentration of wealth. This concentration was a striking phenomenon not only at the regional but the world scale. Hora explores the evolution of the landowners as what he terms a 'class', looking at their relationships with issues of political power and the state.

The author sees the pampas, long devoted to a live-stock economy, moving 'towards a capitalist organization of production' after 1850. Some will find it hard to accept that capitalism on the pampas was new, but signs of structural change were certainly present, in the expansion of sheep breeding, and in the efforts of landowners to associate. In 1866, they formed the Sociedad Rural Argentina, a landmark in the history of rural associational behaviour across South America. Hora draws a picture where few paid much attention to the ideology of rural progress and modernization embraced by the leaders of the Sociedad Rural. In summary, he presents rural conditions as dismal, estancias as 'primitive.' While paying close attention to ideology, he says surprisingly little about the connections between the Sociedad Rural and practical issues of rural legal reform (on the subject of changing property rights, Richard Slatta's 1983 study *Gauchos and the vanishing frontier* is a glaring absence from the generally excellent bibliography).

The expansion of the frontier on a huge scale (some 20 million hectares of land were sold on the pampas between 1878 and 1882) and the adoption of new technology in ranching changed the fate of the rural landowners. Rural images turned overwhelmingly positive. Ranchers were seen as the way forward at any sign of economic slowing for Argentina, such as the Baring crisis of 1889. They began to organize politically. Hora shows, however, how increasing rural wealth did not readily translate into political power. He makes a series of convincing points about obstacles to landowner political party organization. The pampa elite was recent in most cases; its connection to place was more shallow than in some other parts of Latin America. A highly-commercialized and mobile society on the pampas, with low labour demand on the ranches, left little scope for the development of a 'deferential dialectic' (p. 96).

Despite an ongoing admiration by Argentina's public for the achievements of ranching, this had essentially reached a technical plateau by around 1910. The extension of the suffrage, along with the changes in markets and foreign investment patterns that followed the First World War, meant that by the 1920s the landowners no longer showed their earlier confidence about their position in society. Hora provides an excellent discussion of the economic and moral challenges faced by large ranchers during the 1930s, the period when bilateral ties with Britain took on renewed, if ultimately challenging, strength. He also explains clearly how the rural sector was eventually forced to subsidize the costs of urbanization and industrialization.

This book contains truly impressive research. Readers are introduced to a vast range of specialized literature contemporary to the study, including the papers of

some leading ranching families. For example, Hora makes excellent use of the Senillosa family papers. He succeeds in showing how landowners thought with different minds, his argument sometimes contradicting long-held but little-examined views on Argentina's history. The book is thick with useful efforts at revisionism, including the following. It is valuable to learn that by the 1890s not all the major landowners were still convinced free traders. Many readers will be surprised that they generally supported the broadening of the electoral franchise in 1912. When World War I placed a new set of stresses on the living standards of urban workers, some landowners could even identify with the appeal of socialism for organized labour.

The book works to set its discussions within a broader context. It is admirable to see discussions of political behaviour (including the impact of elections) that set Argentina alongside such exemplars as Mexico and Colombia. It is regrettable, however, that comparisons with the parts of Latin America where land use and social structure bore the closest resemblance to the pampas are fleeting and undeveloped. For example, the findings of the leading historians of rural change and politics in Uruguay are barely visible in either the text or the bibliography.

Hora makes valiant efforts to lead his readers through the dense thickets of Argentina's politics, although it is doubtful whether readers new to the region will follow all the nuances of Autonomists, Federalists, Personalists and myriad other groups. This reviewer gained some sympathy with Emilio Frers, a rancher lobbyist, who in 1891 thought he wanted to lynch all the 'ists' in his country's politics! Yet the discussions of politics in this book are ultimately stronger than the sections dealing with rural change, which at times seem disjointed. The book needed a closer focus on the mechanics of land-use change, specifically the roles of cultivation in meeting the challenges of ranch intensification. At times, the author seems to conflate ranching with farming.

Despite my reservations, this book is a valuable addition to the literature. It charts in detail the major vicissitudes of the landowners. Long before the advent of Peronism, they were seen as a central element in a national agrarian problem. But even as the sources of wealth for the country's landed elite showed dramatic change, Hora correctly points to the enduring strength of the estancia as a key element of Argentina's national symbolism. I suspect many would still echo the decades-old comment of one poor-born rancher from Italian cultural roots: 'at the bottom of every Argentine heart there is an *estanciero*'.

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ROGER MUNTING and TAMÁS SZMRECSÁNYI (eds),

Competing for the sugar bowl (St. Katharinen, Germany:

Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 2000). xii + 193 pp. DM44.

Among the seemingly irreversible features of world change, such as the absolute declines in arable land, fisheries and forests, has been the rising curve of sweetener consumption, including sucrose and other caloric and noncaloric sweeteners. The human sweet tooth, abetted by technology, advertising, social emulation and affluence, is now increasingly global. But the picture of that ascent is enormously complicated by the diversity of sweeteners, the diversity of their uses, of custom, and of politics. This excellent collection of essays is based on a session of the Twelfth International Economic History Congress (1998) augmented by a couple of additions. It examines many different aspects of that secular but evolving trend.

The editors have arranged the papers in two parts, the first on rivalries between cane and beet sugars, and the second on rivalries between sugar and other sweeteners. There are ten papers in all. Since listing each essay with an explanatory sentence or two would fill up this review, it seems more useful to discuss certain major points, and to offer a judgement on the book as a whole.

So much has been written about sucrose from cane that the immense importance of beet sugar, particularly in and for Europe, may be missed by all but the experts. Chemically identical but not perfected and commercially viable until well into the nineteenth century, sucrose from sugar beets had wrested sixty per cent of the world market from cane by the century's end. Moreover, as was pointed out by Timoshenko and Swerling long ago, this was important politically and technologically, as well as economically: a perfect replacement for cane sugar was being produced on the temperate lands of the Metropole, rather than on the tropical lands of the colonies. As Munting and Perkins indicate, while the Spanish-American War briefly enabled the exportation of European beet sugar even to the U.S., the swift re-establishment of Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico and other war spoils as American sugar colonies soon reduced beet sugar's world share again, to forty per cent from the sixty per cent it had briefly enjoyed. The cane sugar-beet sugar competition has persisted, now on different levels, since European states must balance concern for their former colonies against the pressures of domestic beet-sugar producers.

But the cane versus beet rivalry is only one of several; there is also sugar versus noncaloric sweeteners, and it is at least as byzantine a competition. In a stimulating essay, Merki traces the history of saccharin, and how it once was actively smuggled because its increasing use might reduce the profits of beet sugar producers and,

accordingly, state revenues. Merki observes that, despite some health concerns, saccharin is still a legal sweetener in the United States. Szmrécsányi and Peláez Álvarez add that the enormous diet-beverage industry in the USA may have been on the minds of congressmen who have repeatedly postponed banning saccharin. And Polopolus, who examines the fight between sugar and corn sweeteners, discusses usefully how high-fructose corn syrup was able to take advantage of political changes to outshine sucrose in the US market. The massive shift from home cooking to eating out, and from buying foods to cook to buying cooked foods, has vastly increased the roles of fats, salts, thickeners of various sorts and sweeteners in the USA, and the trend is now also affecting other countries, as is the continued spread of diet beverages. But many of the relevant markets are quite volatile, and this book offers few predictions.

The reader is provided here with some excellent historical essays on sweeteners of all sorts. Particularly refreshing are the many discussions of taste, of differing class preferences, and of sweetener uses, matters often not much taken into account by economic historians. Published somewhat obscurely, this nicely provocative and interesting collection deserves much more attention than it is likely to receive.

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VACLAV SMIL, *Enriching the Earth: Fritz Haber, Carl Bosch, and the transformation of world food production* (MIT Press, 2001). xvii + 338 pp. 5 figs. £23.95.

The school chemistry syllabuses of forty years ago contained much more on industrial processes than today's, and the Haber-Bosch method of nitrogen fixation was, if not at the inky fingertips of every schoolchild, at least something they might have heard about. The current student generation will be much better informed about what is going on at an atomic level when chemical reactions take place, but their chances of knowing how one of the most influential chemical processes of the modern world came to be developed are correspondingly diminished. This is a pity, because as the number of people in the world increases to nine or ten billion within the lifetime of this generation, over half them will be dependent upon the products of the Haber-Bosch process for their very survival. Already, according to Smil, the figure is two out of five, and this prompts his claim that the synthesis of ammonia was the most important technical invention of the twentieth century.

In some ways this present-day reliance upon artificial sources of nitrogen replicates, on a bigger scale, the problem faced by Germany in 1900, insofar as it was perceived at the time by Wilhelm Ostwald. The outbreak of the

Boer War made Ostwald, one of the leading German scientists, realise that conflict with a superior naval power would cut off imports and so deprive his country of the mineral nitrates that came from Chile and were used both for fertilizers and explosives. He set out to produce a substitute for Chilean nitrate, and soon notified the head of the chemical firm BASF that he had succeeded in synthesizing ammonia from its elements, nitrogen and hydrogen. If this were true he would indeed have solved the problem, for the ammonia could then be converted to ammonium sulphate fertilizer by treatment with sulphuric acid, or oxidised to make nitric acid for use in fertilizers or explosives, both of which processes were already well established. However, Carl Bosch, the young BASF chemist who checked Ostwald's claims, soon demonstrated that the small amount of ammonia he produced came from an impurity on the catalyst he used. Then, in 1904, a request from another chemical firm in Vienna provoked Fritz Haber, a lecturer at the Technische Hochschule in Karlsruhe who had worked on gas reactions, into carrying out further work on ammonia. His initial results were not encouraging, but they were criticized by another more prominent scientist, which prompted Haber to continue with his experiments. In 1908 these came to attention of BASF, who financed further work, and on 2 July 1909 Haber demonstrated the successful production of liquid ammonia to the firm's representatives. All that remained was to make it commercially viable.

Haber's method of combining hydrogen and nitrogen to make ammonia used very high pressures and an expensive osmium catalyst. BASF again gave Bosch the job of checking Haber's method and making it work on a commercial scale. In the following four years he designed pressure vessels and pumps that would withstand the high pressures required, and his colleagues developed a system capable of testing the catalytic ability of thousands of substances. They discovered a relatively cheap catalyst – magnetite (iron oxide) combined with the oxides of various other metals – which overcame the problem of the expensive osmium and is still the basis of catalysts used today. A further problem was to find cheap ways of producing the feedstock gases. Nitrogen was relatively straightforward: by 1909 techniques were available for liquefying air and then distilling it so that the nitrogen was separated from the oxygen. Bosch solved the more difficult problem of producing hydrogen using relatively cheap coal and water as raw materials, and by October 1913 a new factory was producing ten tonnes of ammonia per day and converting it to ammonium sulphate fertilizer. Although they generally use natural gas as the source of hydrogen, and are much more efficient in energy terms, present-day methods of ammonium

synthesis, producing millions of tonnes each year, are fundamentally the same as this Haber-Bosch process.

Although nitrogen fertilizer production still requires much more energy than phosphates and potash, Smil calculates (p. 131) that it only needs about 1.3 per cent of all the energy derived from fossil fuels. The other feedstocks – mostly air – are readily available, so the extra nitrogen production needed to feed the world's expanding population will not be restricted by energy and feedstock supplies. The limiting factor might easily be the environmental impact of nitrogen. The annual industrial output of nitrogen is now almost as great as the amount fixed by natural processes on the continents, and only about half of it is incorporated into crops. The rest becomes nitrous oxide, which is a greenhouse gas, or becomes available to change aquatic ecosystems, often far from the farmed areas where the fertilizer was first applied. In this way human intervention in the natural nitrogen cycle is similar to intervention in the carbon cycle producing global warming, or in the sulphur cycle producing acid rain; the difference is that technical solutions are available for global warming and acid rain, but we do not yet know how to grow enough to feed the world's population without using the Haber-Bosch process. We are engaging, says Smil (p. 180), upon 'an unprecedented large-scale biogeochemical experiment whose eventual impacts we can predict only poorly'.

Only about one hundred pages of this book are strictly concerned with history. The other half of the text (and there are also another hundred pages of appendices and notes) is concerned with the present-day nitrogen fertilizer industry and its environmental impact. Smil himself recognizes this, suggesting various combinations of chapters for agronomists, ecologists and historians of technology. Agricultural historians will presumably be most interested in Chapter one, which contains an excellent summary of the gradual revelation of the role of nitrogen in soil and crops, Chapter two, on the world history of manures and the role of nitrogen in traditional farming systems, Chapter three, on the rise of the fertilizer industry in the nineteenth century, and Chapters four to six (and part of seven) on the work of Haber and Bosch and the subsequent development of the world nitrogen fertilizer industry. There is also a short postscript outlining the lives of Haber and Bosch – both eventually tragic – after 1913.

The whole book demonstrates the relevance of agricultural history to environmental history and to current environmental problems, and for that reason alone is well worth reading. It is also an excellent corrective to the Rothamsted-centred isolationism of the established British texts on the history of agricultural science.

However, Smil's account of the post-1918, and especially post-1950, development of nitrogen production emphasizes technical rather than business developments in accounting for change, to an extent which is debatable. By the late 1950s the fertilizer industry in the UK was attracting the attention of the Monopolies Commission, and since then, in both Europe and the USA, questions of over-investment, excess capacity, concentration, structural change, and international trade have influenced the development of the industry to a greater degree than this account appears to recognize. Thus the implications of the excess of world output (p. 127) over world consumption (Appendices L and M) are not pursued. The only other problem is a minor one – a misprint which exaggerates maximum fertilizer production in Appendix Q. Otherwise Smil is to be congratulated on a well-illustrated text which makes a complex chemical and environmental story fascinatingly clear for a non-technical readership while containing a wealth of references and data for those who need to know more about the details. And all congratulations this time to the publishers: Smil's book is in hard covers for under £24.

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PAMELA RINEY-KEHRBERG (ed.), *Waiting on the bounty. The dustbowl diary of Mary Knacksted Dyck* (University of Iowa Press, 1999). xiv + 365 pp. Illus. £30.50.

Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, an associate professor of history at Iowa State University, has edited a poignant diary by a farmwoman possessing no more than a fourth grade education. Mary Dyck, who was fifty-two years old when she began her diary, made entries from 1936 to 1955 while living on a fairly substantial farm in Hamilton County, Kansas. Because she began her daily record in the midst of drought, dirt storms, and distress, she observed the farm failures and rural depopulation of the depression era. With each observation, the inner-world of an ordinary farmwomen unfolded in an interesting account of family, community, and rural life.

In the first chapter, Riney-Kehrberg eloquently surveys Mary's life on the farm and recognizes her household labour as a valuable source of income during the hard times. The subsequent six chapters organize her diary entries chronologically by year, with only a brief interruption for a photographic montage. Although the edited text ends in 1941, the epilogue indicates that those who persisted in southwestern Kansas were in a fortunate economic position to take advantage of the agricultural boom accompanying World War II. Nevertheless, Riney-Kehrberg found that her subject did not conceive of 'bounty' in terms of crops in the fields and remained 'depressed' after the dust bowl conditions abated.

To her credit, the historian allows Dyck to render much of her own woebegone tale. Her diary centred upon her relationship with her husband, Henry, as well as with her three children, Ervin, Thelma, and Verna. Using the third person voice in repetitive and random musings, Dyck displayed an uncanny ability to find humour in the midst of her misfortunes. In addition to the murky skies, she documented mundane activities such as cooking, canning, cleaning, and correspondence. She dwells upon the absences of her life, particularly once her children depart for new frontiers elsewhere. In response, she filled the emptiness with the presence of the radio, evidenced by her references to the plots of 'episodes' from her favourite soap opera, Betty and Bob. As she lamented in 1937: 'Its very lonesome when we can't have much radio ...' (p. 45).

Inexplicably, the historian chose to erase from Dyck's diary a number of the references to the radio broadcasts – a puzzling choice given the fact that the box seemed to be her most valued possession. Indeed, her rhythms and routines became anchored to the social drama carried over the airwaves. The diary is not as much about an ecological disaster as the editor's subtitle would have the reader believe. It is more about the dynamic consciousness of folks inhabiting what anthropologist Eric Wolf termed a 'peasant' culture. Her obsession with the broadcasts indicated the escapism provided by the technologies of desire and insinuated the lines of connection between traditional and modernizing societies.

Ostensibly, the farmwoman was coming to terms with the trauma of her condition, even as Depression America was making sense of modernity. Her words in a deeper and broader sense reveal that something other than bad weather was stirring the soul of the heartland. Comparable to the memoir of Lawrence Svobida and the diary of Ann Marie Low, this primary source opens a window into a private world. This particular cultural product of Mary Dyck's labours resonates with the anxiety of individuals coping with uncertainty. Readers will benefit from learning something about Mary and her dystopia.

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WYN P. GRANT and JOHN T. S. KEELER (eds), *Agricultural policy* (Edward Elgar, 2000). xv + 453 pp. (Vol. 1); x + 474 pp. (Vol. 2). £235.

Agriculture's success in obtaining government support, which long predates the establishment of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), has traditionally been justified by pointing out the consequences of its absence for food imports (with their strategic and balance of payments effects), farm incomes, and the rural economy in general. Unfortunately, this approach does not explain why other

small rural businesses, or industries such as coal and steel with similar trade implications, should not also be subsidised by the consumer or taxpayer, or why support has been at a relatively high level. Political explanations have therefore appeared. These have been based upon pluralism (agricultural pressure groups have been more successful than their rivals), or corporatism (agricultural interests have integrated more successfully with governments), or policy networks (emphasizing agreement on policy goals among a closed negotiating community), and have been more convincing than the traditional economists' defence. Rural historians have employed the insights of both disciplines for many years, but only recently have they begun to examine agricultural policy in the late twentieth century, and especially the CAP, so these two volumes of reprinted key articles might appear to be of interest both to policy historians looking for analytical frameworks and to those interested in studies of individual countries.

For historians of rural policy in the UK, perhaps the most useful of the analytical approaches are Martin Smith's two papers, in which he uses the policy developments of the 1930s, the 1980s, and the salmonella in eggs affair of 1988/9, to examine the policy community and issue network theories. Those with wider interests, especially in the possibilities of transferring the lessons of agricultural history in developed countries to the current problems of low income countries, will find much to provoke sober reflection in Friedmann and McMichael's paper on the role of agriculture in the development of the capitalist world economy. Papers on individual countries include an assessment of the impact of the New Deal on agricultural policy in the United States, an analysis of farm product mix and voting behaviour in France since 1958, and two papers on rural issues in post-Second World War Japan.

The two volumes together amount to over 900 pages,

containing 48 papers, printed in their original formats (so that some but not all are prefaced by abstracts) and drawn from 22 different journals and four books, mostly but not exclusively by American and European authors. Each volume has a name index, and Volume One contains a six page introduction by the editors. The earliest of the papers was first published in 1979, but the majority date from the 1990s, with only nine from the 1980s. They are divided into six sections: policy theory, CAP reform, national perspectives on policy reform (all in Volume One), and trade liberalization, case studies of policy reform in the United States, New Zealand and Japan, and a final section on agri-environmental policy in various European countries. This framework, hardly surprisingly, reflects the policy concerns of the 1990s, with little or nothing on the emerging issues of the present decade such as food safety or EU enlargement. More curiously, despite the introduction's claim that these volumes 'bring together key articles ... on ... agricultural policy', there is nothing to suggest, either in the introduction or the selection of the papers, that anything was written on the subject before 1979. Neither would anyone beginning with these volumes suspect that the corporatist school had had much influence on the policy theory debate in the UK, although Keeler's paper provides a clear account of its impact in France. And although the papers include some from journals rarely available in UK university libraries, about half of them are from *Sociologia Ruralis*, *The American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, *Public Administration*, and *The Journal of Common Market Studies*. Given the ability to order a few inter-library loans, a sight of the contents pages of these volumes would be worthwhile; whether one could seriously recommend a librarian to buy them, given their cost, is another question.

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