

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

1. G. SIMMONS, *An environmental history of Great Britain from 10,000 years ago to the present* (Edinburgh UP, 2001). xii + 419 pp. Illus. £59.50 (hbk); £19.95 (pbk).

Attempts to review the environmental history of Britain in a way that balances past human activities against their environmental effects are relatively few in number. Attempts that handle both sides of such a review, and all periods, with equal command and assurance are even fewer. Simmons' *Environmental history of Great Britain* undoubtedly falls into this latter category. It ranges from 10,000 BP and the first hunter-gatherer-fisher communities down to the present-day. As well as dealing with some familiar and well-worked issues, such as forest clearance, it also incorporates a great deal of novel discussion. Indeed, one of its strengths as a text is to greatly broaden the debate, highlighting areas of past human environmental impact that previous overviews have glossed or neglected.

In an introductory chapter, Simmons outlines his framework for the book, including the key themes and environmental systems that are used to structure the discussion. From the start, he shows himself to be as skilled, and as comfortable, in drawing his material from social and economic history as from the environmental sciences, offering a genuine holistic survey. Nor does he shrink from the challenge of balancing what he calls objective history with what he refers to as moral history. The main body of the text opens with two chapters on environmental change in prehistory. Given Simmons' own research background, it is not surprising that the prehistoric chapters are full of informed synthesis and mature observation. In these, as in other chapters, he is very successful at interweaving outline models and general summaries with points of illuminating detail. His description of how human-created openness in the landscape appeared during the mesolithic and how it spread over the next four millennia provide examples of the former, whilst his reference to how the early agriculturalists probably used lime as an indicator of what was most easily cultivated and left the thin woodland cover over chalk soils to the last is an example of the latter.

Simmons' concern to cover all the different habitats

and environmental systems occasionally produces an overly systematic text, one broken down into numerous sections and sub-themes. This is the case with the chapter covering the period 550–1700 AD and sub-titled 'closed and open systems'. The underlying themes for this chapter are twofold. First, he shows how the broad differentiation in ground ecology that had emerged between upland and lowland Britain during the later stages of the prehistoric was refined further into a still more differentiated land cover between 550–1700 AD. His sensitivity to the way different habitats were used and transformed comes across strongly here. Second, he takes the idea of the organic economy and explores the different ways in which it impacted on resources. Again, his ability to shape the larger picture is impressive, but his eye for the right illustration also stands out, such as in his observations about the number of trees needed to build a seventeenth century farmhouse or man-of-war. Indeed, when we realize the scale of consumption stemming from such purposes alone, the organic economy does not entirely convince as a sustainable economy, at least not as a closed economy. Whilst Simmons does not think that the period 550 to 1700 AD experienced changes as profound in their environmental effects as, say, the first coming of agriculture, he does see the eighteenth century as a watershed. Land improvement and enclosure transformed previously underused habitats, such as heathland, adding them to what he calls 'geometrized' landscape. More significantly, coal and steam began the transformation of environment through both their resource demands and waste effects. His introduction of these themes, and their expansion in a chapter dealing with industrial growth, 1800–1914, are two of the most successful in the book as over-arching reviews, partly because his programmatic approach manages to draw in themes that are neglected in other, similar texts.

The book concludes with chapters dealing with the periods 1914 to 1950 and 1950 to the present. Government and archival sources are abundant for these periods. Simmons chooses well, producing cleverly-worked discussions that range widely, from air pollution and sewage to fishing. As in other chapters, he is strong at digesting the technical and teasing out what is essential to his purpose in a highly readable way. As these events shape

current environmental debates, it is not surprising that here Simmons interweaves the moral with the scientific or objective. His story about T. H. Huxley, who in 1883 denied the possibility of over-fishing either then or in the future, captures well the problem of the modern environmental debate and how much we still have to learn about trends. As J. K. Galbraith put it, there are two types of people who don't know: those who know they don't know and those, like Huxley, who don't know they don't know. Simmons is also quick to emphasize the lessons of an historical perspective, such as in his reference to the fact that much contemporary site designation or protection in the UK is really too static when seen beside the long-term pattern of environmental flux.

This is easily one of the more successful and authoritative books on the environmental history of the UK and arguably the most successful to date in bringing the human and the environmental together with equal understanding. It is well written, imparts a real breadth to the problem and moves freely between the large-scale perspective and the case study or local illustration. For those who are teaching the environmental history of the UK, this will be a benchmark text.

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G. H. R. KENT (ed.), *The Victoria history of the counties of England. A history of the county of York East Riding, VII, Holderness wapentake, middle and north divisions* (OUP for the Institute of Historical Research, 2002).

xx + 455 pp. 64 plates; 35 figs; 55 maps. £85.

There cannot be many agricultural historians who have not had reason to consult the Victoria County History over the years. Some of us curse the fact that their own county of interest (in my case Buckinghamshire) was one of the first out of the blocks at the beginning of the twentieth century and fully into print by the end of the 1920s. The series has so dramatically improved over the years. So imagine the delight when a volume from my adopted county hits the desk. Volume VII covers the middle and northern divisions of Holderness wapentake. The area is more or less bounded by a line running due east from Hull to the North Sea, then running northwards to include the whole of the coast past Hornsea and practically to the boundary of Bridlington. It then cuts south-west to pick up the boundary provided by the River Hull which itself runs south west and then due south skirting to the east of Beverley, and finally down to the Humber in Hull. The south division of the wapentake was published in 1984 and some of the places in the north and middle divisions were covered in the Hull and Beverley volumes. The area is predominantly rural and agricultural containing just one town, Hornsea. It is

also an area that is fast falling into the sea. The retreat of the Holderness coast has produced a special category of deserted medieval villages. The post-Domesday land magnates were the archbishops of York and the count of Aumale, but from the sixteenth century the dominant local family and the lords of Holderness have been the Constables of Burton Constable Hall (now the Chichester-Constables). The land is low lying and flat and dominated by glacial boulder clay. The need for drainage is self-evident, especially along the River Hull, but only solved effectively for the last two or three hundred years. Perhaps more than most geographically defined areas the enclosure history of Holderness is protracted. But close on forty per cent remained long enough in open fields to be enclosed by parliamentary acts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which places it high up in the league table of longest surviving open-field areas. After enclosure it became a major cereal producing area, but more recently was noted for the intensive rearing of poultry and especially pigs. The decline in agricultural employment from the nineteenth century to the present, for whatever reasons, does not diminish the importance of the area as a place of residence having as it does the city of Hull and the towns of Beverley, Driffield and Bridlington in close proximity for commuting purposes.

That is the geography of the area covered, and more or less the bones of the introduction, but the volume is mainly about the constituent parishes, villages, townships and hamlets. In this regard, it adopts the familiar pattern of the VCH in describing the location and main physical attributes of those parishes and places, including place name origins, the Domesday economy, fourteenth century poll tax details, and various other gems of information from a variety of standard or familiar sources. In addition, the equally familiar format involving the descent of the manor or manors and other estates is presented, as are details of the church, education, and charities. There is also rather more local detail on economic history than perhaps has always been the case in other VCH volumes, and given the location this is especially informative for agricultural historians. Local industries, fishing, and the servicing of industry and agriculture are also well covered. There are also a series of pen portraits on local government, mainly the operation of the manor courts, and the poor law administered by the churchwardens and the vestry, as well as references to the modern structures.

The degree of detail and its presentation is exemplary and a credit to the editor. But while there is nothing exceptional or unfamiliar to users of the VCH in general – you pay your money and you know what you are going to get – I must finish with a commendation for the many high quality maps that have been reconstructed or

redrawn from enclosure and other sources. They reveal a lot about the open-field structure in this part of east Yorkshire. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was simple in the extreme. The two-field village, township or hamlet dominated. About two thirds of the forty or so reconstructions reveal just two fields and only one third in three or four fields (but predominantly three). The only complications were the areas of common pasture known locally as carrs and ings, sometimes moors, as well as descriptions familiar elsewhere. Moreover, the overwhelming name of choice for the fields was simply based on opposite pairings of the four principal compass points.

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DAVID MCCLURE (ed.), *Ayrshire in the age of improvement. Contemporary accounts of agrarian and social improvement in late eighteenth-century Ayrshire* (Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, Ayrshire Monographs 27, 2002). 192 pp. £6 incl. p & p from Ronald W. Brash, AANHS, 10 Robsland Avenue, Ayr KA7 2RW.

This monograph contains two significant contemporary accounts of agriculture and rural life in the west of Scotland in the final quarter of the eighteenth century, namely the Ayrshire section of Andrew Wight's *Present state of husbandry in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1778-84) and Colonel William Fullarton's *General view of the agriculture of the county of Ayr* (Edinburgh, 1793). The authors adopted very different approaches to their subject. Wight's book was the result of several surveys throughout Scotland seeking examples of good agricultural practice that could be widely disseminated. The surveys and their publication were an initiative by the Commissioners of the Annexed Estates who managed those estates in the Highlands and neighbouring counties that had been forfeited from landowners who were involved in the Jacobite rising in 1745-46. Each estate is described in turn and Wight comments on a wide range of topics including soil conditions, crops, animal husbandry, enclosures and the benefits to be gained by planting shelter belts of trees. Wight's account is also notable for the way in which he identifies improvements made by many of the lairds on their estates. Lord Auchinleck for example was described as 'a most assiduous planter' and several letters written by landowners to Wight which describe their achievements were published in the original volumes. Finally, Wight also visited many towns in Ayrshire and he commented on manufacturing, markets, the value of town dung and the availability and price of labour. In contrast, Fullarton's study follows the familiar thematic structure of the early Board of Agriculture county surveys. Each

topic is dealt with in broad terms and while examples of experimentation and innovation are to be found, such as the introduction of different breeds of sheep, much of the study is given over to suggested improvements. Unlike later surveys such as William Aiton *General view of the agriculture of Ayr* (Glasgow, 1812), Fullarton's account frustratingly contains very few references to estates and individual places except when dealing with topics such as burgh landholdings and manufacturing. Much of his effort seems to have gone into a statistical summary of the population, number of landowners, acreage, valuation of land and a brief description of prevailing soil and land use characteristics of each parish.

In addition to the reprinted eighteenth-century texts, this monograph also contains an introduction written by the editor which provides readers with a short discussion of agrarian change in Ayrshire, a biography of Andrew Wight and some discussion of late-eighteenth century publications of interest to agricultural historians. A separate chapter is devoted to the life and career of Colonel Fullarton. The appendices comprise a list of Fullarton's publications; an explanation of Scottish weights and measures; a discussion of the role of lime and lastly an example of the cost of enclosing and improving land in Dreghorn parish. Each section of the volume including both reprinted sources is fully referenced with detailed footnotes. A map and index to Ayrshire parishes is also provided which will help readers to locate places mentioned by Wight and compare the characteristics of adjacent parishes in the valuation produced by Fullarton.

This publication makes available to a wider audience two books which are only available in comparatively few libraries. The editor and the Society are to be congratulated on the production of a very useful monograph. The extensive footnotes should help readers easily locate related books and journal articles and may encourage local historians to investigate the detailed evidence for the improving movement on Ayrshire estates in local and national archives.

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JOHN HATCHER AND MARK BAILEY, *Modelling the middle ages. The history and theory of England's economic development* (OUP, 2001). xiii + 254 pp. 1 table; 3 figs. £30.

This is an intriguing book which establishes, in the broadest terms, historical approaches to change in the medieval English economy. The core of this six-chapter study involves discussion of the three significant driving forces for economic change in the period: population, class and commercialization. Hatcher and

Bailey set these out and consider, in each case, their strengths and weaknesses. Thereafter, the authors discuss the general problems, not just of each model, but of economic modelling in general, drawing attention to the inevitable associated generalizations, evinced in the disregard of the specifics of time and place. Thus, the work of Postan, Hilton, Brenner, Britnell, and others, as well as the contribution of early theorists, is set out and discussed. They also offer, in an engaging final chapter, an alternative by attempting to admit into the discussion what, as they suggest, 'instinctively we know', that is, 'that historical outcomes are determined by a wide rather than a narrow range of forces and events, and that these forces and events are variable rather than fixed, and interdependent rather than independent' (pp. 208–9).

One of the strengths of the book, and one that meets, in many respects, the intention of its authors, is its potential role as an introduction to the historiography of the medieval English economy. This contribution is enhanced by a useful guide to further reading which follows the text. In particular, the volume offers a valuable pulling together of themes which, as an exercise, encourages historians and students to address questions of historical causation. It is very useful to see two leading economic historians engage fully with these sorts of issues; in that sense, also, the volume responds to earlier work by S. H. Rigby, as in his article on historical causation (*History* 80 (1995)). An engaging aspect of the work is the opportunity which it permits for the authors to reflect, as they and, of course, we, must, on the potential – or lack of potential – for historians to establish a causal hierarchy. Hatcher's telling phrase from his *Past and Present* article of 1994 (vol. 144), that 'devastating waves of mortality caused by a mutation in a micro-organism carried by fleas on the backs of rodents living at high altitudes in the remote steppes of Asia are not easily fitted into a dialectical process', is reworked here as a perfect indication of the problems of causation, and the identification of primary movers (p. 228).

But beyond the reflection on questions of causality and primacy, and the observation that we should not be drawn into simplification and generalization, there is also the further reflection on our innate inability to avoid a commitment to linearity, a conviction that is expressed both explicitly and implicitly here. While Hatcher and Bailey express some consternation at their own labelling in earlier work by other historians, labels which they essentially reject, it is undoubtedly the case that both of the authors have invested more of their past energies in promoting certain positions above others, an inevitability, of course, which should shock no one, and which is hinted at here in a rather more trenchant discussion of, for instance, class than of population. In that sense

also this highly enjoyable and provocative volume offers an important and useful perspective on historians and their writing as regards historical positions. It also affords us some insight into our ability to reflect upon the nature of our own endeavours: what is 'partisan' to the reader (p. 238) might well be a balanced synthesis to the author.

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RAY LOCK (ed.), *The court rolls of Walsham le Willows, 1351–99* (Suffolk Records Society 45, 2002). vii + 234 pp. 4 plates; 2 maps. £30.

This second volume of translations of the Walsham le Willows court rolls is as welcome as was the first. It provides an accessible and very interesting edition of manorial court records from this Suffolk lay manor for the second half of the fourteenth century. In his introduction, Ray Lock, as in the first volume for the early fourteenth century, sets out the essential history of the manorial descent and the nature of the documents as well as the particular evidence of the rolls. Lock describes the nature of the curial form, with separate discussion of, *inter alia*, court officials and procedure. He also discusses the tenantry, their landholding as well as their demography, a topic on which he has also published in earlier work. Lord-tenant relations are also given some attention as is the impact of plague on the manor.

In this introduction, Lock manages to hint at a number of important entries in the rolls. While their cumulative message is, undoubtedly, open to the sort of analysis that might permit arguments to be constructed regarding, say, the behaviour of the land market, the level of seigneurial reaction, and so on, there is much of particular and singular interest in this series. Amongst some of the highlights in the Walsham rolls are the entries which touch on the way in which the court was held and reveal the extent to which the lord oversaw judgements through the agency of his steward. Of real note here is the letter, written in French, from the lord of Walsham to his steward, directing him in the resolution of a dispute between two tenants in the manor court (p. 162 and appendix, p. 209). Similar references to the lord's direct involvement in the manor court at Walsham, especially in inter-tenant disputes over landholding, appear elsewhere in the rolls (for example, pp. 192–3; see also plate 4) and offer, in a manner far more explicit than is usually the case, an important insight into the management of this private jurisdiction.

There is also much of value with regard to custom and the role of the village community, including the statement by the homage, when questioned as to the extent of their obligation in 'recognition' of their new lord, that 'nothing is remembered of the payment', except that it is

clearly smaller than the lord imagined, not a fixed amount and at the 'courtesy' of the respondents! Finally, there are a series of very detailed maintenance agreements recorded in the later rolls (for instance, pp. 180-1), which will be of interest to those interested in, for example, life-cycle, diet, and provision for the elderly.

Usefully, and bravely, Lock, as in the first volume of the Walsham court rolls, includes plates of some of the rolls, which, for the first court, one of only two courts (out of 99) which is offered as a Latin transcript, allows easy comparison of his Latin text with the original. Such a comparison does reveal the occasional minor error or omission (as for instance, p. 28, in the entry recording the seizure of the property of Agnes Sket and its regnant as a farm, where 'est' is given for 'fuit', etc.); but the message of the text is not lost. While the selection of plates from the text is well-judged, an additional plate, of the Norman-French letter from the lord to the steward, the text of which appears in the appendix, would have been a real benefit. Irrespective of minor carpings, Lock deserves the wholehearted thanks of students of late medieval rural society who, through his considerable efforts, have been afforded access to a wealthy and important series of manorial court rolls.

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MICHAEL J. BRADDICK AND JOHN WALTER (eds), *Negotiating power in early modern society. Order, hierarchy and subordination in Britain and Ireland* (CUP, 2001). x + 316 pp. £40; TIM HARRIS (ed.), *The politics of the excluded, c. 1500-1800* (Palgrave, 2001) ix + 295 pp. £52.50 (hbk); £17.99 (pbk).

In the last decade early modern historians' definitions of the 'political' have expanded. At the same time, historians have also widened and deepened the boundaries of the 'political nation'. Politics is no longer confined to the activities of central government, and its personnel. The political nation is no longer simply the Privy Council, and its agents in the localities, the JPs and the 'county community'. These two collections of essays advance this process, and our understanding of it, to a new level. Rural historians will particularly want to seek out the essays by Steve Hindle on 'Exhortation and entitlement: negotiating inequality in English rural communities, 1550-1650', John Walter, 'Public transcripts, popular agency and the politics of subsistence in early modern England', and Dan Beaver, "'Bragging and daring words": honour, property and the symbolism of the hunt in Stowe, 1590-1642', all in Braddick and Walter, and Hindle (again!) on 'The political culture of the middling sort in English rural communities, c. 1550-1700' in the volume edited by Harris. But it is not individual essays but the two books

as a whole which have major implications for the writing of rural history.

In both studies, 'politics' is redefined as 'power relations', writ broadly across society, not merely the business of government. The essays in Braddick and Walter take this the furthest, discussing not only local administration, property rights, the creation of social order in England and Ireland, and the construction of religious orthodoxy, but also power relations in the sphere of personal life, illegitimacy, sexual mores in London and child abuse in the early modern period. The essays edited by Harris adhere more firmly to conventional political themes, such as popular protest, power in the parish, and contests over authority, but explore the extent of participation, and the political strategies of participants in new depth.

The main difference between the two volumes is methodological. The Braddick and Walter volume is a collective attempt to apply or evaluate the concepts of the anthropologist James C. Scott. Scott's work is best known to historians involved in peasant studies. It analyzes power relations by deconstructing verbal and written accounts, to identify the 'official' and the 'hidden' or 'contested' 'transcripts'. Scott has suggested reconstruction of these transcripts can help the observer understand the identity, coherence, values and strategies of groups with different relations to official power. Exclusion from the 'official transcript' or from formal positions of power, does not, in Scott's view, necessarily represent an absolute deprivation of social or political power among the socially 'subordinate'. The essays in Braddick and Walter set out, systematically, to reconstruct these hidden transcripts, and through them to disclose the negotiations of personal, gender, ethnic, economic, political and religious power that occurred in early modern society. The essays in Harris are also concerned primarily to discover this hidden transcript of power in early modern England, and are merely lacking the Scottian gloss.

This similarity means that the two volumes have common emphases. In particular, as they expand the perimeter of the political nation both sets of essays lay considerable stress on the agency, organizing powers and divided loyalties of the rulers of the parish, the 'middle sort of people'. They feature as key agents in society and politics in the essays by Wood, Hindle, Goldie, Harris and Rogers in the Harris volume, and in Hindle, Walter, and Braddick in Braddick and Walter. This group occupied an equivocal position in relation to formal political enfranchisement. They were involved in parish and judicial office and often possessed voting and property rights. Yet, they also represented their communities, as the top link of the chain of the socially and politically disenfranchised. Often, they were the prime negotiators of power,

socially, politically and spatially. In examining their influence over the 'official transcript', both volumes pay careful attention to the choices, strategies and interests of this group. They emerge as important arbiters in personal and public politics throughout the period, from the mass rural rebellions of the early sixteenth century, to the rowdy street politics of the eighteenth century.

Both volumes also share a common assumption, that those below the enfranchised, office-holding elite exhibited a clear and repeated political awareness, knowledge, and the capacity to exert influence on the elite. This is evident in the essays by Shagan, Wood, Bellany, Harris, Walter, and Gillespie. Political activism among the bulk of the population is depicted as consistent, rather than episodic, a constant presence to be dealt with by those in authority, not the momentary consciousness induced by short-term crises. This demonstrates that the concentration of 'Revisionist' interpretations on the politics of the court or the political centre and on politics narrowly defined ('government and the business of government'), obscures the effort, energy and endeavour that went into ruling early modern England and its people. These essays also illustrate that this process was constant and active, and that governments that failed to negotiate with sections of the people (notably Charles I's and to lesser degree Henry VIII's) could not expect blind, apolitical obedience. This provides an enriched understanding of the political process, showing that authority, like liberty, was the result of eternal vigilance, rather than of unquestioned deference, or naked shows of force.

Such approaches work best in the public rather than the personal sphere. As Gowing points out in her essay, the variable distribution of power within gender relations makes it difficult to reconstruct 'women as a coherent subordinate group with a shared culture of resistance'. The same might be said of children, their abusers and those engaged in other forms of illicit sexual activity. As Braddick and Walter also observe in their very important and thoughtfully-argued introduction, in unsympathetic hands Scott's interpretation can lead to the creation of a binary divide, between those in authority versus the 'subordinate', and the 'official' versus the 'hidden' transcripts. Wood's essay on the language of popular politics, which is not written with particular reference to Scott, comes closest to arguing for the polarities of 'elite' versus 'plebeian' identities, but he emphasizes that this duality is found in contemporary terminology, and illustrates the hidden fault-lines within these two opposed groups. As these essays are 'post-Revisionist' in their understanding of politics, so in their analyses of identity and society they also avoid the artificial, arbitrary distinction between 'elite' and 'popular cultures'.

Reading the two volumes not only emphasizes their

similarities, but it also introduces a slight paradox. The essays in Harris would have been given more coherence by dealing with Scott's methodology explicitly (although essays by Wood and Rogers deal with his ideas implicitly). The search for the political ideas, communications, organizations and activities of 'the excluded' can be conceptualized fruitfully as the reconstruction of the 'hidden transcripts' of power. Similarly, in Braddick and Walter, an explicit consideration of the fact that people could adopt different social identities or negotiating positions at the same time may have enriched the evaluation of Scott's ideas for historians (although this point is noted in passing by Walter, Braddick, Lake, and Champion and McNulty).

Therefore cross-pollinating ideas and concepts from both volumes gives the reader genuine insights into the politics and strategies of power of those beneath the level of the formally enfranchised or in positions of authority. Both studies extend our understanding of politics, not merely by broadening the definition of the term to include other power relations in society, but by deepening our knowledge of the political process in a non-democratic society. They demonstrate that monarchs and royal governments did not translate their decisions into policy and practice simply by a process of magic or magnificence. Rather, they had to cajole, coerce, negotiate, conciliate, advance, retreat, and listen to the ruled. Structures of government had likewise to build in the perspectives of those who they co-opted. The result was not democratic, equitable, representative or 'popular'. Instead there were a series of social and political compromises that reflected the distribution of wealth in the kingdom rather than the distribution of population, and which were periodically threatened, reshaped and renewed.

Those in authority were made to understand that they were an unrepresentative minority, weak in terms of numbers, dependent upon support in order to exercise power, accountable to norms of 'stewardship'. Those who were nominally subordinate were kept away from the levers of power by property qualifications, inside knowledge, social networks and patriarchal ideology. However, just because it was difficult for either to visualize a world without servants or political masters, this does not mean that power relations were immutable, or non-negotiable. The greatest weapons of the 'excluded' were the fears of the elite. Both volumes demonstrate the political awareness and judgement shown by the excluded in marshalling these fears and this power over three hundred years, until the gradual advent of representative democracy.

The main methodological question posed by these two works is whether James C. Scott's ideas assist us

in understanding this process. The answer given by Braddick and Walter is that the notions of the 'hidden transcript' and negotiations of power by the 'subordinate' in society are investigative tools not interpretative panaceas. We should not expect to find one 'official transcript' or authority-group, opposed by a single, unofficial version. The detailed studies in these two volumes demonstrate the sheer complexity of social identities and power relationships in early modern England and Ireland. As Braddick notes, they also illustrate the historian's need to participate in Clifford Geertz's world of 'thick description', 'for here it really matters whether the movement of an eyelid was a twitch or a wink, or a burlesque of a wink'. As a consequence, discussions phrased in terms of simple polarities of power now appear as redundant as political analyses confined to the social elite.

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L. A. CLARKSON AND E. MARGARET CRAWFORD, *Feast and famine. A history of food and nutrition in Ireland, 1500-1920* (OUP, 2001). x + 325 pp. 30 tables; 28 graphs. £25.

Irish cuisine has never attracted its Elizabeth David or even its Jamie Oliver, and for good reason. Why should they bother when what is distinctive about Irish fare – items such as colcannon, boxty, dip 'n onion (potato-based dishes), drisheen (a blood and oatmeal sausage), crubeens (boiled pigs' feet), and buttermilk – have already disappeared from Irish tables, and even bacon and cabbage, soda bread, and Irish stew are fast becoming heritage foods? Irish food has also lacked a specialist history until now, though there have been monographs about the impact of the potato in Ireland and on the history of brewing and distilling, and several studies of Irish agricultural history.

Leslie Clarkson's long career as one of Ireland's foremost economic historians and Margaret Crawford's dual training as a nutritionist and historian qualify them admirably for writing this ambitious and important book. In Ireland multiple authorship has tended to be the exception in economic and social history – four-fifths of the contributions to *Irish Economic and Social History* over the past decade have been single-authored – but Clarkson and Crawford epitomize its advantages. *Feast and famine* is the culmination of their partnership.

The sources available to them mean that we learn more here about the well-off in the community before 1800 and more about the poor thereafter. The earlier chapters rely more on big house accounts, tours, diaries, and the like, mainly of Anglo-Irish provenance; the later more on official sources. The dietary corollary of the

secular shift from mainly pastoral to mainly arable farming is well spelt out, but the implications for nutritional status are less clear, at least for the earlier period. Most of the hard information on food intake for the post-1800 period concerns the less well off, and it confirms that, years of famine apart, the monotonous diet of the Irish poor was also quite nutritious. Much of the book concerns Ireland's fateful dalliance and love affair with the potato in the centuries before the Great Famine. The relative longevity and good health of the pre-Famine Irish has been highlighted in recent years, and Clarkson and Crawford add their own insights based on a careful scrutiny of evidence on working-class diets both before and after the Great Famine. The finding that the rural poor consumed enough carbohydrates and proteins to be healthy, though not enough fat, squares with anthropometric and impressionistic evidence. While thus corroborating the quality of the potato as a food, Clarkson and Crawford allow more room for supplements in the diet of the poor than previous accounts. And they argue that the nutritional status of the poor may have deteriorated when they switched from potatoes and skimmed milk to tea and bread (pp. 236–240).

Famine is a recurring theme and the famines that preceded the cataclysm of the 1840s are well documented here. But famine does not dominate: indeed, Clarkson and Crawford stress the infrequency of big famines (pp. 132–3). This is an important point, given Irish poverty. They also speculate on the negative effects of the Great Famine on the physical and mental development of survivors' children in the worst affected areas. This is a challenging topic for future research.

Hardly surprisingly, alcoholic drink features too, though the Irish reputation for drinking is not upheld. Against the ancient stereotype of an inebriated gentry Clarkson and Clarkson invoke Arthur Young's remark that 'hard drinking is rare among people of fortune' (p. 53) and produce excise and import data that tell 'a sober story'. Poverty constrained consumption at the other end of the pecking order, leading the *Freeman's Journal* to opine in 1861 'perhaps the most abstemious race in the world is the labouring class of Irishman' (p. 108).

Two puzzles not definitively resolved here concern the failures of the Irish to develop their own cheeses and to make more of the abundant fish surrounding them (pp. 45–7). Clarkson and Crawford tentatively suggest that these may have been due to 'a shortage of equipment' and the requisite skills (pp. 18, 81). As long as such puzzles persist there is room for both economic and cultural interpretations of food consumption choices. Economists tend to see rising incomes and of the relative price shifts and increasing variety brought by about globalization as

largely responsible for such shifts; Clarkson and Crawford also wisely allow culture and habit a role.

Some gaps remain. Topics such as food hygiene, the shifts in the daily and seasonal rhythms of eating and drinking, the changing extent of food storage, and the evolution of potato and grain varieties might have been given more space. But besides being an able and reliable account of Irish diet over half a millennium, *Feast and famine* is also an excellent introduction to much of the new research in Irish economic history over the past two decades.

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NEIL R. WILKYN AND BARNETBY WEA, *All things forgotten. Village life in Barnetby in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (WEA Barnetby branch, 1999). 190 pp. Illus. £12.50 incl. p & p, from WEA Barnetby, 48 Railway Street, Barnetby, Lincs DN38 6DQ.

North Lincolnshire has produced a plethora of fine WEA local historians including Rex C. Russell and Geoffrey F. Bryant. A strong tradition of WEA classes and published work exists in such places as Barton on Humber, Keelby and Winteringham. Now Barnetby can be added to the list. This book is the result of work from 1996 to 1999 on probate inventories, first under the tutelage of Nick Lyons and then Neil Wilkyn. The period studied was from the 1520s to 1735. There were 75 inventories for this period.

Barnetby le Wold is about eight miles south of the Humber and four miles east-north-east of Brigg. It is a parish of 2,500 acres, one third of which lies over the 150 foot contour. It lies in a natural west/east gap of the Lincolnshire Wolds which was utilized for road and later rail and motorway links. An act of 1766 enclosed the vast medieval north and south fields, the award of 1768 allocating 2260 acres.

The book has been divided into two parts, the first being an analysis of the inventories. It has ten chapters on such topics as rooms and their uses, cooking and eating equipment, luxuries and debts. The two chapters on the appraisers and agriculture, crops and livestock are particularly interesting. The second half of the book consists of all the transcribed inventories and a glossary. Use is also made of other sources such as religious censuses, parish records and glebe terriers.

Nationally, work on probate inventories has been led by such scholars as Mark Overton and Margaret Spufford. They brought inventories in out of the cold. There is a small amount of work based on Lincolnshire inventories, notably by Dr Joan Thirsk and Dr J. A. Johnston. However, some authors in the *History of Lincolnshire* series for the period studiously ignored

probate inventories. If carefully used, they can be a very valuable source for local history. Among their limitations is the fact that surviving inventories relate to only a small proportion of the population. Comparison with the bishops' transcripts show that 77 per cent of the deceased in Barnetby left no inventories. Women and the lesser sort are very poorly represented. Another drawback is that inventory wealth is not total wealth, as real estate is not included. Sometimes debts too are omitted. Land tenure is not given. Where crops are shown, crop values are stated but sown acreages generally are not. Finally there is the problem of the rather subjective valuations given by the appraisers. In Barnetby, 73 per cent of the appraisers could sign their names, but this was not necessarily an indicator of high levels of education. On the credit side, inventories do lend themselves to statistical analysis and the study has done this.

The book has many illustrations. They do not all enhance the text. Some of the maps have small or blurred lettering (p. 54.). The map on p. 11 has no northern coastline. However, the main difficulty is that 75 inventories are rather too few to provide a sensitive barometer of change over a 200 year period. Bearing all these factors in mind, the study is an admirable and interesting one. This book is a welcome addition to local history and will act as a model and source book for other WEA groups or individuals who wish to research the history of their village through the medium of probate inventories. It is a credit to a relatively small group of local historians that they have not only researched but published their results.

SHEILA MCA. STEVENS
University of Warwick

TOM WILLIAMSON, *The transformation of rural England. Farming and the landscape, 1700-1870* (University of Exeter Press, 2002). x + 199 pp. 35 figs. £47.50 (hbk); £18.99 (pbk).

Landscape history, notes Tom Williamson, does, 'what historical geographers used to do, before many of them lost interest in maps and embraced postmodernism'. Happily the pages that follow are totally free of the baroque excesses and gothic absurdities of the postmodern world and Williamson provides a text remarkable for the breadth of its scholarship, its clear understanding of the scientific principles underlying some of the changes he describes, and (relatively rare in agrarian history texts) its sound and practical common sense. Over the course of seven chapters he reviews the whys and wherefores of agrarian change and revolution and describes in detail temporal change in various regions of England including the midland clays, the light heaths and chalklands, the areas to the north and west of the midland plain and

the clays and fens of East Anglia. As one might expect from Williamson's own academic pedigree, the approach throughout is from a landscape perspective and the various economic, agricultural and ecological themes are interwoven to present a rich tapestry of regional variety. Thus, the natural environment moulded social, cultural and environmental structures and society, landscapes and farming were intimately connected to form distinctive patterns in distinctive regions.

Inevitably a work of this sort covers a good deal of hitherto well-cultivated ground. We are confronted, for example, with the rather hoary old arguments about the significance of the turnip, the vexed question of the contribution of the small farmer to agrarian change, the effect of enclosure on productivity and the growing social divisions in rural society as agrarian improvement forged ahead. However, Williamson deals with this material with a commendable lightness of touch and offers an abundance of fascinating minutiae of landscape change. His chapters on the midland shires (well known to me) and the fens (better known to him) are typically replete both with practical detail and perceptive insight regarding, in particular, the effects of enclosure and drainage on landscape change. The rationalization of road networks, temporal changes in field shape, the creation of woods, coppices and parks, the contraction of villages, relocation of farms, peat shrinkage and the various attempts to arrest it, the construction and operation of wind and steam pumps – little escapes the author's eye. Reading Tom Williamson's account of the triumphant transformation of the fens into prime wheat and potato land and thinking of Tony Phillips' masterly works on the drainage of the English clays leads one to despair of the lunacy of present-day policy makers who, with a jejeunerie alarming in the extreme, propose the blockage of field drains to create more wetland! For all the significance accorded by historians to the agricultural revolution on the light lands, Williamson argues, with some justification, that the creation of the fenland arable made the greatest contribution to increased demand for cereals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Dutch engineers in the time of William III made some inroads, but it was the genius of the Victorian drainers (capable of creating an infrastructure whereby seventeen steam pumps could drain 222,000 acres) which ultimately moulded this rich Canaan.

It goes without saying that a book of so wide a scope will attract its critics. The doyen of English agricultural historians will raise an eyebrow to see his name transmogrified to 'George'; the inhabitants of that charming Northamptonshire village of Wilbarston will quibble at 'Wilbaston', while field botanists will be surprised to see *Holcus lanatus* described as a herb. Meanwhile, regional

specialists, be they agricultural historians or historical geographers, will quibble over some of Williamson's points of emphasis or some of the more technical aspects of agrarian change. Williamson claims, for example, that there was 'significant' improvement in the quality of upland pastures in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I am not sure what 'significant' means in this context, but in any case would offer the view that very little improvement in the nutritional quality of grazing throughout Britain as a whole occurred in the pre-Stapledon years. In any event, writers on agricultural history in any shape or form need to qualify rather vague terms like 'significant', 'substantial', 'when the dung was at its best', 'infertile soils' and the like. And then we come to the difficult question of cereal yields and cereal quality. Tom Williamson, like most others writing in this field, expresses yields in terms of bushels per acre. Given that on the one hand bushel weights will vary widely according to season, soil type, variety and fertilizer treatment, and that on the other an undergraduate readership is likely to be wholly bemused by the bushel, perhaps it is time to abandon this rather arcane unit in favour of something more logical – pounds per acre or kilograms per hectare, perhaps. This term 'bushel' presents all sorts of problems. To begin with it is by no means always the case that fertilizer treatment increases volume at the expense of bushel weight, while to claim modest increases in volumetric output of cereals as a result of enclosure may not tell the whole story since bushel weights themselves may have changed due to more favourable nutrient flow within the system.

Williamson rightly observes that the wholesale transformation of rural England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries took place at the expense of ecological diversity. Fenland drainage, leading to the loss of reed beds, peat cuttings, meres and sluggish rivers significantly impoverished the flora and fauna of the east, while the improvement of heath, chalk and downland decimated ecological niches elsewhere. Whether those and other changes represented 'an ecological disaster on an awesome scale', however, is a matter for argument. After all, the disappearance of the unfortunate bustard and the reduction of heathland butterfly and insect populations has to be set against the environmental enrichment offered by the hedges, parks, copses, ponds and roadside verges of the 'improved' landscape of enclosure so admirably described by the author. The modern green movement has successfully perpetuated the myth that intensive farming is wholly responsible for reduced wildlife diversity in the countryside when the case is far from proven. The argument conveniently ignores such effects as the decline of the gamekeepers (and the concurrent surge in the number of foxes, corvids and other small

mammal predators), while it is clear that many of its proponents have not read the works of A. G. Street, H. J. Massingham and others who testify to the deleterious effects on the natural flora and fauna of the inter-war rural depression when much of rural England sank into weed-infested desuetude. Tom Williamson's eco-environmental judgements are commendably balanced, although even he cannot resist the statutory mantra of farmer-bashing when he refers to the 'onslaught on the environment' mounted by the technologically sophisticated farmers of the post-war era. Few would gainsay the errors of the 1960s and 1970s, but anyone who takes the trouble to look carefully at the contemporary English landscape (preferably on foot and definitely not from the window of a car parked in a lay-by on an arterial road) cannot fail to be impressed by the environmental enhancement undertaken by farmers over the past twenty years. Ponds have been dug, thousands of miles of hedgerows planted, vernacular buildings have been conserved and a rich new diversity of crops planted in a countryside now more heavily-wooded than for generations. The 'onslaught' is over; a new mood prevails, and if one ignores the bedraggled beastliness of 'setaside' the English landscape remains as glorious as it ever was. This triumph, like that so elegantly described by Williamson, is deserving of celebration.

Tom Williamson's excellent book serves as a useful complement to the writings of Mark Overton, Michael Turner and other contributors to the burgeoning literature on agrarian change. It raises many questions and provides many answers; it is both scholarly and accessible, and besides promoting debate among specialists it will offer a stimulating experience for all those interested in countryside history. Williamson manages to bring to life many of the themes and topics which for too long have slumbered in indigestible form in the ranks of academic journals and weighty, overpriced books.

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

JOHN CHAPMAN AND SYLVIA SEELIGER, *Enclosure, environment and landscape in southern England* (Tempus Publishing, 2001). 160 pp. 35 illus. £30.

This book is a comprehensive survey of post-1700 enclosure in the four counties of Dorset, Hampshire, Sussex and Wiltshire. The research on which this book is based forms part of the authors' wider ongoing 'National Enclosure Project'. The book's stated aims are to examine the role of different types of enclosure in the period and to assess the impact on the landscape and environment, though the focus is in fact overwhelmingly on the first of these aims.

The most significant finding to emerge from this

book is the continuing importance of non-parliamentary enclosure across both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In these four counties as a whole the authors suggest that non-parliamentary enclosure was more important than parliamentary enclosure after 1700 and they speculate that this may prove to be typical of counties outside of the Midlands where eighteenth and nineteenth century enclosure was more exclusively parliamentary in character.

The authors put each enclosure into one of three major categories: parliamentary enclosure, enclosure by formal agreement and informal enclosure. Parliamentary enclosures need no further explanation. Enclosures by formal agreement were effected by a written agreement signed by all the interested parties. Informal enclosures cover those brought about by piecemeal enclosures, by an owner who owned all the affected land and common rights, or by a tenant who controlled all the land and common rights.

Two introductory chapters are followed by one on sources which will be valuable to anyone trying to document either the presence of common land or its enclosure. But the meat of the book is contained in chapters on each of the four counties. For each county the authors have documented, as far as the available sources allow, all the open-field systems, commons and common meadows extant in 1700. They then go on to identify when and by what means each of the commonable elements was enclosed in the ensuing two hundred years and to assess the relative amounts of arable, pasture and meadow enclosed by these means. Because of the difficulties associated with determining the acreages affected by non-parliamentary enclosure the authors frequently focus on the number of systems extinguished by each method. The authors leave little doubt that in terms of the numbers of open-field systems, commons and common meadows enclosed, non-parliamentary enclosure was more important than parliamentary enclosure in much of the region.

However, this enormously valuable exercise is not documented as fully as it deserves in the book. The statistical information which the authors have produced is scattered through the text in forms which are inconsistent between and within chapters. Take Dorset as an example. We are told that there were 116 open-field systems but not to how many townships these belonged – elsewhere we are informed that some townships had multiple systems. There were 132 townships with common waste and forty with common meadows. But how many townships were there in total and how many had none of these types of common land and how many had one, two or all three? We learn that one third of the field systems, half of the common meadows and one quarter of the commons

disappeared entirely by informal means but are not given the breakdowns between the different types of informal enclosures. The corresponding information for parliamentary and formal agreement enclosures are given in acreage terms without the numbers of systems affected. However, the acreages enclosed by each means are more important than the numbers of systems enclosed for the wider argument. Whilst the figure of 103,000 acres enclosed by parliamentary enclosure is clearly derived from the awards, the derivation of the figure of 87,000 acres for the non-parliamentary enclosures is produced without explanation. Given the impossibility of calculating acreages for most of these, providing an account of the estimation procedures used will be crucial if these figures are to gain general acceptance.

The four substantive chapters also contain much narrative material illustrating the negotiations and manoeuvrings which preceded and accompanied the various types of enclosure. Finally an appendix contains details of each of the parliamentary enclosures. Space has not been found to list the open-fields, commons and common meadows extant in 1700 nor the non-parliamentary enclosures. This is a shame because these would have been invaluable for local historians, though the authors have already published a very full account for Hampshire (*A Guide to Enclosure in Hampshire 1700–1900*, Hampshire Record Series 15, 1997).

Sadly, the publisher's editing of the book leaves something to be desired. For example, Figure 32 is seriously mislabelled and lacks a key while Figure 9 is referred to on page 62 as Figure 4.6 and the headings in the appendix are over the wrong columns.

This book will be essential reading for students of enclosure. However, it is to be hoped that the authors intend to publish a more complete account of the data elsewhere to do full justice to the vast labours embodied in the underlying research.

LEIGH SHAW-TAYLOR
Cambridge Group

CHARLES K. RAWDING, *The Lincolnshire Wolds in the nineteenth century* (History of Lincolnshire Committee, Studies in the History of Lincolnshire, 1, 2001). xiv + 246 pp. 20 tables; 50 figs. £25 (hbk); £12.95 (pbk). The History of Lincolnshire Committee, having completed the publication of its twelve-volume history of the county, has embarked on a new series of monographs on various aspects of the county's history. This is the first of these monographs, and it gets the series off to an excellent start.

The Wolds form a substantial part of eastern Lincolnshire, comprising an upland region of some 350 square miles, about 45 miles from north to south and from five

to eight miles wide. It is in fact a distinct *pays* in the French sense of being a region of coherent geographical characteristics; basically a smooth chalk tableland with loamy soils and few villages.

The interest of the Wolds for students of agricultural history lies mainly in the way in which they responded to the agricultural revolution from the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1800 they were distinctly underutilized. The main activity over large areas of the upland was rabbit warrening. But thereafter, rising corn prices and falling rabbit prices led to the modernization of the Wolds. The story is then one of gradual improvement, so that the region became one of the great exemplars of high farming. The critical elements here were soil improvements, combined with turnips for feeding sheep. The result was a rotation which produced high yields and good profits. By the mid-nineteenth century, the region was one of the foremost grain growing and sheep breeding areas in England. The other notable feature was the size of farms, which were not unusually several hundred acres, or even over 1,000 acres. The large tenant farmer dominated the industry and much of the social life of the region.

In a region with few large centres of population and large estates, the most important group in society was that of the great landlords. The greatest was the Earl of Yarborough, whose Brocklesby estate covered some 57,000 acres in 1831. The other large ones were Henry Chaplin at Blankney (23,000 acres) and Christopher Turnor (21,000 acres) at Stoke Rochford. The policy of the larger owners was the liberal one of keeping rents low in the early years, as the land was improved and yields rose. After the mid-century they were more disposed to cash in and raise the rents. On the whole they seem to have run the estates fairly. There were few leases, and the system worked on tenant right. The 'Lincolnshire custom' was regarded as an exemplar of the type, and attempts were made to introduce it by legislation into the rest of the country. Some larger landlords also had a policy of directly letting cottages to labourers, bypassing the tenant of the farm. The aim here was to ensure fair treatment for the labourer, which would ensure a good supply of competent labour.

The great landowners' influence was seen in many ways apart from the purely agricultural. The second Earl of Yarborough, who was also the chairman of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway, was instrumental in running the railway line in a loop close to the Brocklesby estate, with its own convenient railway station, built in a style to match that of the estate. Tennyson d'Eyncourt rebuilt Bayons Manor as 'the ultimate Victorian mediaeval Gothic castle' (photograph, p. 63). The landlords' influence was felt locally as Justices of the Peace, as ecclesiastical patrons, as leaders of fox

hunting and as charitable donors. The influence of the great landowner and larger tenant farmer was greatest in the smaller villages, and in estate villages.

Whilst concentration on the activities of the great landowners might give an impression of seamless social harmony, this was clearly not the case. Social and economic relationships within the countryside were at a particularly low ebb at the time of the Swing riots in 1830, and Lincolnshire was prominent in the 'revolt of the field' which accompanied the rise of agricultural trades unionism in the 1870s. But that is not to say that between those times that peace reigned. Throughout this period there were various associations formed to combat agrarian crime. The 'Brigg, Barton, Caistor, Grimsby, Kirtton and Winterton Association for the Protection of Property against Incendiarism' was formed in 1844 and was still in existence in 1865. Simmering discontent and endemic poverty was the lot of the bulk of the workforce, and the contrasts in society were enormous: 'when the Earl of Yarborough died in 1875 his stock of cigars sold for £850, or more than 18 years' income for a Lincolnshire agricultural labourer' (p. 159).

Dr Rawding has made excellent use of estate papers and other local and national sources in drawing a picture of the region, its economy and society, which is a model of its kind.

PETER DEWEY

Royal Holloway, University of London

ALAN ARMSTRONG, *The population of Victorian and Edwardian Norfolk* (Centre of East Anglian Studies, University of East Anglia, 2000). 142 pp. 29 tables. £9 incl. p&cp.

Norfolk is an interesting county. It is, or at least was, quite remote, intensely rural; its people have a deep sense of their own special identity. It is a place of sky and sea and wind. In the Victorian and Edwardian eras it was not at the centre of things – no coal and only three small towns – but because of this it offers an excellent case study of demographic change in the agricultural regions of England. In this short book Alan Armstrong has done the county which first charmed him during National Service in the 1950s proud. This is both an account of a county's population history during seventy years and a guide for local historians. It is a model of clarity and good sense.

The book is divided into six chapters which do not quite follow the conventional structure of demography texts. Chapter One establishes the basic dimensions of the Norfolk population from the decennial censuses and demonstrates that whilst the county was capable of quite natural population growth its enumerated residents only increased by about 25 per cent between 1841 and 1911.

Norfolk fed Victorian London with food and people. These roles, especially the latter, are highlighted in Chapter Two, 'Coming and going'. In migration terms Norfolk was a county of 'push' rather than 'pull'. In fact at least 85 per cent of its inhabitants were born in the county and although its towns did grow, they did so largely at the expense of the rural-agricultural sector.

Chapter Three turns the reader's attention to 'Disease and death'. In general there was a marked urban-rural mortality gradient in Victorian England and Wales. Most, but not all, rural areas experienced relatively low levels of mortality, and thus higher life expectancy, which in turn allowed for natural population growth. By 1911 Norfolk's inhabitants certainly did experience a life expectancy at birth higher than that of England and Wales, but for those who lived in Norwich there was little difference between local and national survival chances. Armstrong's account of mortality variation and decline has clearly been thwarted by the availability of statistics. It has, for example, proved difficult to chart the changing geographical variations in the infant mortality rate, that classic barometer of health and welfare, because annual rates are not reported for registration districts after the mid-1880s and because the records of the town Medical Officers of Health have not proved to be as comprehensive as might have been anticipated. Nonetheless, a rough sketch can be drawn and some attempt at explanation offered. But here some of the limitations of local (county) studies begin to become visible. Norfolk was not at the forefront of medical or sanitary innovation, yet its mortality declined almost despite itself. Here is one of the unresolved mysteries of Victorian demography to which Norfolk's experience could contribute: why did mortality from pulmonary tuberculosis decline from mid-century well before scientific identification and effective treatment? Norfolk was a high tuberculosis area (with the rest of East Anglia and Wales) and it too contributed to national decline. Was this a function of rising living standards (in diet and housing especially) or more to do with the virulence of the disease itself?

Chapters Four and Five cover, respectively, 'Getting wed' and 'Babies and birth rates'. The former points to the generally late age at marriage in Norfolk with a mean age at first marriage in the early twentieth century around 28 years. The latter uses Coale's fertility indices to chart the decline in marital and non-marital fertility, as well as suggesting some causes of the local fertility transition, causes which turn out to be universal rather than specific in their operation since it appears that fertility decline was remarkable uniform across Norfolk.

The final chapter offers some of the author's reflections on Norfolk and its population, together with the possibilities for local study. It offers a fitting conclusion

for the professional and amateur alike. After Kent and now Norfolk, let us hope that Professor Armstrong will be turning his attention to other counties.

ROBERT WOODS
University of Liverpool

DIANE MONTAGUE, *Farming, food and politics. The merchant's tale* (Irish Agricultural Wholesale Society, 2000). 392 pp. Illus. £15

It is now well over thirty years since Professor Thompson first made the case for a second agricultural revolution, based on the increasing use of purchased inputs, especially of feeding stuffs and fertilizers. Beginning in the 1830s, the trend was strengthened by the increasing availability of cheap grain from the 1870s onwards. The cost of feeds, seeds, fertilizers and pesticides was equivalent to only about 17 per cent of the gross output of UK agriculture in 1870, but more than doubled by 1970. This transformation of agriculture implies the simultaneous rise of another industry of input suppliers. In many cases they emerged from the ranks of the corn merchants. In addition to buying the outputs of the harvest from the farmers, they sold to them the inputs required to produce it. And in turn supplying the merchants were the fertilizer manufacturers, seed breeders, feed compounders and agrochemical manufacturers. Without this complex network of businesses the technical and economic changes which have transformed agriculture in the last 150 years would be inconceivable, but with some exceptions, most notably the recent volume VII (1850–1914) of *The agrarian history of England and Wales* (E. J. T. Collins, ed., CUP, 2000), agricultural historians have largely ignored the supply trade. There have indeed been numerous company histories, often published by the companies themselves, but nobody has been brave enough to tackle the whole story.

In some ways this neglect is surprising, because the agricultural supply trade is an interesting case study of the transition from atomistic family businesses to oligopolistic transnational corporations with globalized names such as Advanta, Aventis, and Novartis, and from traditional technology to science-based industry. Conversely, the neglect may be understandable, given the complexity of the trade. There were numerous local merchants selling everything from baler twine to pesticides, often supplied on credit against expected future purchases of grain. Many fertilizer and feed producers dealt through them, but others sold direct to farmers using their own extensive sales forces. Then, latterly, there were numerous mergers and acquisitions involving endless name changes as the whole industry was rationalized and combined so that feed manufacturers were owned by grain merchants and seed suppliers by agrochemical

companies. Perhaps only somebody with Diane Montague's long experience as one of the leading specialist journalists in the trade has the necessary background knowledge to untangle it all.

Over half of her book is concerned with the corn and agricultural merchanting trade, concentrating on the period after 1945. The development of merchants, millers, seed crushers and corn exchanges from the eighteenth to the late nineteenth centuries had already brought into existence firms whose names – Ranks, Spillers, Bibby, BOCM, Pauls, Cargill – remained familiar until recent years. It is a story of expansion from the late nineteenth century, reaching a peak in the period 1945–73, which she identifies as 'the golden years'. By the late 1970s, 250,000 UK farms were being serviced by 60,000 people in the supply trade alone, and 85 per cent of the businesses involved were still family-owned. Over the following twenty years amalgamation and rationalization stripped out 20,000 jobs in the input industries and more in food processing and marketing. By 1997 the supply trade association's membership fell to 200 (there had been more than ten times that number in 1947) and the eight largest merchants were buying 80 per cent of all the grain sold by UK farmers. The process of concentration and globalization was replicated to an even greater extent in the flour milling and animal feed trades. And, as the subsequent chapters reveal, fertilizers, the seed trade and the pesticide industry followed the same pattern of expansion, overcapacity, rationalization and globalization.

Diane Montague deserves the gratitude of future workers in this field. She has reminded them that the topic exists and is fascinating and important. She has provided an enormous amount of detailed information, especially on the complexities of who merged with or took over whom. On the other hand, this is an example of journalism as the first draft of history rather than the last word. There is still plenty to do, because this book is stronger on fact than analysis. Indeed, the analysis is virtually absent, and so much information is packed in that it often becomes confusing. The two pages 73–4, for example, deal with international wheat policy, the rise of Cargill, Louis Dreyfus and other multinationals, the 1931 Agricultural Marketing Act, the launch of the London grain futures market, the National Institute of Agricultural Botany and seed testing, agricultural mechanization and the development of the Pertwee group of companies. She is often imprecise on dates, with the phrase 'at about the same time' frequently occurring. There are interesting stories, and one riveting but unsubstantiated allegation: we are told (on p. 143) that there was 'strong evidence at the time' (the early 1980s) that the impetus for the campaign against the weedkiller 2,4,5-T came from 'the Church of Scientology which was being cleverly

manipulated by the Soviet Union', but we are not told what the strong evidence was. A good editor might have improved the book, and not only by removing the typographical errors and the inaccuracies in the bibliography. At present it resembles a quarry face shortly after blasting, with a lot of potentially useful material requiring some sorting and shaping.

PAUL BRASSLEY
University of Plymouth

VAL PORTER, *British cattle* (Shire, 2001). 40 pp. £4.50;

DEREK RAYNER, *Traction engines and other steam road engines* (Shire, 2002). 40 pp. £4.50.

Reading Val Porter's excellent contribution to the Shire series puts me very much in mind of a former girlfriend, a wholly admirable art historian, whose persistent complaint when travelling the English countryside was of the ubiquity of 'boring old Friesians'. Ms Porter, whose unquenchable passion for pigs and cattle will be well-known to readers of this *Review*, describes and illustrates the dwindling pool of British breeds and in so doing hints at the profound dangers of declining genetic diversity. All the usual suspects are to hand: Glamorgans, Longhorns, Red Polls, Lincoln Reds, Shetlands and White Park Cattle, many of them relatively common within living memory, but now steadily sinking to minority or even endangered status. In enumerating the traditional British breeds, Ms Porter illustrates the extraordinary contribution of these animals to world livestock production. The past century has witnessed the export of that beef breed par excellence, the Aberdeen Angus, to some sixty countries worldwide, while the Sussex, with its ample supply of sweat glands, has been a major contributor to the beef industries of warmer climates in South America, South Africa, Texas and elsewhere. Similar claims might be made (though in different environmental circumstances) for the Highland, Galloway and Welsh Black. Meanwhile, the British beef industry, in pursuit of higher growth rates, better killing-out percentages and higher quality (sic) has pursued the path of cross-breeding to imported Continental breeds with their double-muscled conformation and their tendency to induce calving difficulties. In like manner, the Friesian breed, which almost wholly replaced the Dairy Shorthorn, is itself being eclipsed by infiltrations of Holstein blood, thereby to produce higher yields of milk of significantly lower quality from animals requiring higher food inputs. It seems inexplicable, at least to me, that a national industry, faced with declining demand for two of its major products, beef and milk, should resort to a strategy which increases output at the cost of quality and at the risk of irreplaceable genetic diversity.

As archivist of the Road Roller Association and a

member of the Road Steam Forum, it seems only right and proper that Derek Rayner should write on traction engines in a Shire volume which fittingly complements his earlier *Road Rollers*. As one might expect, he writes with conviction, enthusiasm and authority on what to many might seem a somewhat esoteric subject replete with engaging, if often obscure, technical terms. Even so, once one has mastered the 'Pickering-style fitting', the 'Watt-type heavy two-ball governor' and 'worm and quadrant direct steering', one can enjoy Rayner's discussion of the traction engine, a vehicle used, as readers will recall, to such marvellous sexually metaphoric effect in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. As he traces the history of the traction engine from the first-recorded efforts of Nicholas Cugnot in France in 1769 through to the steamrollers and road locomotives of later years, Rayner reflects upon developing mechanical and engineering features and the adaptation of the mobile steam vehicle to changing agricultural, transport and economic conditions. By the late nineteenth century, some ninety firms were building traction engines in Britain. Steam rollers to flatten water-bound road surfaces for cyclists (and later to roll out tarmac and chippings for all-weather roads), road locomotives, flexible steam tractors, engines for threshing, dredging, stone crushing and operating saw-benches – all produced by British manufacturers for the British, Imperial and world economies. And then there were the steam plough outfits, six hundred and fifty pairs of them working on British farms as late as 1918. If the internal combustion engine was eventually to bring about the eclipse of the traction engine, the fine old English names of their makers – Aveling and Porter, Rushton and Hornsby, Clayton and Shuttleworth, Gibbons and Robinson – are kept alive as enthusiasts like Rayner himself strive to restore these massive, awe-inspiring and elegant machines. Long may they continue to do so; long may their rallies flourish!

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

ALAN F. WILT, *Food for war. Agriculture and rearmament in Britain before the Second World War* (OUP, 2001) vi + 262 pp. £40.

While the military and economic aspects of British rearmament in the 1930s have been intensively analyzed by previous authors, the preparations made to secure the national food supply have so far been rather ignored. There is little historiography to fill the gap between the beginnings of practical government interest, exemplified by the formation of the Food (Defence Plans) Department of the Board of Trade in 1936, and the springing into action of the Ministry of Food and the county War Agricultural Executive Committees (known to farmers as

the 'War Ags.') on the outbreak of war three years later. It is this gap which Professor Wilt aims to fill, and he has done so in a most illuminating way.

The consideration of food supplies in a future war was never absent from the government, even before the remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936. In February 1933 the Manpower Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence produced a report which foreshadowed wartime policy very accurately, and in May 1935 the Board of Trade formed its Sub-Committee on Food Supply in Time of War. A year later it had fleshed out the framework of a wartime food policy. Thereafter the pace quickened. Most important was the formation of the Food (Defence Plans) Department of the Board of Trade in November 1936. In wartime, this would be transformed into the Ministry of Food. By the outbreak of war it had developed its policy on imports, food storage, control of prices and the profits of the food trade, distribution, the feeding of evacuees, and food for the armed services. The civilian rationing system was ready to be implemented. The one omission was the formulation of a national nutrition policy, and this was not to happen until after the fall of France.

The counterpart to the food policy was that of home food production. There was general agreement that the task of the Ministry of Agriculture in a future war would be to raise home production by methods similar to those already tried in 1916-18. The MAF first promulgated a target for the ploughing-up campaign in January 1937, when it proposed that in the first twelve months of war 1,285,000 acres of grassland could be ploughed up, and planted with cereals and potatoes. MAF pressed ahead in 1937 with the formation of the county War Agricultural Executive Committees which were to oversee this process at the local level, writing (in confidence) to suitable prospective chairmen of the War Ags. Further action followed: the 1937 Agriculture Act extended the subsidy already in place for wheat to oats and barley also, thus placating Scottish farmer opinion (although it would not have impressed the Scottish newspaper correspondent who thought that every household in Britain should agree to purchase one bag of oatmeal each); provisions were made for protecting farm labour from military service; the Womens' Land Army was formed; the MAF entered into a contract with Fordsons to assure the supply of tractors; finally, as war loomed in the summer of 1939, farmers were offered a grant of £2 an acre to plough up grassland.

Thus the organizations were in place to address the questions of food supply and home production in wartime. Prof. Wilt also addresses the question of how far the agricultural constituencies were involved in these processes, by examining the archives of the National

Farmers' Union, Central/Landowners' Association, and National Agricultural Workers Union. Here, the great political achievement of the government was to get the full support of the NFU. Earlier in the 1930s, it had been fairly critical of farming policy. As the depression eased, and policy became more farmer-friendly, the NFU became more co-operative. The pinnacle of this process came in January 1939, when W.S. Morrison, who was competent but not particularly farmer-friendly, was replaced as Minister of Agriculture by Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, the former President of the NFU. This breathtaking piece of poacher-turned-gamekeeperism was, as Alan Wilt states, 'to head off mounting discontent in the countryside'.

Finally, Alan Wilt looks at the question of how far the public were aware of what was going on, and how far they were in support. This he does by analysing newspapers, both national and regional, and the archives of the NFU, NUAW etc. Generally, there was no lack of information, for those who cared to read about in the public prints. Insofar as the public was confused, it was usually on questions of food supply and control. On matters affecting farming, the story is one of a growing awareness of what would be demanded of the agricultural industry, and growing support in the farming constituencies, mounting to a flood of patriotic feeling by September 1939.

This book is the fruit of assiduous research in the UK and the USA, and Alan Wilt has filled a long-standing gap in the literature most comprehensively. It is a notable addition to our understanding of the links between food, farming and rearmament in the 1930s.

PETER DEWEY

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Elsewhere and General

MICHAEL MCCORMICK, *Origins of the European economy. Communications and commerce, AD 300-900* (CUP, 2001). xxviii + 1101 pp. 82 tables; 16 figs; 16 graphs; 40 maps. £40.

This is an awesome book at first sight: 'the first comprehensive analysis for over sixty years of the economic transition from antiquity to the middle ages' (back cover). Even if this is the publisher's hyperbole, nevertheless this huge overview begins with a bold premise: 'A scholarly Rip Van Winkle who went to sleep over his late Roman or early medieval dissertation twenty years ago would scarcely recognize the age which recent research has unveiled. New methods and tools have sprung up and invite new questions. Together, the new insights and new tools open large vistas to the historian. The time is ripe for trying new approaches to old problems,

including this one' (p. 3). Boiled down, though, McCormick has pursued an old quest, first addressed by Henri Pirenne, and then over the past seventy years by his disciples and detractors. Put simply: what happened to trade and communications in the Mediterranean between the end of antiquity and the rise of the middle ages? Pirenne concluded colourfully that without Muhummed there would have been no Charlemagne. McCormick, making use of new archaeological evidence from all over Europe and a systematic analysis of travellers' accounts, shows that 'the rise – and economic consolidation – of Islam changed the nature of an emerging European economy ... perhaps Pirenne was right' (p. 798).

McCormick's view of Europe from the Mediterranean is best illustrated by Map 20.4 'The Northern Arc, from Space'. Baghdad lies in the top left hand corner; Rome is in the right-hand corner; York is in the lower right-hand side, while Birka and Staraja Ladoga anchor the bottom centre. It is a view charged by McCormick's reading of his catalogue of 828 travellers' movements, collected in Appendix 4 and given additional substance by an invaluable catalogue (Appendix 3) of Arab and Byzantine coin finds in Carolingian Europe. The result, not surprisingly, lays emphasis upon a cosmopolitan world in striking contrast to the post-war emphasis upon a Europe composed of regions. Calibrated by quarter-centuries, McCormick presents a canvas that is truly pan-European, but uses individuals as metaphors of the changing geopolitics of the continent.

'Hunting for commerce has proven illusory' (p. 15) as far as the early medieval commerce in the Mediterranean has been concerned. So he quantifies the travellers' accounts to illuminate the new archaeological data. The results are little short of extraordinary. Let me offer my choice conclusions (of the many dozens in this book). McCormick demonstrates that there is a clear seasonal change in communications between antiquity and the early middle ages. Summarized on Chart 3.1, late antique travellers journeyed between May and September, while their later counterparts travelled throughout the year. Why? Travel was primarily by sea before AD 700, and primarily overland afterwards. He shows that the domicile of a great number of early medieval pilgrims and travellers was within a 100 km radius of a major emporia (trading centre) (p. 158). He demonstrates that between 753/76 and 800/25 western travellers aiming at points beyond Constantinople abandoned ancient Byzantine routes and began to travel east through the Islamic world. The wealth of Islamic contacts and, indeed, the presence of Islamic coins in Italy and elsewhere in Carolingian Europe is powerfully demonstrated. Chart 12.1 graphically illustrates the percentage of Arab coins in Sardinia, the Viking territories, the Adriatic region, the Iberian

peninsula and the Rhône valley. The twin-peaks delineate a decline from 700–724 in the second quarter of the eighth century, then a sharp rise to c. 800, then a fall to c. 850–874. Taking this evidence with the data on travellers and the incidence of Byzantine coins, he concludes that 'communications between the Frankish empire and the eastern Mediterranean world surged in the final decades of the eighth and the first decades of the ninth century ... never again in the history of Europe did they come close to the low levels that prevailed before 750' (p. 442).

Many incidental sections flesh out this grand narrative. Illuminating sections on travelling the Mediterranean, on the relic trade, on Venice, on the objects of trade, and on the slave trade are deployed to substantiate the central thesis. Pirenne is essentially vindicated, if shown to be wrong about the details. Islam played a crucial part in the thrusting adventure of Charlemagne's life, breathing new economic vitality into hitherto moribund places. Archaeologists will welcome this window on a world of pilgrims and missionaries, and the splendidly illustrated quantification of the data. There are errors and small inconsistencies; but these are negligible blemishes. Historians, one can be sure, will be less complimentary. After all, the countryside and its management, the traditional domain of post-war historians of regions, is barely mentioned. Added to this, the book might be read as further praise for the economic foresightedness of Charlemagne, something that has grown steadily more unfashionable with historians as the European Union has established a prize in his memory as its greatest accolade. Historians, too, will be sceptical that this cosmopolitan world tells us anything new. Such a conclusion would be mistaken: in its detail McCormick has established a benchmark for what, as he rightly points out, has been a virtual world lost between those studying the East and West, and the North and South. Time will show what a massively useful work this is. Indeed, his book obviously invites a companion that looks at estate histories from Wessex to Palestine and treats them to the same analytical scrutiny. Taken together, what a homage these would be to the genius of Pirenne!

RICHARD HODGES
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PETER HOPPENBROUWERS AND JAN LUITEN VAN ZANDEN (eds), *Peasants into farmers? The transformation of rural economy and society in the Low Countries (middle ages – nineteenth century) in light of the Brenner debate* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001) (CORN Series 4). 338 pp. 25 tables; 19 figs. €61.97.

Of the competing accounts of European social and economic history before the industrial revolution, Robert

Brenner's approach to the emergence of agrarian capitalism is distinguished by its extension of the Marxian dialectic of class conflict to a world without capitalists and workers. According to Brenner the pre-industrial analogue to capitalist expropriation of workers' means of production was state (and in some cases seigniorial) expropriation of peasants' means of subsistence, by which he means the land and agricultural capital needed to permit peasants to reproduce their social form free of the discipline of the market. Since that discipline typically enforces greater efficiency by weeding out failures to observe it, and since a growing agricultural surplus was the necessary condition for industrialization, the advent of market-based agriculture was critical to the emergence of industrial capitalism. The question is: what caused the transformation of agricultural organization? Brenner attributed it neither to the growth of markets for farm produce nor to the pressure of population on the land, because neither process put the self-reproducing institutions of peasant farming and seigniorial exactions in jeopardy. Rather, it was the absolutist state that eventually forced peasants into greater dependence on the market for their survival by oppressive taxation and military destruction of peasant capital. The emergence of commercial farming was therefore not a response to opportunities created by expanding markets or falling wages, but instead grew out of the dynamics of state-formation. Brenner's hypothesis thus asserts the traditional position held by Marxists and nineteenth-century historical economists, that the market for agricultural produce and agricultural inputs was a delayed historical phenomenon.

Until recently the historiography that treats these issues mainly considered them in the light of stylized economic and social histories of England, France and East Elbia. The present volume of essays was intended to redress this geographical imbalance by considering them in the light of the economic evolution of Belgium and the Netherlands. The result is an assemblage of empirical and theoretical essays by young and established scholars. From the perspective of the Brenner debate, the crucial questions concern the extent of the market in late medieval Netherlands, and why the early urbanized and commercialized districts of Flanders and Brabant were so late to experience an industrial revolution. As can be expected from a test of a hypothesis based on a highly stylized ideal typology, the empirical work does not sustain Brenner's definitions. Hoppenbrower's review of the Dutch experience shows that lords, peasants, and merchants all invested in market-related agriculture; Limbert's account of merchant capital in the Duchy of Brabant reveals that peasants with the most secure title to land were the most involved in markets for farm produce; Bas van Bavel's study of large farms near

Utrecht indicates that their success was due not to the policy of landlords, but to their privileged access to the capital needed to pursue specialized production. Van Tielhof's essay on grain provisioning in Holland between 1490 and 1570 is an important contribution to the question of how dependent the region was on foreign supplies; Van Dam's study of the wage accounts of the administration responsible for repairing the Rijnland dikes provides a useful description of how the Dutch market for unskilled labour worked at the start of the sixteenth century. While the above are essentially specialist studies, the general discussions and bibliographies will be useful to students with a generalized interest in early modern economic change.

The theoretical articles are a rather mixed bag, and could have benefited from more vigorous editing. Of those that most closely approach an historical synthesis, the essay by Thoen on the evolution of the Flemish rural economy between the twelfth and nineteenth century, and van Zanden's essay on proto-industrialization in Holland and Flanders are the most useful. Because Brenner based his interpretation of Dutch agrarian history on Jan de Vries's doctoral dissertation, de Vries's views seem to have been as much an object of contention at the conference that gave birth to this collection as Brenner's. De Vries's response to criticisms of his work and his analysis of Brenner's thesis are, as one expects, incisive and cogent. Perhaps the most useful theoretical essay, however, is Brenner's discussion of his own ideas. For those who desire to know exactly what his argument is, this is the essay to consult.

Macro-history fell out of favour over a half-century ago, because of its sociological reifications and nebulous chains of causation. Despite its dispersed focus, the present volume avoids the worst of these pitfalls of historical reasoning by staying close to the historical evidence. Its real contribution, however, lies not in new evidence or new interpretation, but in clearly posing the question of how analytically to describe the evolution of European agriculture between the middle ages and the nineteenth century. This is an old question for which there is as yet no agreed-upon answer.

GEORGE GRANTHAM
McGill University

J. BIELEMAN AND A. H. VAN OTTERLOO (eds), *Techniek in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw, III, landbouw, voeding* (Zuthphen: Walburg Pers, 2000). 442 pp. Illus. €39.95.

The third volume of the series 'Technology in the Netherlands in the twentieth century' consists of two parts. The first (pp. 1 to 234) has been written by two seasoned agricultural historians, J. Bieleman and P. Priester and

describes and analyzes developments in agriculture except horticulture between *circa* 1900 and 1985. The second part (pp. 235 to 374) describes some aspects of changes in food and food technology in the Netherlands. The largest contribution is by A. H. van Otterloo, whose main work has hitherto been on the long-term development of cultural aspects of food consumption in the Netherlands. Other chapters have been written by A. P. den Hertog, A. Albert de la Bruhèze, H. Buiter, B. Suyter and A. P. de Knecht-van Eekelen, authors with a shared sociological/historical background.

The first part is well informed, well written, well illustrated and, considering the magnitude of the changes in Dutch agriculture after about 1955, quite focused and coherent. It must however be mentioned that this coherence is partly obtained by leaving out the most dynamic (and least subsidized) sector of Dutch agriculture, namely horticulture. It is a welcome change that neither the beginning (c. 1950) nor the end of the period under consideration coincides with either of the World Wars. A more ample use of statistics might have made it possible to get more mileage out of this departure from customary historiographical practice.

Due attention is given to emblems of mechanization and technological change like the milking machine, the mechanical thresher and the tractor, and also to less spectacular but also extremely important innovations like artificial insemination, 'Bordeauxse pap' ('Bouille Bordelaise' or Bordeaux mixture, the first effective means to combat *Phytophthora* in potatoes) and the introduction of ensilage. More attention should have been given to even less dramatic but still very important innovations like roller bearings, pneumatic tyres, the introduction of electricity and water supply systems (ever considered how much labour is involved in watering ten cows manually, even when the well or ditch is close by?), radio, telephones, and so forth. Bieleman and Priester also describe aspects of government policy, especially the land consolidation policy which enabled all these changes and led to the almost complete restructuring of the countryside of the Netherlands.

A little more space should have been given to the consequences of the mechanization of agriculture. After 1955, labour productivity in agriculture rose at an astonishing rate. Despite a strong and sustained growth of agricultural production, the number of people working in agriculture fell sharply, while farms increased in size and 'capitalist' agriculture, i.e. farmers employing large numbers of workers, virtually disappeared (except from horticulture). Though Bieleman and Priester do give a few data on numbers of farms and average farm size, this does not suffice to show the magnitude of these processes. It is also not clear why 1985 is the *de facto* end

of the period under consideration; data on the period 1985-1997 must have been readily available at the time of writing. In sum, the first part is a welcome addition to the existing literature, giving much well-ordered information on several aspects of mechanization and in the process also widening the scope of agricultural history. Its main flaw is a failure to use concepts which make it possible to summarize and generalize these enormous and highly diversified changes in a concise way.

The second part has a more haphazard character, switching from the introduction of freezing technology in fisheries during World War I on one page to the triumphal progress of French fries during the post World War II period on the next. Some efforts to introduce encompassing concepts are made, but these are either inaccurate – the data on food consumption on p. 238 are severely flawed; much better data have been around for quite some time – or incomplete. There is for instance a chapter on milk and dairy products, but chapters on other foods – vegetables and fruits, bread, meat and fish, and beverages – are wanting, though a chapter on snacks has been included. A chapter on packaging, another standard item of the food technology curriculum, contains lots of information on the dairy industry but almost nothing on other products. The chapter on cooling and freezing is rather unsystematic and stops in 1970. Important though they may be, cooling and freezing are only one of the ways to solve the main problem of food technology, namely preventing and controlling decay. Too little effort has been made to compare the technologies of the cooling chain with such methods as salting (meat, butter, bread), drying (fruits, vegetables, meat, tea), sugaring (fruits, jam), fermenting (bread, wine, sausages, cheese, butter), adding herbs (sausages, sauces), and heating and canning. Developments in these technologies are barely mentioned.

Of course, food technology is not restricted to the factory, and some attention is given to changes in the way food is sold and to the relation between this and consumption habits. More use of statistics would have made it possible to pinpoint marketing changes more precisely. In general, there are too many missed opportunities in the second part of the volume.

MERIJN KNIBBE

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GÉRARD BÉAUR, *Histoire agraire de la France au XVIII^e siècle: inerties et changements dans les campagnes françaises entre 1715 et 1815* (SEDES 2000). 320 pp. 19 tables; 15 figs; 12 maps. €21.34.

The subtitle captures the essence of this book, which is more a study of inertia and change in the French countryside between 1715 and 1815 than, as the main title

would have it, of French eighteenth-century agrarian history in the round. It attempts not to be (not always successfully) yet another study of the relationship between the French revolution and the agrarian question. Its main contribution is to assess the hold of the French peasantry on the land, the social structure and regional diversity of the peasantry, their fiscal and seigneurial burdens and the impact of the revolutionary period on them, and also to present a detailed picture of French agricultural production and productivity within the 'long eighteenth century', with a view to including French eighteenth-century agriculture in debates about the agricultural revolution. The book itself is an outcome of a series of lectures for students preparing for the *agrégation d'histoire*, and it bears some marks of hasty publication, lacking an index of subjects and names, and omitting the listing and numbering of tables, graphs and maps.

Béaur is a specialist on the land market, and he starts by an analysis of the social distribution of agricultural land ownership during the eighteenth century, and the impact of the revolution on the land market. The pre-revolutionary peasantry held approximately forty per cent of the arable nationally (though with substantial regional variations), mostly in small family holdings of from about one to ten hectares. It seems that the trend towards expropriation of peasant land by nobles or the bourgeoisie stopped around 1750, but that due to demographic growth peasant land holdings continued to fall in size, and that the numbers of landless peasants grew. By suppressing the seigneurial system and establishing private property, and by putting church lands (the *biens nationaux*) on the market, the revolution increased the land ownership of the peasantry by at least 15 per cent, making it 55 per cent of all cultivated land by 1825. But the revolution was far from a peasant's land charter. The *Code Civil* of 1804 extended to the whole country egalitarian customs of succession, already widespread. Though the increasing concentration of land seen during most of the eighteenth century ceased, the bourgeoisie were the main beneficiaries in the post-revolutionary land market.

Two core chapters are concerned with changes in arable production and the problem of productivity. The main factor behind French eighteenth-century agricultural growth was the rise of demand in foodstuffs from one of Europe's largest populations – 25 millions in 1789, 30 millions by 1825. It is clear that this explains the French obsession with bread-cereals production, and especially wheat. The pastoral sector and animal production were secondary to the paramount concern for grain. One consequence was that manure was on the whole insufficient to contribute to progress in yields. There was a great expansion of wine-growing, supplying an expanding

market, but crop specialization and intensification following the model of the 'new husbandry' had uneven success in the French countryside. However, Béaur identifies five regions where fallow lost its importance and even disappeared, to be replaced by the continuous cropping of leguminous fodder crops (clover, sainfoin, lucerne, etc.). Béaur also documents the rise of new crops (rape seed, colza, maize, American beans, sugar beet, carrots, potatoes, tobacco, madder, etc.), the search for new fertilizers, and improvements in agricultural implements, tools and machinery.

What of French agricultural productivity? The matter has caused one of the hottest controversies among French historians. Tithe series have been used both by the 'deniers', especially Michel Morineau, who did not believe that any progress in productivity happened before 1840, and by Joseph Goy and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie who drew the contrary conclusion that productivity growth definitely occurred in the eighteenth century. The progression of grain yields is clearly attested in northern France (Flanders, Artois, Picardie, Soissonnais) and in the region of the Paris basin (Île-de-France, Brie) and Normandy. Progress in labour productivity was part of the change.

Béaur suggests that most of the growth in French agricultural productivity during the eighteenth century took place in the thirty year period between 1740 and 1770. This was a period of sustained growth with relatively few and rather mild subsistence crises. But from the 1770s, and especially from 1773, a number of more severe *crises frumentaires* and *crises des subsistances* brought famine, epidemics and increased mortality, harbingers of the final crisis of 1789 and the revolution. The rise in food prices, the stagnation or the fall of wages, the ensuing famine and rise of mortality created the revolutionary mood. All this can be related to the actual absence of the free circulation of grains and foodstuffs and to the lack of a national market unobstructed by material and institutional obstacles. Béaur shows in a brilliantly detailed chapter that, in spite of revolutionary reforms liberating the market, the *crises des subsistances* continued unabated all through the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras and were especially serious in 1793, 1795, 1811–1812 and 1816.

In his conclusion, characterized by a healthy scepticism, Béaur tends to minimize the impacts of the French eighteenth-century agricultural change. It was an assemblage of small changes, neither a turning point nor a breakthrough. He believes that the French peasantry gained some advantage from the revolution, but that the French revolution was definitely not a 'peasant revolution'. Finally, he takes a cursory glance across the Channel to try to reduce the distance between the eighteenth-century agricultural histories of Britain and

France. But comparative history is the most delicate of exercises, and here he fails completely.

JACQUES BEAUROY
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RITA GUDERMANN, *Morastwelt und Paradies: Ökonomie und Ökologie in der Landwirtschaft am Beispiel der Melorationen in Westfalen und Brandenburg (1830–1880)* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000). xiii + 577 pp. €51.60.

This very thoroughly researched monograph endeavours to explore not only agricultural and social transformation during the middle decades of the nineteenth century in two districts of northern Germany, the area east of the town of Münster in Westphalia and the Havelland west of Berlin in Brandenburg, but also the environmental and ecological impact of the changes that occurred. The impact of the latter has until quite recent times been almost entirely ignored by German agricultural historians.

The areas examined consist almost entirely of relatively infertile sandy soils, often subject to frequent flooding, and practically worthless moors. The originally-limited woodland had practically disappeared with settlement by the end of the eighteenth century. Flooding was worsened by dams built to serve the number of mills operating in the areas, which also acted to raise the water table to the detriment of most crops – but not of weeds. In the periods between inundations as much as half the land area was suited for nothing more than providing poor pasturage for breeds of livestock adapted to scavenging for fodder. The limited arable area was devoted to low-yielding crops of rye or buckwheat, which will grow on the poorest of soils. All in all, in the early nineteenth century these were among the most marginal of agricultural areas in Germany. Practically the only non-agricultural resource available was peat, which was exploited on account of the high cost of importing coal in the pre-railway age.

Paradoxically, while agricultural progress was predicated on the replacement of open-field farming and common pasturage by individual farms, collective action was required to solve the flooding problem. Early piecemeal drainage efforts had simply exacerbated the problem elsewhere. Matters worsened from the 1850s when progressive farmers began to lay field drainage pipes. It required the state to intervene to organize the collective drainage of large areas. Within that context a remarkable difference between the earlier and later nineteenth century was the positive response of most farmers to the improvements in the farming environment.

It is difficult to do justice to a monograph of this length and depth within the number of words allowed.

Some criticisms might be levelled at some of the content. The author does little more than mention migration – in particular by the *Hollandgänger* – as a source of employment for the landless of east Münsterland. But this work is unlikely to be surpassed in a very long time.

JOHN PERKINS
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CLINTON L. EVANS, *The war on weeds in the Prairie West* (University of Calgary Press, 2002). xvii + 309 pp. Illus. C\$29.95.

No other region in the world would serve better as a theatre for a drama entitled 'the war on weeds' than Canada's western prairie. War is violence, disruption, invasion, and, at its worst, decimation and displacement of incumbent populations, which is what immigrant farmers, the influence of the world market, and herbicidal corporations have inflicted on the flora of those grasslands. The results have been low food prices, for which all consumers must be grateful, and ecological instability over much of North America, with which we all should be concerned.

This book begins with a valuable discussion of how to define weeds. Are they simply plants that grow where they aren't wanted – a totally human-centred definition – or is there something about them in and of themselves that makes them weeds? Then the book goes on to a consideration of British farming and weeds, i.e. to what the Euro-Canadian farmers who first moved onto the prairie expected to happen in the rivalry between their crops and weeds. They expected a sedate sort of rivalry into which they could gently and effectively intervene as allies of their crops. What they got was gross combat, hence chapters in this book with titles like 'War on the Western Front, 1906–1945'. In Europe weeds were a nagging problem. In western Canada they were a curse, like locust plagues and prairie fires.

Euro-Canadians had often found themselves in competition with native Americans for control of the land, but the competition between European crops and weeds was not one of immigrants versus indigenes. The worst weeds were also immigrants: Canadian thistle, for instance, which many farmers would nominate as the most villainous, is, despite its popular name, an import. Another villain, tumbleweed, considered by many city-folk south of the Canadian-US border as American as John Wayne himself, is more accurately entitled Russian thistle.

The Canadians' fight with such floral enemies resembled in many ways a war effort, enlisting science, government, educational institutions and organs of propaganda. It was a war that did not go well for the farmers until the arrival of the farmers' best friends – at least for a while

– 2,4-D and the other herbicides, in the 1940s. Some commentators, of course, define the indiscriminate dumping of tons of poison into the environment as simply another and, in the long run, worse problem.

Our author, Clinton L. Evans, is convinced that the problem of weeds in western Canada, if it is to be dealt with successfully, should not be defined as a war of one kind of plants against another, but as a matter of the inappropriateness of the culture of the farmers and the economics of the grain industry. The farmers have stripped off the incumbent ecosystem and substituted monocrop agriculture. They have 'mined', the prairie, and the weeds they brought in with their wheat are not the cause but the most obvious symptom of their problems. Herbicides have provided not a solution but a means to postpone facing up to those problems.

I recommend this deeply researched, well organized, and unhysterical book for all who are worried about agricultural mining in western Canada or anywhere else.

ALFRED W. CROSBY
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IAN MACLACHLAN, *Kill and chill: restructuring Canada's beef commodity chain* (University of Toronto Press, 2001). xxxi + 378 pp. 10 tables; 17 illus; 27 figs. £35 (hbk); £14 (pbk).

This is not a book on agricultural history but on agrobusiness history, and no less important because of that. It is the first comprehensive study of Canada's beef industry from calf production to the retail store, and the radical changes it has undergone over the past 130 years. Canada has never been a major beef producer and at no time has it had an important export trade. However, the industry has, as one might expect, been strongly influenced by developments in the United States. After a time lag of some twenty years or so, the business methods of America were usually adopted in Canada. Thus the United States meat-packing industry started to industrialize in the 1860s and 1870s but similar development in Canada did not begin until the 1890s.

This means that the main starting point for this book is about 1890 and it follows the entire process from beef calf production, cattle feeding and marketing, through slaughtering and fabrication to distribution and retailing. The treatment is generally as comprehensive as the source materials allow but there do seem to be gaps at some points where perhaps aspects of the industry were never prominent enough at the time to gather a lot of comment. This criticism applies to the first two chapters on calf production, breeding and feeding of beef cattle. They are rather unbalanced with most attention devoted to post-1950 developments. The first chapter is not such a problem as it does have some coverage of nineteenth

century imports of British purebred cattle and twentieth century experiments with exotic cross-breeds. But the second chapter is entirely on the present-day feedlot system, where some farmers running the largest industrial scale operations in Alberta grain feed over 25,000 head of cattle on 160-acre quarter sections of land. Although the treatment of this important aspect of the industry is excellent, this reader would have liked more information about the early history of feedlot farming and also on exactly how beef animals were fed for the Canadian market from the 1890s to the 1940s. After all, this was still a market of around 5 million persons in 1890 and 14 million by 1950.

In contrast, the later chapters on livestock marketing, transportation, beef packing and distribution deal very fully with developments since 1890. They chronicle the emergence of large-scale packing firms, and their success in preventing their tiny market from being captured by the much larger United States firms – at least until the 1990s. Important though nineteenth-century changes were, the overall picture is one of an industry that experienced its greatest transformation in the second half of the twentieth century. From the 1960s a new generation of very large scale vertically integrated beef specialist firms has emerged, operating very large-scale plants with rapid processing speeds and a very large scale of output. There have also been significant changes in the location of the industry as meat-packing has moved out from nineteenth century city sites, supplied from railway stockyards to concentrate on 'kill and chill on the prairie' (p. 281). This is linked to what the author describes as 'postmodern beef retailing' (p. 320) with packing plants no longer just producing quarters of beef, but cuts ready-packaged a great variety of ways for immediate display in supermarket cabinets. This has allowed processors to divert an increasing amount of the added value of beef from retail butchers. No longer are most cattle sent some distance by rail to stockyards, and carcass beef then moved to wholesale distribution centres by refrigerated rail cars. Today rail is in decline with an increasing amount of 'boxed beef' trucked by road in refrigerated trailers, although there is more resistance to this product in the east.

The author does not just detail the institutional and business arrangements surrounding the Canadian industry, but also covers themes that have a wider significance. Meat-packing was an industry affected by government animal and human health regulation in the nineteenth century, and one where some of the earliest investigations into the monopoly power of big business were undertaken. In more recent times the runoff from feedlots has raised environmentalists' concerns about water contamination, and the transport and slaughter of

cattle has raised protests from animal welfare groups. The industry has seen progressive deskilling beginning in the nineteenth century but once again the pace of this change has accelerated since the 1960s. The whole beef industry in western countries has also faced significant market challenge since the mid-1970s, in the face of red meat health scares and growth in poultry consumption. In Canada this has resulted in a 35 per cent decline in per capita beef consumption in the last twenty years. This is an industry that has provoked criticism on several of the issues above but the author covers these in a fair and dispassionate manner. Overall, Ian MacLachlan's book provides a very valuable contribution to the historical geographical literature on livestock farming and the food industry.

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ASHOK GULATI and TIM KELLEY, *Trade liberalization and Indian agriculture* (OUP India, 2001). xxiv + 296 pp. 28 tables; 17 figs; 18 maps. £13.99.

The conclusion of Gulati and Kelley's book is that a unilateral liberalization of India's agricultural trade will lead to a gain in efficiency as well as welfare, while cost-of-living expenditures in rural and urban areas are only marginally affected. Accordingly, the authors conclude (p. 164) that there are no grounds for stalling agricultural trade reforms 'that are critical for the efficient and for the long-term growth of India's agriculture, and the economy as a whole'. Their conclusion is based on an empirical analysis in three interrelated parts. First, focusing on India's semi-arid tropics regions and using a fixed effects regression model, the elasticities of crop area changes with respect to price and non-price factors (mainly irrigation) are estimated (Chapter 4). This exercise is meant to establish that farmers are responsive to price changes, which is essential since trade liberalization is to affect the agricultural sector by bringing domestic prices in line with world prices. Second, using widely applied concepts such as Domestic Resource Costs (DRC), Nominal Protection Coefficient (NPC) and Effective Protection Coefficient (EPC), Chapters 5 and 6 estimate regionwise differences in domestic and international crop prices. The authors find that the domestic prices of rice, wheat, cotton, chickpeas and maize are below the international price, which means that India has a comparative advantage in these crops vis-à-vis the option of imports. In contrast, domestic prices of oilseeds and sugarcane are above world prices, indicating that, at the margin, resources could be saved by importing these products at lower prices than those being paid to domestic producers. This second exercise is meant to establish that deviations between domestic and

international prices are substantial, which implies that the gain in allocative efficiency from trade liberalization may be substantial as well. Third, using a partial equilibrium multi-market model with base-year 1993-94 (Chapter 7), the authors evaluate the impact of full unilateral agricultural trade liberalization on crop prices, crop supply and demand, crop trade, agricultural income and welfare, and costs of living. The model results confirm the authors' expectations: output and prices of rice, wheat and cotton rise, output and prices of oilseeds and sugarcane decline; aggregate agricultural income rises, there is a welfare gain (of about 3 per cent), and the reform has hardly any impact on the costs of living of the various rural and urban income classes.

Unfortunately, Gulati and Kelley's analysis does not provide adequate grounds for its strong policy recommendations, because it is flawed in important respects. We will highlight only three deficiencies. First, the authors' assessment of the static efficiency status of India's cropping patterns vis-à-vis world markets takes world prices as the relevant referent prices, assuming that world markets function without distortions. This is not an innocent assumption! In reality, world agricultural trade occurs in a highly imperfect setting where, as a result of non-tariff barriers imposed by developed and developing countries alike, world prices are determined by the relatively small surpluses and deficits which enter world markets. The implication is that world prices can respond disproportionately to even fairly small changes in world trade volumes, particularly because the relevant price elasticities are small (see Deepak Nayyar and Abhijit Sen, 'International trade and the agricultural sector in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29 May 1994, pp. 1187-1203). As a result, the variability of world prices is significantly higher for most crops than that of Indian prices (as can be calculated, for instance, by the price data given by Nayyar and Sen). Why would the imposition on Indian agriculture of world prices that are highly unstable improve resource use efficiency? The authors, in other words, ignore the potential costs of increased price uncertainty. They also incorrectly claim (on p. 129 and p. 180) that their concept of efficiency, operationalized as the ratio of domestic to world prices, is dynamic and holds good for the short to medium run. The price-based efficiency comparisons are undeniably static and solely of historical interest, as they have very little prospective value: what guidance in deciding their cropping pattern do farmers get from next year's world prices that are even more uncertain and unstable than domestic prices?

Second, while agricultural globalization has many dimensions, the book focuses, rather narrowly, on its comparative-static implications for allocative efficiency.

What strikes us is that the once-and-for-all efficiency gain due to agricultural trade liberalization is very small: aggregate welfare increases by only three to four per cent. This increase is almost negligible compared to the potential welfare gain that can be obtained from a sustained reduction in the vast under- and unemployment of India's rural labour force or from a step-up in the rate of agricultural technological change. In other words: making Indian agriculture grow is far more important for development than making it more efficient! Unfortunately, the authors fail to grasp the once-and-for-all nature of the efficiency gain and mistakenly use their results to make inferences about India's long-term agricultural growth.

Third, notwithstanding ninety pages of annexes, the book's analysis is in many important respects not well documented. For example, the use of farm harvest prices (rather than procurement prices or wholesale prices) in estimating crop supply responses is not clearly indicated in the main text nor are its implications for the estimation results discussed. Likewise, the data source of the world crop prices used is not given nor is it stated which specific domestic and international price quotations were used. Regarding their choice of the shadow exchange rate (a crucial variable used to convert international prices into domestic currency), the authors state (p. 104) that we 'have not estimated this rate ... but relied on the results of another study'; however, no reference is given. Finally, the discussion of the model is silent on the choice of labour market closure; presumably, labour supply and demand are balanced in neoclassical fashion by real wage adjustments. If so, this closure is not only obviously unrealistic for India (see Gaurav Datt, *Bargaining power, wages and employment: an analysis of agricultural labour markets in India* (New Delhi, 1996)), but it also significantly affects the model results, which is – again – something the authors do not discuss. As Shankar Subramanian has shown (*Agricultural trade liberalisation and India* (Paris, 1993)), the welfare effects of trade liberalization are likely to be even smaller when labour market closure makes a realistic allowance for rural unemployment.

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SHAYNE BREEN, *Contested places. Tasmania's Northern Districts from ancient times to 1900* (Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, 2001). xv + 226 pp. 8 tables; 44 illus; 9 maps. A\$35. JOHN FERRY, *Colonial Armidale* (University of Queensland Press, 1999), xi + 308 pp. 1 table; 15 plates; 1 fig; 10 maps. A\$27.95

There is a relatively limited body of scholarly writing about the history of specific rural districts in eastern

Australia. Major works include: Margaret Kiddie's, *Men of yesterday* (1961), R.B. Walker's *Old New England* (1966), Duncan Waterson's *Squatter, selector and storekeeper* (1968), W.K. Hancock's *Discovering Monaro* (1972), Don Watson's *Caledonia Australis* (1984), Alan Atkinson's *Camden* (1988), and Jan Walker's *Jondaryan Station* (1988). The books under review are a welcome expansion of this corpus, especially as they extend its intellectual agenda, embracing current concerns about environmental history in the context of power relations.

Contested places benefits from works on ecological and environmental history unbeknown when Hancock addressed (to quote his subtitle), 'man's impact upon his environment'. Breen especially acknowledges a debt to environmental historians of the American West (e.g. Carolyn Merchant, Richard White), for remedying a prior 'conceptual schism' between the environmental and the social. This has added real strength to his study, as has his nose for power relations, which also owes something to American scholarship, especially James C. Scott's *Domination and the arts of resistance* (1990). This theoretical dimension makes Breen's book anything but parochial (neither is Ferry's, though he mostly implies his theoretical underpinning rather than spelling it out).

Hancock dualized humans and environment as contending forces. For Breen, the environment had active agency over people and vice versa. Nevertheless, his northern Tasmanian settlers damaged the environment under the delusion of conquering nature. Forest destruction, wetland degradation, species loss, and soil-exhausting cultivation practices are convincingly presented as mutually constituted with a social landscape of marked domination and subordination. Large gentry estates emerged early and the gentry progressively entrenched their wealth and power. If the greatest sufferers thereby were aboriginals, nevertheless convict workers, small tenant farmers and itinerant, landless free labourers had many woes. Unfortunately, Geoff Raby's able defence of the economic rationality of the cultivation practices of colonial Australia's much-criticized small farmers up to 1860, in *Making rural Australia* (1996), is ignored. Breen thus lost a golden opportunity for debate with a significantly different interpretation to his own.

Breen is very sharp on recreational land use (not addressed by Ferry). Bushwalking intensified white Tasmanians' sense of place, albeit with imported aesthetics, but created further environmental pressures. Thus in 1855 the wealthy landowner William Archer and a botanist, W.H. Harvey, scaled Cummings Head peak. On the ascent, Archer casually set a fire 'with the view of making a clearance'. Archer was rather gratified that the resultant pall of smoke, lasting for days while a huge upland bush

tract burned, resembled a London fog. This was taking colonial culture's mania for recreating England in Tasmania to an extreme.

Like *Contested places*, *Colonial Armidale* commences with a thoughtful conceptual exploration of place, including its cultural and social senses, though without Breen's Heideggerian approach. Oddly, since Breen is concerned with theorising space/place, he has not utilized Australianist works which grapple fruitfully with this very question: e.g. Paul Carter's influential *The road to Botany Bay* (1987). Ferry, with a delicate but effective touch, approaches place through the competing narratives that constructed it culturally, thus avoiding some dodgy (or even rather scary) ontological essentializations from Heidegger embraced by Breen. There are, however, some striking similarities between their stories.

Both lament the fate of wheat farmers. By 1861, Armidale Police District had more steam-powered flour mills than any other in New South Wales, except the Sydney District, indicating the flourishing state of the local market for Armidale District's wheat farmers. Over the next few years wheat production boomed. By the 1880s, however, railway construction allowed in cheaper and better South Australian flour while the Hawkesbury river bridge, completing a direct line to Sydney in 1889, finished off wheat farming and milling. Smarter or luckier farmers survived by crop diversification. The adherence of New South Wales to free trade didn't help. As Breen reveals, the same applied in Tasmania (on top of landlord exactions and some unrealistic idealization of family farms as yeoman paradises). In both colonies, free trade was favoured by the big landholders, who produced export commodities, and by associated urban mercantile interests, and these elements were politically dominant.

Ferry is excellent on the 'second struggle for the land' – between emergent selector small farmers and the big pastoralists – from the early 1860s. He provides one of the most astute, nuanced and well-informed accounts in the extensive literature on selectors versus squatters in eastern Australia. In Tasmania, there were no selection acts and even when it came to leases of crown lands, the big rural interests took the lion's share. In the northern districts, an insecure and often impoverished tenantry remained, despite periodic protest, under the thumb of the big landholders. But then, in Armidale District too (as generally in NSW), many big property holders deployed all the effective chicanery that wealth and high-level connections could facilitate, to retain substantial control over the land during the era of selection legislation.

Inevitably, this review provides a mere sample of themes explored in two extremely rich studies. Breen says much about policing and the lower courts, Ferry

about family, inheritance and gender relations; mining; and the urban development of Armidale town. Both are strong on new technologies and are informative about indigenous peoples – the Pallitorre and Panninher of Tasmania's Northern Districts and the Anaiwon of Armidale District. Both whet the appetite for more such studies.

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ANNE KELLY KNOWLES (ed.), *Past time, past place. GIS for history* (Redlands CA: ESRI Press, 2002). xx + 202 pp. Illus. \$29.95.

After two helpful introductory chapters, this book offers a series of well-written and handsomely-presented case studies on 'Teaching the Salem witch trials' (Benjamin Ray); 'Similarity and difference in the Antebellum North and South' (Aaron Sheehan-Dean); 'Telling Civil War battlefield stories with GIS' (David Lowe); 'Immigration, ethnicity and race in metropolitan New York, 1900–2000' (Andrew Beveridge); 'Redlining in Philadelphia' (Amy Hillier); 'Causes of the Dust Bowl' (Geoff Cunfer); 'Agricultural history with GIS' (Alastair Pearson and Peter Collier); 'Mapping British population history' (Ian Gregory and Humphrey Southall); 'GIS in archaeology' (Trevor Harris); 'Mapping the ancient world' (Tom Elliott and Richard Talbert); and 'The electronic cultural atlas initiative and the North American regional atlas' (Lewis Lancaster and David Bodenhamer).

The Pearson and Collier piece is the most relevant chapter for this journal, although Cunfer comes to the interesting conclusion that environmental historians need to consider the possibility that dust storms are a normal ecological disturbance that coincides with extended periods of drought and high temperatures on the southern plains, rather than evidence of human ecological failure. Elliott and Talbert indicate how archaeological findings and geological modelling can be employed to reconstruct the ancient landscape.

Pearson and Collier offer not a global survey, but, instead, a specific account based on the Tithe Survey of 1836–50, which, they argue, is ideal for conversion into GIS. They have been employing GIS to combine the geographic and economic information contained in the Tithe Survey with other socio-economic and environmental data, such as soil characteristics, and mean altitude, slope and aspect for each field, for parishes in Britain's agricultural heartland and in south-west Wales. The geographical pattern of tithe charges in the area discussed – Newport parish on the northern coast of Pembrokeshire – indicates that they were apportioned consistently. Multilevel modelling was then used to show that most rent variation was accounted for by environmental

factors, not by owners or occupiers, although the latter two did affect productivity: by 9 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. Thus, tenant farmers appear to have been more responsible for agricultural improvement in this part of Pembrokeshire, than were landowners.

This essay ably indicates the potential value of GIS to the historian interested in reconstructing past agricultural landscapes. However, it takes months of work to input the data in a form compatible with the GIS. More generally, successful historical GIS projects require a heavy investment in data collection and classification. Furthermore, not all documents lend themselves to inputting, as many offer very poor spatial referencing. This is an important volume that is richly suggestive about methods and mapping.

JEREMY BLACK
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PETER HAY, *A companion to environmental thought* (Edinburgh UP, 2002). x + 400 pp. £18.99.

Grander than introductions, less complete than encyclopedias, more synthetic than handbooks, and organized as coherent tracts with some attitude, 'companions' to philosophical thought are a rising literary form. Companions span the gap between original tracts and pedantic texts. Peter Hay writes in this new genre on how environmental concerns are challenging old and generating new social philosophy. By his own admission, the task required a boldness that bordered on foolishness. The preface makes it clear that he is discussing western environmental thought and ignoring that arising from other cultural roots in the clash with western-style development. Within only this constraint, Hay takes on the challenge of organizing the academic literature on social philosophy and the environment.

Hay leads his reader through a particular progression of thought. The first chapter addresses our attraction to nature, or why we care, taking a historical perspective. The emphasis is on nature and wilderness, missing the early histories of our concern for clean air, water, and food as well as for the well-being of other species. The second chapter sets out taxonomies of how people progressively relate to nature, from historic and bad forms of exploitation to increasingly modern and good levels of ecological consciousness to which only a few environmental philosophers have apparently risen. I find this a very limiting way to organize environmental philosophy, and indeed it serves only to document particular portions of the literature in this chapter. Hay identifies key aspects of ecofeminism in the third chapter, providing an interesting and reasonably comprehensive analysis. Moving next to religion and spirituality, Hay breaks his bounds in the fourth chapter and tries to cover the world's

religions. He does so a bit too shallowly in an effort to make linkages to the diversity of calls for new spiritualities by ecofeminists and environmental ethicists.

Hay takes on how green issues and new ways of thinking interact with science in the fifth chapter. He puts too much emphasis on the pitfalls of reductionism against the need for a holism yet to exist, but he touches on many other critical issues in the process. As a lecturer in geography, Hay provides a good summary in the sixth chapter of the importance of place, community, and bioregionalism against progressive visions of global communities. In the seventh chapter, Hay addresses the authoritarian and conservative roots of green concerns. Environmental challenges to liberalism, especially as embodied in economics, are dealt with in the eighth chapter. Here we find a good review of the limits of environmental economics and how alternative approaches, including the emerging field of ecological economics, address critical issues of environment, growth, and the quality of life. Hay addresses the socialist response to environmental challenges in the ninth chapter with a good review of the work of European democratic socialists during the 1970s and 1980s and the efforts to bridge the gap in perspectives during the 1990s. Both the eighth and ninth chapters are lengthy and solid, but short on synthesis and perspective. The final chapter addresses the contradictions and big issues raised by the multiple perspectives considered separately. For the already well-read, this is definitely the chapter to read. For initiates to the way environmental issues have challenged and generated social theory who have made it through the bulk of the book, the final chapter should be, and probably is, exciting.

This 'companion' is both a bold and foolish effort. Environmental thinking is challenging and generating social thought, breaking it into multiple, intermingling, and constantly changing streams, like the great Mississippi River meandering across the delta of silt it has deposited over millennia in its final approach to the ocean. Hay knew the task would be difficult when he set out. A good overview requires a vantage from which to look at the broader processes that are taking place, a position from which everything can be put into perspective. Such a perch is difficult to find when we are so clearly in the process ourselves. Hay assumes a somewhat different perch in each chapter. However, he never takes a look at the environmental justice literature, which considers how differential access to environmental resources and exposure to insults affect well-being across race and income. This is a serious shortcoming. With this significant caveat, this volume could provide a very interesting companion to a wide variety of courses in environmental ethics, history, politics, and social theory in general. For more established scholars addressing environmental

issues from a particular disciplinary perspective, Hay provides an interesting reminder and partial synthesis of the breadth of our efforts.

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H. C. DARBY, *The relations of history and geography. Studies in England, France and the United States* (University of Exeter Press, 2002). xiv + 293 pp. 9 plates; 7 figs. £40.

This book is based on a lecture series that Clifford Darby gave to students at University College, London and later at Cambridge. Darby gave this course over many years, and it bears signs of having been updated until the mid-1960s. Its format, as suggested by the title, is a three-nation survey of work at the borders of history and geography, and, under each national heading, discussion is divided into four parts: the geography behind history (essentially, environmental determinism); past geographies (the 'cross-section' approach to historical geography for which Darby is best known from his editorial labours on the Cambridge historical geographies); the history behind geography (the evolution of place over time); and the historical element in geography (human alterations to the environment over time). Essays elucidating and updating Darby's work have been appended to these national surveys by three former students and admirers of Darby: Hugh Prince (on England); Hugh Clout (on France); and Michael Williams (on the United States). The whole is framed by assessments of Darby's contribution to the methodological definition of historical geography.

The major issue for any reviewer of this book is the vexed question of *cui bono*: what good does publishing these lectures some forty years after they were written serve the scholarly community? The editors seem to waver between asserting that they are a major methodological statement and making the rather more modest claim that they form 'a contribution to the historiography of historical geography' (p. xiii). Let us take these possibilities in turn. Read as a methodological statement of relevance in the present, these essays canvass an issue which is hardly a 'live' one in historiography, the need to beat the disciplinary boundaries between history and geography seeming a far less pressing concern to the parishioners of both disciplines than in Darby's day. Even waiving that and accepting that Darby has identified a serious issue, the twelve essays printed here remain decidedly weak as a methodological statement about how to practise geography, history and historical geography. Darby was himself constitutionally averse to

a methodology that was expressed outside the realm of practice, and this hostility is abundantly evident here. The essays claim to demarcate the spheres of history and geography, but Darby himself admits that this is a rather quixotic pursuit: 'geography and history refuse to be separated in practice, whatever theoretical distinctions we may draw between them' (p. 171). So, if Darby set himself the task of methodologically delimiting geography and history, in the course of the text itself he both eschews theory and denies the possibility of such a delineation.

Perhaps, then, these essays should be seen as a key text in the history of geographical thought. Whilst their provenance entitles these essays to attention by historians of geography almost by default, they are in fact rather disappointing even when viewed in this light. Whatever the verve of Darby's lecturing style, the prose rendering of this material reads as a set of twelve annotated bibliographies, whose categories are initially appealing, but whose rationales of inclusion and exclusion are wholly opaque on any prolonged interrogation. Furthermore, the categories Darby deploys imprison the writings they discuss in a framework he had established years previously in a paper published in 1951, such that this book adds little that is new to our understanding of Darby's map of the scholarly landscape. These essays are not what Darby will be remembered for, and rightly so: they show him venturing into the unfamiliar territory of theory and relapsing from explication and elucidation to enumeration.

With no clear rationale for publication in terms of current relevance and only a tangential interest for historians of geographical thought, the present reviewer could not but see *The relations between history and geography* as a *memento mori* for academics. For as a skull might symbolize both the power and the transience of mortals for a Renaissance scholar, so these essays might perform a similar role for a budding historical geographer. These essays have been lovingly edited, annotated and elucidated by Darby's students, all of whom have had highly distinguished careers but remain in the thrall of their master's voice. And yet viewed by one outside that thrall (both in terms of training and generation), these essays appear of nugatory significance, as embroiled in sterile border disputes where ignorant scholarly armies clash by lamplight. If such transience applies to the musings of a figure of the stature of H. C. Darby, the present reviewer can only see his own commentary on Darby's words as falling under the same stricture to the power of two.

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