

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

PETER FOWLER, *Farming in the first millennium AD: British agriculture between Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror* (CUP, 2002). xviii + 393 pp. 43 plates; 21 figs. £75 (hbk); £27.95 (pbk).

This book is an ambitious enterprise, which, in effect, aims to supersede volume II (i) of CUP's *Agrarian history of England and Wales* edited by H. P. R. Finberg and published in 1972. The main differences are that Scotland is included, chronological treatment is largely eschewed, the approach is predominantly archaeological rather than historical – and the whole is written by one person. Mostly, the book is organized as a series of thematic chapters on farms, ploughs, livestock and so on, illustrated by a selection of archaeological discoveries mostly made in the (post-Finberg) era of much more intensive archaeological work. Additional insights are derived from 'traditional' farming practices, medieval literature and manuscript illustrations, as well as Fowler's own fieldwork on Overton Down in north Wiltshire, consultative roles at Butser Ancient Farm (and, I presume, Bede's World), and observations of recent farming practice in Galicia and the Causse Méjean in the Cévennes. The book is intended in part as a textbook, and it certainly contains a great deal of information and thoughtful comment, as well as a 38-page bibliography. It will be especially useful for those whose specialism is document-based history, and who wish to develop an understanding of what archaeologists have contributed to knowledge of first millennium farming in recent years.

A survey of British agriculture which aims to run in time from Cunobelin to Cnut and in space from Marazion to Muckle Flugga involves hard choices. Fowler has rejected a framework of region-based chapters which would have encouraged more even spatial coverage. Rightly out of sympathy with 'ethnic' categories such as 'Romano-British agriculture', 'Anglo-Saxon agriculture' and so on, he has also refrained from telling the story chronologically. In the short and seemingly belated historical overview which turns up in the final chapter, eight phases of agrarian history are described in fourteen pages, within a framework defined by 'political' events. (And in this context, the book has largely lost interest in anywhere

more than a hundred miles from Oxford.) It seems that first millennium agrarian history cannot be put into self-defined phases, even those fuzzy and regionally-varying phases which last a couple of centuries or so and are markedly different from those which precede and succeed them despite the fact that their boundaries are transgressed by quite a few general trends. I appreciate that this book is not intended as an agrarian history; yet someone, some day, will have to provide such a history for the first millennium AD – and he or she will be using much the same sort of data as Fowler presents here.

The thematic treatment carries the risk that the reader will rarely gain a sense of the holistic, experiential, landscape-centred nature of farming. To some extent a corrective is provided by local case studies, though as these are quite frequently not illustrated by site plans or photographs, it is sometimes hard to visualize the agrarian landscape being described. I suggest that a second edition might contain illustrations more closely linked to what is after all quite a closely-focused text. Some of the photos are atmospheric, but they don't do much work; most readers will already know what muck heaps, flocks of sheep, and coppice stools look like.

What are Fowler's first millennium farmers like? Mostly, they resemble the figures in Alan Sorrell's well-known illustrations of the archaeologically-oriented past – working their butts off for an oppressive master, with some very nasty weather on the way. They are portrayed as conservative, pragmatic characters, whose common sense was much like ours, so it is not surprising that what they did is often described as 'unsurprising'. They were 'not democratic', their spirituality (although 'sincere') was very much an epiphenomenon, and they worked land which was almost always 'owned' by somebody else. They were in other words essentially passive, their cultural competence and social agency fenced in by certain given factors whose complexity, variability, mutability and internal tensions are largely unexplored. They are stereotypical 'farmers', only allowed roles as social beings in other branches of history. They are characterized as exploited, for instance, but this does not lead to an interesting (Marxian?) analysis. The research agenda mostly involves farming practice in its narrower sense and the recommended strategy seems to be simply to

wait and see what archaeology will throw up next. Don't we also need a wider, more intellectually demanding agenda, in which farming practice is socially, politically, and economically contextualized, and archaeology makes its contribution to some wider debates? We might, for instance, set a knowledgeable concern for the pinch-points of farming practice, in terms of soils and weather and labour bottlenecks, alongside closer and wider social and economic understandings, and a good sense of regional landscapes, rather as Tom Williamson has attempted to do in his excellent *Shaping medieval landscapes* (Windgather Press, 2003). *Farming in the first millennium* is indeed authoritative, as its publisher's blurb maintains, and it is often illuminating; but it is also a distinctly personal view.

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PHILIP RIDEN (ed.), *The Victoria history of the counties of England. A history of the county of Northampton, V, Cleyley hundred* (Boydell and Brewer for the Institute of Historical Research, 2002). xvi + 466 pp. 16 plates; 34 maps. £90.

In common with other counties, the Victoria County History of Northamptonshire is undergoing a long period of gestation. Four years elapsed between the appearance of Volume I in 1902 and the publication of the second volume, while Volumes III and IV became available in 1930 and 1937 respectively. Whether through intention or serendipity, then, this latest edition to the magisterial series celebrates the centenary of the project. The editor's foreword darkly hints at a complexity of interplaying tensions at work during the work's preparation. These were perhaps not entirely unconnected with disagreements between collaborating academic institutions and other difficulties which appear to have been in part instrumental in the termination of the contracts of employment of both the editor himself and his assistant at the Nene College of Higher Education (currently University College, Northampton) where they were based. This being the case, it is to the credit of Philip Riden and his colleague Charles Insley that with the generous support of a variety of trusts, commercial organizations, banks, historical societies and individuals the volume has been safely guided through the press.

The hundred of Cleyley comprises twenty-five thousand acres in the extreme south of Northamptonshire and in its quiet way reflects on a local basis many of the broader trends of English rural history. Although the limited fieldwork to date has identified little in the way of prehistoric, Roman or early Saxon activity, Cleyley had evolved by the later Middle Ages as a district of nucleated settlement largely innocent of industrial activity. Of

major significance was the establishment in 1542 of a large royal estate, the Honor of Grafton, which, before it passed into the control of the second Duke of Grafton in 1706, had been subject to imparking, some enclosure of common field and a modest degree of depopulation. While various grantees remodelled their houses and rationalized their estates in the seventeenth century, industrial development remained vestigial and Cleyley rested in its rural slumber for the next three centuries. The Victorian period witnessed the final enclosure of open field, extensive rebuilding of farms on the major estates, the establishment of village schools, the renovation of parish churches, and, in parishes not under the control of major landowners, some limited building of villas for the professional classes. Meanwhile the hundred pursued the quiet tenor of its way. Political and religious tensions were few, industrial and commercial development fragmentary, and as men laboured in field, wood and byre, their women remained at the hearthside occupied with lace-making. The only perceptible stresses within this particular rural backwater were linked to an increasing level of pauperism, and as population increased limited efforts were made to establish a small-scale scheme to promote transatlantic emigration.

With the sale of the great estates and the rise of freehold farming in the early twentieth century, the age-old pattern was set to change. The Heskeths managed to cling on to the great estate of Easton Neston with its glorious Hawksmoor house, yet thousands of acres of other properties changed hands as generations of tenants purchased their freeholds. Henceforth we encounter the familiar pattern of increasing rural depopulation, the building of council houses after World War I (often against the wishes of the sometimes obscurantist rural district councils), and, in subsequent years, the almost total eclipse of traditional village life. As the working classes happily gravitated towards the new council houses after the Second World War, so their dark and insanitary cottages – sanctified by age, if little more – were eagerly acquired by professional incomers from elsewhere, keen to secure a rural foothold. In the meantime, farm buildings were adapted for light industry or offices and outlying field barns were converted to domestic purposes, so that rural facilities deteriorated in a manner so balefully perpetuated the length and breadth of England. Today Milton Keynes and Northampton, the workplaces of many Cleyley denizens (whence they are obliged to travel by car due to the disgraceful shortage of public transport), are the principal influences on the local economy.

Philip Riden's volume follows the standard Victoria County History format and in terms of its detail is rather superior in respect of depth and breadth than its

predecessors. Drawing upon an impressive range of sources, the work achieves exhaustive (and sometimes exhausting) coverage of individual parishes including manorial and ecclesiastical aspects, agricultural and economic history, local government, landscape and settlement, trades and crafts and much more besides. Lustre is lent to Riden and Insley's efforts by the high quality of the line drawings and maps, the excellence of Peter Moyse's photographs, and a highly-detailed and comprehensive index which is an exemplar of the *genre*. The volume is prefaced by a lengthy introduction to the hundred of Cleyley and a separate section dealing with the Honor of Grafton. Whereas in keeping with the traditions of the Victoria County Histories, these essays are severely factual and offer little in the way of analysis or interpretation, they provide valuable context to the remainder of the work.

Many readers of this *Review* will not have been born when the previous volume of the Victoria History of the County of Northampton came into being. Let us hope that not too long a time will elapse before the appearance of Volume VI from which, if it equates with the admirable quality of Riden and Insley's efforts, those of us still in the land of the living will derive much pleasure and profit.

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MARYANNE KOWALESKI (ed.), *The havener's accounts of the earldom and duchy of Cornwall, 1287–1356* (Devon and Cornwall Record Society, new ser. 44, 2001). xii + 361 pp. £20 incl. p&p from the Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 7 The Close, Exeter, EX1 1EZ.

It is the harvest of the sea rather than the harvest of the land that is the principal focus of this welcome and scholarly volume. Professor Kowaleski has drawn selectively on the first seventy years of the copious records of the earldom and, then, duchy of Cornwall to assemble this remarkable collection of accounts. They document the pioneering attempts made by successive earls and dukes to regulate and profit from an array of maritime activities and resources over the critical and controversial period punctuated by the agrarian crisis of 1315–22, outbreak of the Hundred Years War in 1337, and Black Death of 1348–9. The 'havener' of the title was the official responsible for administering the earldom/duchy's maritime properties. This unique position first appeared in the mid-thirteenth century and is a clear indication of the importance of the sea to this most maritime of English earldoms. Wrecks, royal fish (whales, sturgeon, and porpoises), prisage from cargoes of wine, port farms, fines levied in maritime courts, trantery (a toll paid by those who purchased fish for re-sale elsewhere), fines

paid by forestallers of fish, customs duties on a range of imported and exported goods, and an assortment of other perquisites were all potentially lucrative sources of revenue for which the havener was required to account.

This comprehensive edition of the havener's accounts – translated into English and reproduced verbatim (including insertions and deletions) – therefore makes interesting and revealing reading. Here are the materials that make it possible to document the relative importance of Cornwall's many ports, the volume and composition of the trade that they handled, the ships and shipmasters responsible for carrying that trade and the voyages that they took, trade links between Cornwall and the rest of England, Wales, Ireland, Flanders, France, and Spain, the activities of Cornish fishermen and the nature of their catches, the risks and hazards of navigation, and the relationships between those who worked the sea for their livelihoods and the officials of the earldom/duchy. Much of this information is repetitive, cryptic, and formulaic but it is leavened by a wealth of anecdotal detail which ensures that these accounts are anything but a dull read. They record, for instance, the intriguing case of a ship captured in 1338/9 with a valuable cargo of wine and salt but entirely deserted by its crew and even its cat, the costs involved in transporting a carcass of venison from Lostwithiel to Bristol in 1339/40, and a tragic case in 1348/9 when a crew of fishermen were drowned even though their boat was saved. A substantial and first-rate introduction by the editor, detailed and thorough index, and glossary of the many unusual and archaic terms establish this as a volume that is as easy as it is interesting to use. It will become an indispensable work of reference for anyone interested in the south-west, in the earldom/duchy of Cornwall, in medieval fishing, trade, and shipping, and in the many trials and tribulations of the early fourteenth century.

Plainly, no account of the agrarian economy of the south-west can afford to ignore the food, employment, wealth and commercial opportunities that were supplied by the sea (the same, of course, applies to the national economy). Moreover, because so much of what Cornwall produced and needed left and entered the county by sea the character and composition of its economy are more transparent than would have been the case had the county been more land-locked. The Cornish economy at this high point of medieval economic development was overwhelmingly geared towards primary production. Tin, sought after throughout Europe, was its most valuable export (and, by implication, a major employer), followed by unprocessed hides, and fish. At this peak in the national wool trade Cornwall was not a significant producer and exporter of wool, for Cornish wool was coarse in quality and low in value and of little use,

therefore, to Flemish cloth producers who were increasingly specializing in high-quality woollens. In return came salt, required in quantity by the fishing industry, wine, and grain, the poor harvests of 1352–53 eliciting a noticeable increase in grain shipments. Significantly, the ships that carried this trade were as yet mostly built and owned elsewhere.

To an economy so dependent upon maritime trade the outbreak of hostilities between England and France proved to be a major set-back. Not only were established patterns of supply and demand disrupted, but piracy and privateering made plying the high seas a great deal more dangerous. The 1330s and 1340s were therefore a very difficult time for the Cornish economy and these problems were greatly compounded by the massive impact upon the county of the Black Death, to which the haverer's accounts bear abundant witness. In the long run, however, as Professor Kowaleski is at pains to emphasize, adversity served as a spur to enterprise, stimulating investment in ships, mariners, naval supplies, and administrative experience. To war rather than peace, Cornwall ultimately owed the increased supply of ships and mariners that underpinned its remarkable late medieval efflorescence. Professor Kowaleski is therefore to be congratulated for having produced a volume that will please the small band of those interested in the general problems of the medieval economy as much as the host of potential readers hungry for information about the history of this much loved and distinctive English county.

BRUCE M. S. CAMPBELL
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J. L. KIRBY and JANET H. STEVENSON (eds), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem and other analogous documents preserved in the Public Record Office, XXI, 6 to 10 Henry V (1418–1422)* (Boydell / Public Record Office, 2002). xvii + 462 pp. £120.

Volume I of the *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem preserved in the Public Record Office*, covering the reign of Henry III, was published as long ago as 1904. It is therefore something of a shock to be reminded that calendaring of the fifteenth-century IPMs remains ongoing, with the reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV outstanding. In part this is because of the sheer mass of documentation to be processed but it also reflects the widespread historical perception that the IPMs are of dubious reliability and the later IPMs especially so. To have promoted such a view of one of the most comprehensive and useful of all sources bearing upon issues of land-ownership, property, and land-use during the later middle ages must rank as one of the most remarkable own goals ever scored by historians. This detailed calendar of 964 IPMs and related documents from the

last five years of the reign of Henry V (1418–22) is therefore very much to be welcomed. The sheer wealth and variety of the information that it summarizes, concerning landlords and their heirs, tenants and their holdings, rents and services, buildings and their value, mills and other assets, and much else besides should go a long way towards reinstating these fifteenth-century IPMs as an important source, not least by greatly facilitating their use. Indeed, the detail and consistency of the information given in this, the twenty-first volume in the series, is far superior to that provided in the earliest volumes. Over a hundred pages of indexes also make it very easy to locate relevant people, places, and subjects.

Here is information for virtually every county in England and a cross section of almost 450 land-owners. The latter range from the duchess of York and earls of Devon and of Oxford at one social extreme to individuals as humble as William Appelyerd of East Carleton in Norfolk (who died possessed of half a messuage and 13 acres of arable) at the other. In contrast to the earliest IPMs, dating from the reigns of Henry III and Edward I, it is the properties of the lay gentry, rather than the aristocracy, that dominate this calendar. Women also feature more prominently and account for over a quarter of those recorded. Of the men, almost a third are described as knights, a sixth as esquires, and half had no title at all. Imperfect though the IPMs may be, without them many of these lesser landowners and their properties would be unrecorded. With the publication of this excellent calendar there is no longer any excuse for them passing unnoticed.

BRUCE M. S. CAMPBELL
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C. P. LEWIS, *A history of Kirtling and Upend. Landowners and people in a Cambridgeshire parish, 1000–2000* (Wallasey: Magazine Lane Press for Kirtling and Upend Parish Council, 2000). 90 pp. Illus. £7.99

This book, one of a genre of local parish studies produced to celebrate the millennium, covers the history of Kirtling and Upend and its inhabitants over the last 1000 years. The text runs to just 64 pages, divided into six chapters, and is furnished with maps, 'special features' and an album of well-chosen photographs portraying village life from the 1860s. A friendly feel is combined with genuine scholarship as the author develops various themes, familiar to more academic accounts. Central to the story is the impact of the Norths, the leading landowning family, on the lives of the people, the landscape and physical fabric of the parish. Their experience was unusual in that having established themselves in the sixteenth century, with a great estate, mansion and park, they left in 1677 and resided elsewhere for some 150 years,

before returning to Kirtling Tower – all that remained of the house – in the 1820s. Without their presence in the formative years of the eighteenth century, Kirtling and Upend did not become a typical ‘closed’ estate village, but developed in more diverse ways. Enclosure was delayed, independent landowners survived and new influences, such as nonconformity, flourished. By the time the Norths returned they were powerless to reverse these trends. Despite an energetic programme of building new cottages, almshouses and schools, the social control they exercised was little more than decorative.

This tale of interaction between landowner and community is interwoven with themes on the development of farming, the changes in social structure and the cultural life of the village. The work is well organized, fully documented and supported by the several published accounts of the North family. The author also acknowledges his debt to the *Victoria County History of Cambridgeshire*, which allowed him to use the material from the History of Kirtling ahead of publication. Nevertheless, it has been his task to present the story to a new audience in a manner which is crisp, convincing and relevant. A particular strength is the final chapter, ‘Within living memory 1910–2000’, which links the past to the present, and provides for the newcomers to the parish – many commuting daily to Cambridge and beyond – a rich historical context for their often transient lives in this burgeoning part of East Anglia.

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PAMELA SHARPE, *Population and society in an east Devon parish. Reproducing Colyton, 1540–1840* (University of Exeter Press, 2002). xvi + 408 pp. 49 tables; 8 plates; 17 figs; 6 maps. £45.

Colyton is without doubt the spiritual home of English historical demography, and symbolizes both the frustrations and the achievements of this branch of the discipline, both of which are reflected in the latest interpretation of demographic developments in the parish offered by Pam Sharpe. The frustrations are inherent in the sources and basic methodologies of historical demography; the achievements in the ability of demographers to come to terms with, and often transcend, these frustrations. This is exactly what Sharpe has managed to do in this stimulating, if at times somewhat speculative, study.

The problem with Anglican parish registers upon which historical demography depends is that you cannot always trust them. The secret is to choose parish registers of particularly high quality, preferably for a parish large enough to minimize the impact of short-distance migration, and then to identify any remaining shortcomings

and allow for them. When he chose Colyton to pioneer for England the technique of family reconstitution, Tony Wrigley was confident that its registers were comprehensive: it now appears that the early registers cover only the wealthier section of the population, and there is a significant shortfall in marriages registered in the century after 1650, persuasively explained here as the product of the nonconformist tendencies of both labouring and ‘middling’ groups in the parish. A second cause of frustration is that reconstitution, despite its time-consuming nature, remains a blunt analytical tool without context, offering only limited insight in the absence of knowledge of the broader economic, social and cultural identity of the community to which it relates, and the specificity by social class of the various measures to which it gives rise. It is in these latter respects that Sharpe makes her major contribution, providing a ‘total reconstitution’ of the parish of Colyton that draws upon some 80 sets of additional sources to supplement the extant reconstitution of the parish’s Anglican registers. The key novelty is the identification through these sources of four broad social groups – gentry, crafts, labourers and the poor – and the subsequent elucidation of the demographic experiences of each through nominative linkage to the reconstitution data.

Despite the chronological range advertized by the title of this book, there is little here on the sixteenth or nineteenth centuries, and a very heavy focus indeed upon the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when interesting things were happening in the parish. It was this period that witnessed a substantial rise in the age at marriage of women, particularly among the poorer social groups who also exhibited low rates of remarriage, features which are explained in terms of a skewed sex ratio which is itself the product of sex-specific in-migration to take up opportunities in the expanding lace-making industry, a similar hypothesis to that offered to explain relatively late female ages at marriage in the mid-nineteenth century in those parts of Hertfordshire where the straw plait industry flourished. In this period too birth intervals grew, and Sharpe finds evidence of ‘stopping’ behaviour which is consistent with family limitation, particularly for those groups below the level of the gentry, explained in terms of deteriorating economic circumstances and the discipline of dissent. Economic polarization, allied to a rise in infectious disease, also helps to explain rising child and (subsequently) infant mortality after 1650, as well as the onset of disparity between social groups, but the overall conclusion to this central section of the book is that economic factors must be considered alongside the cultural context of population change.

The key demographic analysis is confined to just 47 pages, with much of the rest of the volume providing

economic, social and cultural context. A wide range of fascinating material is included on matters such as pauper apprenticeship, education, the incidence of poverty and its alleviation, the structure of local government, the changing nature of the local agrarian regime and farming practice, land reclamation, the rise of dissent and involvement of Colyton residents in Monmouth's rebellion, and much more. In these sometimes rather discursive discussions, Sharpe reaches out to the wider economy of east Devon, even including a section on the fishing industry despite the fact that it was of very little importance to Colyton itself. The section on the rise of dissent, which unfortunately she had to 'piece together . . . from a disparate set of sources' (p. 30), is central to her subsequent demographic explanations. Her reinterpretation of the development of Colyton's economy, however, is of even more crucial importance, for not only does it underpin the explanation of the skewed sex ratio which emerged in the seventeenth century, but it also fundamentally contradicts the chronology and composition of economic development previously offered by David Levine. What a pity it is that the sources are lacking to provide a clear picture of the changing occupational structure of the parish over time.

The final substantive chapter of the book, 'Viable Households', returns to examine demographic matters in more detail, tracing the inhabitants of Colyton through from birth to old age, emphasizing the correspondence between domestic industry, poverty, singlehood and illegitimacy, and offering particularly valuable insights into the limited extent to which the 'nuclear family' model encapsulated the long-term experiences of the parish poor. In many ways the most stimulating of all the discussions, it is merely one more fascinating chapter, bold in interpretation, rich in detail, and as firmly rooted in evidence as the documentation allows. That documentation is frequently disappointing, as Sharpe is well aware; the social categories adopted are rather amorphous, difficult to define and variable in their representation over time; even a 'total reconstitution' can achieve no more than very partial coverage of even a single parish. Much remains ultimately unknowable, but we are unlikely to get much closer to the 'truth' about Colyton than Pam Sharpe has done here.

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CHARLES F. FOSTER, *Seven households. Life in Cheshire and Lancashire, 1582 to 1774* (Arley Hall Press, 2002). xviii + 248 pp. Illus. £19.95 (hbk); £11.95 (pbk) incl. p&xp from Arley Hall Press, Northwich, CW9 6NA. This is the third volume to appear in a series of books, based on the archives of the Arley and Tabley estates in

Cheshire, which describe social and economic developments in a corner of north-western England in the early modern period. This time, however, the scope is far more ambitious; not only is this book twice the size of the first two but it also extends its survey into mid-Lancashire and Furness. To do so, the author has to go beyond the bounds of his own primary research and make use of published material, specifically, the accounts of Sarah Fell of Swarthmoor Hall, Richard Latham of Scarisbrick and the Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe. His intention is to provide the 'intimate details of daily life' of people from a variety of backgrounds, even families of comparatively humble means. To a certain extent he succeeds. While the gentry dominate the proceedings, there are interesting chapters on representatives of the yeoman class, namely the Fells of Swarthmoor, the Jacksons of Hield and the Lathams of Scarisbrick. Moreover, in passing we learn something of the lives of a kaleidoscopic cast of tenants, craftsmen, labourers and servants. Like the previous two volumes, the book remains true to its origins as a local history project, similarly displaying the strengths and weakness of that genre.

Agricultural historians will read this book with profit for, taken together, the seven case studies cover a number of key developments that were taking place in the countryside at the time. They include agricultural, economic and commercial change; family life and inheritance; social mobility; the provision of rural credit; and the decline in the system of living-in servants. I found particularly illuminating the career of Thomas Jackson, a three-life leaseholder of a fifteen acre farm at Hield in Aston-by-Budworth. Through his efforts he managed to earn enough to spend £840 on setting up his children, to acquire a freehold estate, amass £200 in ready money, and to be recognized as a gentleman. Education, as with so many other people, was the key, for it enabled him to obtain employment as the steward of the Leicesters of Tabley Hall and carry on a thriving legal practice. Alas, two of his three sons did not prosper, illustrating the point that mobility was downwards as well as upwards. This theme crops up regularly in various chapters.

The format of the book, unfortunately, does create some problems. Because the seven households are looked at end-on, there is a considerable amount of repetition. Thus, major themes, such as the ones listed above, are scattered throughout the text and, as a result, the argument is fragmented. In places, too, the local experience should have been contextualized. In addition, some of the findings should have been highlighted to a greater extent; the material presented here is very important but its value is not always fully appreciated. The text also contains a considerable amount of raw data, whether in the form of lists of wages and prices, extracts from

account books or genealogical details. This documentation is very useful as a source of primary information, especially when printed in the numerous appendices, but it distracts, when placed in the middle of a passage. Of course, many of the *Review's* readers will recognize the significance of the information included here and be able to put it into context themselves. The book should certainly be read by all those researching the process of social and economic change in north-western England in the period 1550–1750. I look forward to the fourth and final volume.

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MARGARET SPUFFORD, *The scope of local history and the potential of the hearth tax returns* (British Association for Local History, 2000). 20 pp. £3.50; NESTA EVANS and SUSAN ROSE (eds), *Cambridgeshire hearth tax returns, Michaelmas 1664* (British Record Society/Cambridgeshire Records Society, 2001). cxx + 385 pp. £32; DUNCAN HARRINGTON, SARAH PEARSON and SUSAN ROSE (eds), *Kent hearth tax assessment, Lady Day 1664* (British Record Society/Kent Archaeological Society, 2001). cxvi + 687 pp. £40.

These three volumes present the first results of a project initiated by Professor Spufford at the University of Surrey, Roehampton to publish a series of county hearth tax returns for each county where there is not one in print. Transcription of the original lists, most held at the PRO, will be undertaken by volunteers using microfilms of the appropriate return obtained with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The aim of the project is to provide a national picture of the English and Welsh counties in which the density of those taxed, those taxed according to specific hearth number and those exempted is mapped on a parochial or equivalent basis. Such a picture can then be used as a background against which the typicality or atypicality of a settlement can be judged and as such will provide an immense resource for those interested in agricultural, economic, social, and family history.

The first volume, *The potential of the hearth tax returns* is an edited version of the Phillimore lecture delivered in November 2000 as a progress report on the project. By this date, the maps and tables for Cambridgeshire, Kent and Durham had been completed and Professor Spufford has drawn together the results from these counties to illustrate her vision. The comparable maps show that in Durham those parishes with over 70 per cent of householders paying on one hearth are not scattered spasmodically as in Cambridgeshire but are the norm all over the county, whereas in Kent, they appear only in some numbers in specific areas of the county. Such information presented pictorially does highlight the huge

contrast between 'rich agricultural and clothing Kent and poverty-stricken coal-mining Durham' with Cambridgeshire sitting somewhere between the two. This is impressive work but its validity is open to the usual debate of the extent of comparability of hearth tax data both within and between counties. Similarly, there is the question of whether the recording of the exempt within the hearth tax lists is uniform enough to use as an indicator of poverty, whatever such a condition implies.

The two county volumes follow the usual format of a record society publication, the transcript preceded by a scholarly introduction in which the analysed data is discussed with the aid of well-produced tables and maps arranged by Susan Rose. Whilst the coverage of Cambridgeshire is virtually complete, that for Kent excludes the Cinque Ports and some smaller liberties. The data for Canterbury is taken from an earlier assessment. What sets these volumes apart from earlier hearth tax transcriptions is the standardization of the criteria used in the analyses and the maps, thus allowing for future comparison on a national scale.

Both introducers have used case studies of two or three villages to put flesh on the bones of the hearth tax data in terms of population density, buildings and the wealth and identity of their occupiers. The detailed layout of the Cambridgeshire list proved a more difficult task to transcribe for Nesta Evans, resulting in some errors, and the reader would have benefited from an illustration of a sample extract. The transcript supplies information for both 1662 and 1664 and with the inclusion of additional analyses for 1666 and 1674, the volume provides comparative data for four distinct dates. Although Evans has only briefly touched upon the use of such analyses to investigate the comprehensiveness of the transcribed return, the information is there for others to pursue. The strength of this introduction lies in its detailed comparison of the hearth tax data with that from other sources pinpointing areas of omission and evasion within the list and also suggesting possible fields for future research.

The simpler format of the Kent list, transcribed by Duncan Harrington and using different conventions, is easier to understand. In this introduction, Sarah Pearson has used her deep knowledge of surviving seventeenth-century Kent buildings to show that the relationship between hearths and wealth is not always straightforward. She is able to show that the smaller newer houses in the county tended to have more hearths per house than the older buildings whose occupiers were slow to upgrade their homes.

The potential of the hearth tax returns is well-known and Margaret Spufford is to be congratulated for her vision in initiating the recovery of the national picture.

Hopefully, initial teething problems such as uniformity of conventions and typesetting and the danger of mis-transcription will be addressed in the subsequent volumes. Publication of accurate transcriptions of these hearth tax lists, permitting comparison of the data both between and within counties, is a major stepping stone in the quest to determine their validity.

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RACHEL CRAWFORD, *Poetry, enclosure, and the vernacular landscape, 1700–1830* (CUP, 2002). xiii + 318 pp. 18 illus. £ 45.

Rachel Crawford asserts in the opening sentence of her monograph that ‘containment is not the first thing to come to mind when reading histories of Great Britain’s eighteenth century’ (p. 3). Yet, by the time the reader concludes Crawford’s richly-researched book, she will agree that the idea of containment is essential to understanding landscape architecture, horticultural science, poetic forms, and the very concept of Englishness itself as these each developed during 130-year scope of the book. Crawford’s variegated and erudite exposition forces readers to question many other critical and historical truisms about the forms and aims of writing about the land in the long eighteenth century. Crawford demonstrates that the central concepts of expansion and contraction, when applied to writing about landscape, are not mutually exclusive but exist in a fluid dialectic within an historical trajectory that is much less disjunctive, and thus much more resistant to easy developmental schemas, than previous historians and literary critics have acknowledged.

Knitting numerous heterogeneous sources, from primary texts such as Ralph Austen’s *A treatise on fruit-trees* (1653) to modern works of critical theory such as Susan Stewart’s *On longing* (1993), Crawford relies upon a seemingly limitless set of texts to argue for the importance of the bounded and limited space in discussions of national identity in the period. Weaving so many skeins of discussion together, Crawford’s book resists easy summary, though it is organized overall into tripartite structures, presented chronologically and developmentally. Each of the three main sections contains three chapters, and several individual chapters focus on three specific examples or moments. Fundamental to the book’s argument is the premise of what Crawford labels ‘isomeric relations of words and space’ (p. 5), evident in how writers, whether of agricultural treatises or of georgic poetry, borrow from one another, demonstrating ‘how representational conceptions of space intersect with representational forms in literature’ (p. 9). Crawford gracefully negotiates the linguistic and ideological cross-

pollination among horticultural studies and sonnet collections, garden design guides and popular periodical essays. Her serpentine argument demands concentration, but the abundance of sources allows her to break down unproductive boundaries among academic disciplines. The resulting study is an original and important revisionary history of the eighteenth-century landscape and its representations.

The book opens with an overview of the history of parks and of enclosure in the eighteenth century, and the second chapter is especially valuable for its nuanced account of parliamentary enclosure. Crawford refuses the mystifications of previous accounts (such as that of J. M. Neeson), seeing these as perpetuating an oversimplified notion of the ideality of the open-field system. By exposing how the forces of nostalgia blur modern critical understanding of the significance of enclosure, the book illustrates that

reading in and about agricultural tracts and materials drains parliamentary enclosure of its spectacular effect and provides us with a glimpse of the disparity between historical circumstance and symbolic representation. It becomes clear that the symbolic power of enclosure far exceeds either its positive effects for agriculture or its negative effects on the poor or landscape (p. 54).

Chapter 3 then traces three moments illustrating the mounting importance of the concept of containment through the gardening treatises of Switzer (1715), Whately (1770), and Repton (1808). Relying upon these exemplary texts, Crawford underscores the claim of the previous chapter, that it was increasingly the enclosed landscape that was perceived as authentically English.

The second part of the book examines the literary mode most commonly associated with eighteenth-century discourse about the land: the georgic. After summarizing the rise and fall of the georgic as genre, connecting its fate to historical and cultural developments from the Act of Union to the increased popularity of scientific prose to the impact of the loss of the American colonies, Crawford examines John Philips’s *Cyder* in Chapter 5 and Richard Jago’s *Edge-Hill* in Chapter 6. For the literary critic, in particular, these chapters offer fascinating explorations demonstrating that there is more to georgic poetry than tedious didacticism. Crawford’s reading of *Cyder*, often pinpointed as the first major English georgic of the eighteenth century, focuses on how the apple was appropriated by both poetry and agricultural treatises to the status of the fruit of true Englishness. Her ambitious reading of *Edge-Hill*, often considered as the last major English georgic, focuses on Jago’s techniques of ekphrasis and metaphrasis

as instrumental in moving the georgic scene from a wide view of the landscape to 'the small, well-delineated quarters of the industrial shop and from the unbounded prospects of gentry to the ingenuity of tradesmen' (p. 142).

By the end of the century, the unbounded vistas of aristocratic parks and the capacious form of the georgic were replaced by interest in the aesthetic and ideological possibilities of both kitchen gardens and sonnets or minor odes. The study closes with chapters devoted to kitchen garden manuals and minor poems on the subject of garden bowers by Keats, Coleridge, and Hemans. The final chapters illustrate Crawford's overall contention that the early eighteenth-century emphasis on 'the boundless view put into play a dialectic between containment and unrestrained space that ultimately provided containment with new symbolic possibilities . . . containment could be visualized anew as the means by which England could be made the Garden of the World' (p. 253).

By grafting sources from literature, horticulture, agronomy and aesthetics (to name only a few), Crawford produces a hybrid scholarly work. Yet, as is the case with many hybrids, Crawford's argument yields surprising and productive conclusions. By liberally mixing resources currently constrained within separate academic disciplines, Crawford's work will open up vaster fields of knowledge for readers, challenging the assumptions of literary history with those of agricultural history and vice versa.

BRIDGET KEEGAN
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NICOLA VERDON, *Rural women workers in nineteenth-century England. Gender, work and wages* (Boydell Press, 2002). viii + 232 pp. 16 tables; 8 figs. £45.

Nicola Verdon charges that despite the recent 'impressive ascent' of both women's history and agrarian social history, we know 'surprisingly little' about how rural women made a living during the nineteenth century. Her book is intended to fill this gap.

The starting point for Verdon, as for most other researchers, is Ivy Pinchbeck's foundational *Women workers in the industrial revolution* (first edition, 1930). Pinchbeck's consummate text is based on an exploration of printed sources using traditional historical methods. It has been embellished by subsequent research in the same vein, and by Ann Kussmaul and Keith Snell's innovative research. Their work was inferential, based heavily on southern sources, and is now the subject of revision. But both Kussmaul and Snell provided new insight, significantly in my view, embedded in careful statistical analysis. The resulting conventional wisdom focuses disputation on the precise chronology of women's retreat from waged labour with regional variations in trends readily acknowledged.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of familiar printed sources and seeks to extract something fresh. Verdon begins with the widely-quoted budget accounts of Eden and Davies. Verdon claims the only quantitative analysis of this evidence to be by Thomas Sokoll (1991). This is not correct as both sets of accounts were included in the large data set of working-class budgets assembled by Sara Horrell and myself and analyzed in a series of articles published in the 1990s. Moreover we anticipated Verdon in decomposing family incomes into contributions by fathers, mothers and children. We, however, only included households with a male head, subdivided the budgets according to the occupation of that male head and according to their geographical location, combined the budgets with others recorded for the same period, and contrasted their structure with budgets for different periods. Given the overlap in sources it is not surprising that Verdon's findings mirror our own: the paramount importance of men's earnings, the greater importance of children's earnings than women's earnings and the relative unimportance of women's earnings, although Verdon does not describe them in these terms. Verdon does not report the number of observations on which her averages are based nor whether she includes the female-headed households that feature in these collections in her computations, nor how she treats the contributions of poor relief.

Another well-known source discussed in this chapter is the 1834 Poor Law Report. Again it is not correct that answers to the questions on female and child employment have not been 'systematically exploited' (p. 53). George Boyer, for example, included the answer to Question 11, on the presence or absence of cottage industry, in his econometric analysis of the determination of wages and poor relief in southern counties. Moreover it needs to be underlined that the answers to Question 13 ('What might the labourer's wife and four children aged 14, 11, 8 and 5 years respectively, expect to earn in the year?') do not relate to any actual wife and children but simply to the beliefs of the respondents about what was possible. The value of bar charts based on this evidence would be enhanced if we knew how many responses they represent and/or the variances involved. The resulting decompositions of family income generally confirm the findings from the family budgets for the era, in particular that the earnings of children outstripped those of adult women. It is clear that studies of nineteenth-century standards of living that rely solely on male wage data are misleading.

Perhaps the most useful findings from the printed sources (and see here Burnette, EHNet) are the comparative male and female agricultural servants wages extracted from the Board of Agriculture *Reports*. Verdon

is undoubtedly on the right track when she explains the relatively high female to male wage ratio for Hertford and Buckingham by competition for female labour from domestic industry. Perhaps this explanation could be tested further by linking these wage ratios to the evidence on the geographical distribution of domestic industry revealed in the Poor Law Report.

Chapter 3 turns to farm servants and contributes to the revision of Kussmaul's description of apparently too rapid and universal decline. There is interesting material here on hiring fairs, servants' wages, and the replacement of women by young men in milking. But the focus on the East Riding of Yorkshire, which Verdon herself notes was unique among arable counties in the extent to which unmarried male and female farm servants remained a fundamental component of the labour force, means that the reported experience was far from typical. Moreover as the historians of the East Riding have shown, farm service persisted there because it adapted, shedding many of its traditional characteristics such as residence in the farmhouse. It is interesting to speculate how this process of adaptation contributed to the greater segregation of the workforce, with women servants increasingly confined to indoor domestic labour and men monopolizing outdoor agricultural work.

The most important contributions of the book are undoubtedly in Chapters 4 and 5, which summarize the author's study of farm account books, a much less familiar source than those discussed earlier. In Chapter 4 Verdon measures the relative employment of men women and children at four farms in Norfolk and three in east Yorkshire. She finds that female employment declined in Norfolk but not in Yorkshire. She also charts the seasonal patterns of employment by type of labour, although the failure to record work done on piece rate in the account books leaves men's work seriously underestimated. After 1850 the accounts indicate a decline in women's employment consistent with the standard historiography, though it does not entirely disappear. Verdon also adds to the now long list of comparisons of wage books or farm records with census enumerators' books to show that women who figured as workers in the former were often not recorded as workers in the latter. More ammunition to suggest that the mid-Victorian censuses systematically under-record working women. Cross-linking also allows Verdon to demonstrate that most of her female labourers were married and that many had young children, an important finding.

Verdon joins the debate about the role of custom versus the power of the market in the determination of women's relative wages. While the constancy of female day wages over the nineteenth century leads Verdon to propose some customary element, she does not reject

entirely the argument that women's low pay reflected their shorter hours of work and lesser physical strength.

Chapter 5 turns to women's employment in domestic industry, which is explored indirectly through farm accounts. Verdon shows that in Bedfordshire, where there were jobs for women in lace making and straw plaiting, they were rarely employed in agriculture. The absence of women from farm labour here contrasts with Norfolk and Yorkshire where women's share of the workforce was often around one third and did not fall below five per cent until the end of the century. The inference is that farm labour persisted in areas where there were no alternative employment opportunities. Whether this holds beyond the comparison of Bedford with Norfolk and Yorkshire and why it might be the case are questions deserving further attention.

The systematic failure of many sources which saw the rural economy through the blinkered eyes of Victorian middle-class observers to notice and record the productive activities of women is an ongoing challenge to historians of women's work. Many authors have emphasized that rural women's contributions did not always or even usually take the form of earnings. They also contributed through gleaning, gathering, gardening and micro-enterprise as Verdon's survey of rural working-class autobiographies confirms. But however important they were for individual families, women's earnings and self-provisioning were small beer relative to the contributions of their husbands and children. Verdon balks at this conclusion, even though it is where her evidence leads, as if acknowledging women's dependence undermines the value of her topic. In fact the precocious appearance of a male breadwinner family system is probably of central importance in understanding nineteenth-century social and economic history and it is time it was acknowledged.

In conclusion: did we know surprisingly little about the ways in which rural women made a living in the nineteenth century? I read Verdon's work as confirming key findings from recent research and shading the conventional wisdom rather than stopping major gaps or radically readjusting our focus. This is not to deprecate her contribution. We all stand on the shoulders of others and Verdon has written a fine book that deserves wide readership.

JANE HUMPHRIES
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JEREMY BURCHARDT, *Paradise lost. Rural idyll and social change since 1800* (I. B. Tauris, 2002). 228 pp. Illus. £29.50. In this well-written volume, Jeremy Burchardt has set out to write a history of the countryside but without agriculture taking centre stage. Instead, it is the cultural

appraisal of the English (primarily English in this volume rather than British) of their countryside which is given precedence. As such, he sets himself a difficult task, since arguably one cannot divorce agriculture prior to the latter half of the twentieth century from its social and cultural milieux. To do otherwise is to risk an analysis of cultural production without an understanding of its fundamental context: the (literal) grass roots of rural life.

This is an overview book. As such its primary aim is largely to synthesize and organize previously published material, and in this it certainly succeeds. The writing is admirably balanced and has been helped by good production standards from I. B. Tauris. Chapter 1 provides an excellent introduction to the rest of the book, setting out the broad outlines of industrialization and urbanization in Britain at a macro level, and this is followed by chapters which outline the archaic and classical formulations of the 'Golden Age' (very dependent on Raymond Williams here) and the development of a yardstick by which the quality of rural lives and environments was used to judge the quality of that socio-economic progress which dominated nineteenth- and twentieth-century urban/industrial environments. Having set out the broad parameters, Burchardt then proceeds to both demystify the rural idyll by narrating the outlines of rural radicalism in the nineteenth century (Chapter 3) and to illustrate the 'greening of the city' in the later Victorian period (Chapter 4), thereby bringing the supposed restorative (aesthetic and social morality) properties of the countryside into the burgeoning cities. This coalescence of town and country is then taken a stage further by a consideration of model villages and garden cities (Chapter 5). The chronological structure of the book is also developed by a consideration of literary attitudes to the rural in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Chapter 6) and also by an informative account of land reform movements from 1850 (Chapter 7) and suburban growth (Chapter 8).

The later part of the book departs to some extent from a broad chronological sequencing to examine certain themes. The economic consequences of rural nostalgia (Chapter 9), and rambling (Chapter 10) are examples. However chronology is again established with the twentieth-century organic movement (Chapter 11), interwar rural reconstruction (Chapter 12), rural change and the legislative framework from 1939 (Chapter 13), agriculture and the environment which only deals with the last 50 years (Chapter 14), recreation in the countryside (Chapter 15) and the relationship between attitudinal conflict and social change in the countryside (Chapter 16). The final chapter provides an excellent summary and very balanced judgement of the interrelationship between rural attitudes

and political power in Britain, and is especially good on the analysis of the current Countryside Alliance.

The number of chapters purposely detailed above – 18 including the introduction – and spread across just 208 pages, indicates to the reader that few of the multiple elements involved with this subject can be explored in depth. Indeed, for the academic with background in rural history there will inevitably be a sense of frustration because there is simply insufficient space to develop any of the themes. The movement between chronological narrative and thematic treatment can also lead to an element of repetition, although this is kept to a minimum. I would take issue with a few of the matters dealt with: the treatment of counterurbanization in Chapter 14 is cursory and underplays the extent to which it is not just people moving out from towns into the countryside, but jobs also. In Chapter 16 there are rather too many hints that Burchardt sees the village as the only real rural settlement feature (neglecting the hamlet and scattered settlement patterns of much of the country) and that rural society is dominated by the old tripartite (squire, farmer, farmworker) structure. These are two myths which really also require firm demolition. Finally, does the author succeed in providing sufficient analytical separation between agriculture and his cultural investigation of the countryside, as claimed at the outset? The answer is no. Time and again he simply has to set out the broad perspective or inherent detail of British agriculture; indeed, in some of the later chapters he loses sight of his ambition, and deals very firmly with farming issues – and in this reviewer's opinion, rightly so, since the 'other country' can exist as an imagined idyll only in relation to its historical reality.

All that is, however, to detract from the main strength of the book, which is its synthesis and text book qualities, and I shall be pleased to recommend this as an undergraduate text, and the end-notes and bibliography are helpful for further reading, being generally clear and with very few errors. The price is reasonable, although a soft back version would be helpful for student requirements.

BRIAN SHORT
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PATRICIA LYNCH, *The Liberal party in rural England, 1885–1910. Radicalism and community* (OUP, 2003).

x + 262 pp. 12 tables. £45.

Studies of political change after the Third Reform Act have tended to focus on urban areas. Despite the extension of the franchise to agricultural labourers, there has been a lack of detailed work on the politics of the English countryside. Patricia Lynch's revision of her doctoral thesis ('Popular Liberalism in the English

counties, 1885–1906') goes some way towards filling this historiographical gap.

The book focuses on three county constituencies: North Essex, South Oxfordshire and the Holmfirth division of Yorkshire. Using these case studies, Lynch charts the changing character of Liberal politics in rural England between 1885 and 1910. An opening chapter on the 1885 election shows how pressure from newly enfranchised voters radicalized Liberal rural politics. Candidates often found themselves compelled to make appeals conforming to pre-existing traditions of popular radicalism (e.g. Chartism in Holmfirth, agricultural trade unionism in North Essex). It was where these traditions were strong, Lynch concludes, that the Liberals tended to do best at the polls; where they were weak (as in South Oxfordshire), they did less well.

Liberal success in rural and semi-rural constituencies in 1885 was not repeated in the four subsequent general elections. Lynch finds two major reasons for this. One was the 'abandonment, on a national level, of the language of rural reform that helped them win victory in 1885' (p. 118). The other was a tension between Liberal political culture and the rural 'culture of community'. This helps explain, Lynch suggests, why Liberal party organization was often weak, especially in predominantly agrarian constituencies like North Essex. According to Lynch, the political culture of Liberal activism conflicted with the prevailing ideal of a harmonious, organic rural community, while that of the Conservatives did not. With their emphasis on partisanship and debate, Liberal clubs and associations were seen as divisive in rural villages: hence they often failed to take root. The Primrose League, by contrast, proved far more successful, as its inclusive yet hierarchical ethos and stress on local sociability conformed to the rural community ideal.

Furthermore, in a chapter on local government, Lynch suggests that this community ideal explains why partisan, ideological, campaigns were rarely seen in parish, district and county council elections. It also informed a strong desire for cross-class representation on councils, so acting to stymie working-class radical ambitions to gain a controlling influence over local politics.

In her final two chapters, Lynch argues that the constraints limiting Liberal success in the countryside were lifted. By the 1906 election, the Liberals had returned to the radicalism of 1885. But they combined this revival of radical agrarianism with an emphasis on community. A reformist, anti-aristocratic agenda fused with a defence of the national community against the sectional claims of Unionists (especially tariff reformers). This, Lynch says, was a winning combination, being a key factor behind Liberal electoral success before 1914.

Scholars will find much of use in Lynch's book. It provides valuable insight into the texture of Liberal county politics, with the attention paid to political culture and language being especially welcome. In addition, the chapter on local government provides a bridgehead for future research into a neglected subject. One quibble would be the choice of Holmfirth as a case study: it is easy to see how a constituency where 92 per cent of people lived in towns of over 1,000 inhabitants is a fit subject for a PhD thesis on English county politics, but its appropriateness in a monograph on the politics of 'rural England' is a moot point.

The book's arguments are also questionable. Quite possibly, Lynch exaggerates the extent to which the post-1886 Liberal party withdrew its support for agrarian radicalism. Land reform figured prominently in the 1891 'Newcastle Programme' and in the 1892 election. And even at the next two general elections, agrarian radicalism occupied a significant place on the national platform. In 1895 and 1900 land reform appeared in over forty per cent (1895) and over sixty per cent (1900) of the addresses of Liberal candidates standing for English borough constituencies. By comparison, at the 1906 election, two-thirds of candidates for English seats – both counties and boroughs – made reference to land reform in their addresses. This does not reflect any very dramatic rediscovery of agrarian radicalism.

What, then, of the argument that Liberals were constrained by a rural 'culture of community' before 1900? This is certainly suggestive, but it is not conclusively proven. Lynch might have provided more documentary evidence of the purchase of the village community ideal, to which she attaches such interpretative weight. Moreover, if this harmonious, hierarchical ideal was so pervasive, why didn't it restrain the vigorously, even violently anti-aristocratic appeal that paid such dividends in 1885? And what happened to this ideal after 1900? We are told that Edwardian Liberals mixed traditional radicalism with the language of community, to great electoral effect. But the Edwardian Liberal language of national community was not the same as the 'resolutely apolitical ideal of the harmonious village community' (p. 220) of Lynch's account. This conservative ideal certainly existed (particularly in the fantasies of agrarian Tories), but so did very different alternatives. Lynch pays insufficient attention to the democratic Liberal vision of a village community of self-sufficient, independent cultivators. This vision, which drew upon the Anglo-Saxon and pre-enclosure past for inspiration, informed Liberal local government reform proposals, and also those for land reform (smallholdings legislation especially). It was a vision wholly consonant with long-running traditions of agrarian radicalism, but also – in its unimpeachable

Englishness – with the national, patriotic turn taken by Liberal reformist discourse after 1900.

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HEATHER HOLMES, *'As good as a holiday'. Potato harvesting in the Lothians from 1870 to the present* (Tuckwell Press, 2000). xvi + 334 pp. 41 tables; 16 illus; 11 figs. £20. In the Celtic areas of Britain and especially in Scotland there has developed, mainly since the Second World, an impressive 'school' of academics and enthusiasts working in folk life studies. Folk life studies is perhaps best seen as centred on the intersection of folk-lore, ethnography and history, sharing some the concerns of all these disciplines but above all concerned with the relationships around work practices and material culture. In this, how people work, the tools they use and the organization of the labour process are key elements in the shaping of social relations.

Heather Holmes' fine and interesting book is very much a product of this tradition. Although to an English reader its title suggests that other great movement of casual work – hopping – in fact it centres on very different concerns than those of the 'holiday'. Rather it constructs a complex picture of change over time centred on the nature of the technology of potato harvesting and the changing nature of the workforce. This picture is made up by the skilful weaving together of government reports, local papers, local government records, farm records and oral accounts.

The general outlines of the 'story' fit in with a range of work produced over the last few years on the fluctuations of casual employment in agriculture, particularly in relationship to the employment of women and children. At the end of the nineteenth century the autumn harvest of potatoes was highly labour intensive drawing on local women and children but also urban migrants and Irish workers. By the end of the twentieth century the workforce was much smaller and reliant on quite different groups of workers. However, what is striking is that the technology of the potato harvest underwent much less change, and what change there was was much slower and later than that say of the grain harvest. Holmes shows that many of the basic techniques (and hence labour processes) of potato harvesting not only pre-dated the 1870s but also persisted well into the 1960s. As late as 1963 the Potato Marketing Board could comment that 'traditional methods persist on all but a small part of the acreage' (p. 58).

The main reason for this was the continued availability of 'traditional' labour supply. Children's employment, for example, which had ceased to be a major part of the cereal harvest, in England at least, by the Great War, not only remained central to the Scottish potato harvest but also

was encouraged and protected by legislation until 1962. Irish migrants, again a group declining in importance in much of England before 1914, continued central in the Lothians until after the Second World War. Again what figures there are suggest the final decline was in the 1960s. Finally changes in women's employment patterns, especially the growth of full-time, year-long work in light industry reduced the availability of a key work group.

As a result of the decline in these groups of workers, mechanization, which had been much discussed since the 1920s, finally became urgent. In the late 1950s, with the encouragement of the Potato Marketing Board, but pressed by labour shortage, successful potato harvesters began to appear. The final technical development of the 'complete harvester' in the 1970s and its widespread adoption in the subsequent decades ended the old system and its work patterns and workforce.

This broad account centres only on part of a book, which, as I have already suggested, is a complex and detailed study. Its account of the labour process and the social relations it produced is exemplary and all too seldom seen in English histories of agriculture. Its account of the workforce and especially the changing role of women is extremely important, if for no other reason than that there are virtually no accounts of women in twentieth-century agriculture. As with Richard Anthony's work of a few years ago on the lowland farm worker, Scotland has again provided a pioneering account. It is a sad reflection on English histories of the countryside that we continue to know so little about those who worked the land in the twentieth century, let alone how they worked it.

ALUN HOWKINS
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ALUN HOWKINS, *The death of rural England. A social history of the countryside since 1900* (Routledge, 2003). xii + 260 pp. 21 plates. £60 (hbk); £16.00 (pbk).

In this admirably-researched and crisply-written book Alun Howkins takes us on a brisk canter through a century of English rural life. Most of the general themes will be familiar to students of the recent history of agriculture, yet Howkins offers a comprehensive summary coupled with incisive judgements and what to some readers will prove to be controversial viewpoints. From an agricultural perspective it is a rather sad tale, being in essence a chronicle of the descent of a great industry from triumph into decline, and from public admiration to widespread vilification. While they may have been accused of 'doing rather well' out of two world wars, the farmers' remarkable contribution to wartime food production engendered much public sympathy and a general belief in the principle of protection. But this was to evaporate due

largely to indifference in the inter-war period and increasing resentment over environmental, public health and animal rights issues in the later twentieth century. Incidentally, Howkins writes brilliantly (if controversially) on the rise of the counter-culture of environmental protest and the growth of profound hostility towards the farming interest (whose doings were orchestrated by MAFF and its advisory wing) in the latter period. Farming, of course, has always been a broad church and throughout his book Howkins emphasizes the fundamental social, cultural and economic differences between the large (and highly-influential) arable producers predominantly of the central and eastern regions and their livestock-rearing brethren of the west. Not only did these groupings respond differentially to changing economic conditions, but their attitudes towards their workforces and their overall social aspirations varied enormously. As the eastern grain farmer of the 1980s pocketed his arable area payments, so the small dairyman of the west was forced to sell up as the Milk Marketing Board insisted that he abandon his churns and concrete his farm lane to accommodate their thirty-ton bulk tanker. With the growth of the political clout of the NFU from the 1930s onwards, the initiation of the post-war mechanism of the Annual Price Review, the compliance of the MAFF (more recently castigated as the farmers' poodle) and the positive propaganda provided by the *Farmers Weekly* and kindred journals, there appeared to be no end to the growth of agricultural prosperity by the 1980s. The age-old rural-urban divide was still there, yet even this seemed to decline in significance as increasing numbers of townspeople moved into the countryside from the 1930s onwards. True, this increased village house prices to the discomfort of the indigenes, fuelled the craving for more access to the countryside and threw up the odd Linda Snell-like irritant to moan about the pesticides and the smell of pig slurry. But somehow, it hardly seemed to matter. 'Silent Spring' had come and gone, the environmentalists, and animal rights lobbyists could be dismissed as marginal cranks while the subsidies rolled in and the structural surpluses grew. My father, in many ways a far-sighted man, bought land at this time! The inevitable followed and Alun Howkins chronicles with considerable insight (and un concealed relish) the subsequent disasters; the growth of the anti-factory farming lobby drawing support from all classes and age-groups, the dramatic rise of the environmental movement, the fiasco of BSE, the tragedy of foot-and-mouth disease, and the slumping of farm income from £6 billion in 1995–6 to £1.8 billion in 2000. The Countryside Alliance might fight back with some gusto, yet the world of agriculture had changed for ever as the farmer became an increasingly-marginalized figure

and the MAFF a disgraced, derided and ultimately defunct body.

Howkins' story, of course, is not merely about farming and the book is concerned throughout with the changing class and social structure of the countryside. As one might have anticipated, he relates in some detail the varying fortunes of the farm workforce and its evolving relationship with employers, discusses the tied cottage issue, and describes the effects of in-comers on core community values as urban folk drifted to the villages and farm workers became (almost) strangers in their own land. At the other end of the social scale were the landed gentry, whom Howkins sees as being increasingly divorced from the roots of their landed income as the rituals of deference – still common between the wars – began to evaporate. Perhaps, but not in the Northamptonshire of my youth in the 1960s where the squire was decidedly more than 'increasingly symbolic' and the parson, far from being 'a marginalized minority' remained a force to be reckoned with. Meanwhile, in the village hostelrys of that same county (for all the effects of incomers, sales of council houses, declining farm work force and so on) public bar talk still tends to be of crops and livestock, the weather, hunting and shooting. Here, in the middle of England, animal rights activists and hunt saboteurs are thin on the ground. All of which leads me to my sole gripe with Alun Howkins' admirable book; the title itself.

Having travelled a good deal in the tropics, being immune to the dubious allure of beaches, and having little taste for the company of the Chianti drinkers in Tuscany, I tend to go on holiday in England; frequently alone and more often than not, on foot. On my various wanderings over the past few years, I have seen little evidence of the 'death' of rural England which, to me at least, still seems a highly-dynamic place where crops flourish, woodland is planted, environmental schemes are elaborated, farms adapt to change by way of diversification and 'added value' and the rural economy adjusts to the demands of tourism and the imperatives of increased public access to the land. Of course there has been physical and structural change (as there has always been); of course farmers bemoan their lot (as they always have done) and of course the farmscape appears emptier as demand for labour declines. If 'traditional' rural society has changed, in some areas almost beyond recognition, the notion of a rural England close to 'death' appears to me a little extreme. Go to east Northamptonshire, central Dorset, the Yorkshire dales, the glorious country of the Welsh marches or the broad farmlands of Northumbria, and the 'real' rural England is still to be found, its social structures, traditions and rituals largely intact. And then, of course, there is Wales

to which Alun Howkins nods from time-to-time. Wales may be 'a country in the world's backside', but here the little grey Fergie is as common as the modern behe-moth, every other field is a wildflower meadow, bracken, brambles and bush abound, and farms still co-operate at hay time and shearing time. Social patterns and social behaviours in the countryside remain constrained by traditional values, and the ancient language continues to flourish to the great benefit both of cultural diversity and the tourism industry. As Howkins rightly observes, tourism has long overtaken agriculture as a contributor to national income. Time and again, moreover, focus group studies of visitor perception reveal that in both England and Wales tourists identify the farmed landscape as a major priority. True, the ideal is a 'traditional' farmed landscape, but it is a farmed landscape nevertheless. The appalling disaster of the recent foot-and-mouth disease epidemic dramatically illustrated the intimate links between the fortunes of farming, tourism and rural society in general. Since people do not as a rule come to this country in pursuit of wilderness, we disregard the maintenance of farming England at our peril and while the demands of the environmentalist, the wetlands zealot and the lover of wasteland should be met, they should be accommodated within the framework of well-conducted farming.

In producing this highly-readable and challenging account, Alun Howkins offers a valuable counterpoint to John Martin's recent work focusing essentially on agriculture. Howkins draws upon a wide range of sources in a book which, despite the odd typographical error, is notable for the charm of its illustrations, the common sense deployed in its arguments, and the reasonableness of its price. It is required reading for historians, economists, and social anthropologists for whom it will provide a valuable launching pad for further research into this most important period of rural history.

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

Elsewhere and General

HELENA HAMEROW, *Early medieval settlements. The archaeology of rural communities in north-west Europe, 400–900* (OUP, 2002). xiii + 225 pp. 1 table; 75 illus. £45. In 1855 John Mitchell Kemble saw the similarity of some excavated pottery from Stade on the Elbe and pottery from East Anglia. Since then archaeology has played a major role in the study of the historical relations in the early medieval period between Britain and the countries on the other side of the North Sea. Not only the pottery but also the weaponry, the ornaments, the dress and the

burial rituals of both regions showed a high degree of correspondence in style, technique and origin.

In the field of housing the sunken hut was the common element. But with the expansion of settlement archaeology on the continent since the 1950s and somewhat later in Britain a marked difference appeared. The sunken huts, long seen in England as human dwellings, appeared on the continent to be secondary buildings in farmyards dominated by aisled bipartite longhouses that housed both people and cattle. In due course ground-level buildings were also discovered in England but they averaged only 10 to 12 metres and lacked cattle byres. The roof weight was not supported by double rows of inner posts as in the longhouse, but by wall posts. At the large fourth to sixth century site of Mucking on the Thames, some 200 sunken huts were accompanied by over 50 small wooden buildings, none of them exceeding 15 metres in length and all of them lacking the aisled structure prevailing on the continent in the same period. Why didn't the Angles, Saxons and Jutes in England in the fourth century build the houses they were used to in their homelands, and why didn't their descendants in the eighth century follow the general continental fashion of building houses with roof supports set in the wall, with external raking posts and bowed long walls?

Working on the Mucking material and confronted with the apparent anomaly, Helena Hamerow felt the necessity to study in detail the archaeology of the early medieval settlements on the continent. The book under review is the result of her efforts which brought her in personal contact with archaeologists in Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and northern France and for which she often had to consult papers in the languages of these countries.

In her analysis of the excavated settlements the author has looked at a number of aspects, devoting separate chapters to the different archaeological approaches, the archaeology of the buildings, the settlement structures, the territorial context, the agrarian production, and the evidence for trade and non-agrarian production. At the end of each chapter she discusses the British evidence. In addition she had all the major settlement plans schematically redrawn. In this way she has made a large body of archaeological information from the continent accessible to British students.

I personally have been closely involved with some of the Dutch excavated settlements dealt with – Wijster, Odoorn, Gasselte – and can assure British readers that Hamerow provides an up-to-date picture of these sites and their interpretation. I am convinced that the same holds good for other informative sites, such as Vorbasse and Nørre Snede in Denmark, Flögeln, Dalem and Feddersen Wierde in Germany, Kootwijk and Gennepe in the

Netherlands, and Mondeville in France. Few continental archaeologists will have the same overview as the author, and so her book, with its rich list of references to primary sources, will certainly be of great use to them as well. On the other hand, the continental reader interested in British settlement sites must make do with very few illustrations. Mucking and Cowdery's Down each receive one picture, but where are the plans of, for example, Catholm, Chalton, Linford, West Heslerton, West Stow, Yarnnton and Yeavinger, sites that are amply discussed in the text? We on the continent would have benefited had some of these sites been illustrated in the same way as their continental counterparts.

The author has no clear-cut answers to the central questions. But she is struck by the great diversity shown by the continental settlement data and she finds much that would weaken the contrast, especially when considering long-term social and economic developments as revealed by the archaeological data. Discussing the origin of the Anglo-Saxon timber building, she refers to a number of short houses without internal roof supports in some Dutch sites, suggesting that they might be comparable. Here, however, I would disagree. In these houses the roofs are supported by opposing sets of double posts in and close to the wall, a system quite unlike that of the British houses. Furthermore, these houses only occur in combination with ordinary longhouses in the same farmyard. In my view, the absence of the longhouse in Britain and the origin of the Anglo-Saxon house are two sides of the same problem, the solution of which can only be found in Britain itself.

Hamerow's book is well produced. It should be read and consulted by all students of early medieval archaeology, both on the British and on the continental side of the North Sea.

H. T. WATERBOLK
University of Groningen

CÉDRIC LAVIGNE, *Essai sur la planification agraire au moyen âge. Les paysages neufs de la Gascogne médiévale (XIIIe-XIVe siècles)* (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2002). 299 pp. 135 figs. €38.

This book is the published version of the author's doctoral thesis prepared under the direction of J. B. Marquette at the University of Bordeaux III. It deals with the agricultural landscape of the medieval new towns and villages ('bastides') which were founded in south-western France (Gascony) during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. According to the author, his main achievement is to show that the foundation of the bastides entailed the laying out of planned field systems according to a coherent set of measures based on three fundamental units (16.41 metres, 21.09 metres and 37.5 metres) which

have a common denominator of 9.375 metres (though only after being multiplied by four!).

Lavigne uses vertical aerial photographs, topographic maps and cadastral plans, applying the filtering and other techniques to identify metrological regularities developed by the Centre d'Histoire Ancienne at the University of Besançon in the course of their studies of Roman centuriations. This work on centuriations was designed to discover the periodicity of road layouts on very large surfaces of land, and was carried out at a scale of 1:25,000. A technique developed to function at this scale cannot provide a proper basis for the metrological analysis of field boundaries at the scale of 1:2500, and neither of these scales can allow measurements to be made with the precision alleged by Lavigne. Moreover, the basic documents used by Lavigne, the nineteenth century cadastral maps, are not accurate enough for his purpose. Obviously, he should have checked them on the ground with modern topographical instruments, or assessed their standard of accuracy against present-day cadastral maps.

Although Lavigne starts with a list of 255 bastides located in eleven *départements*, the actual metrological analysis was applied only to a small portion of the commune of Barcelonne-du-Gers, which was the subject of his MA at the University of Bordeaux III. From the results of this single analysis, he creates templates which are then used to analyze and compare the land parcel measurements of thirteen other bastides. Postulating that the same coherent system was used for each of them, the author then jumps to the conclusion that it must be based on the *arpent* and the *journal*, these being the most common units of land measurement in the bastides' foundation charters. His next step is to infer that whenever the *arpent* and the *journal* are mentioned, it implies the creation of planned field systems.

Overall, there is little to recommend in this book. The metrological analysis is fraught with errors, and is carried out on a very narrow sample. The dating of the field systems relies exclusively on written sources. The notion that planned field systems were laid out during the middle ages is anything but new, and there is no need to challenge the allegedly common view that medieval planned field systems were circular in shape, there being no such common view. The author, who presents his book as the first significant contribution to the study of medieval field systems since Marc Bloch in the 1930s, seems unaware of the huge amount of work which has been done on medieval agrarian landscapes in various parts of Europe.

ELISABETH ZADORA-RIO
CNRS-Université François Rabelais, Tours

MARTINA DE MOOR, LEIGH SHAW-TAYLOR and PAUL WARDE (eds), *The management of common land in north-west Europe, c. 1500–1850* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002) (CORN Series 8). 261 pp. 10 tables; 17 figs. €60.

This is an exciting book by seven historians familiar with the history of Europe from the fifteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. By covering the various forms of common property related to land in both upland and lowland England, the Netherlands, Flanders, France, Sweden, and western Germany, the authors do a real service to the academic community. They are bringing together information from a variety of archival sources combined with historical studies by the authors and others of a diversity of common property institutions in these regions during the above era. I do not know of another book like this. Any serious student of common property history simply must read this book.

What is outstanding is that the authors have met and discussed the terms they were going to be using and kept to the conventions they developed as closely as any group of authors I have read recently. For the simple descriptive veracity, this is extremely useful for all serious scholars in this field.

I was flattered that this distinguished group of historians took the design principles I outlined in *Governing the commons* seriously. I think they somewhat mistakenly thought you could describe a wide variety of common property institutions using the design principles. They found, as I have found earlier, that specific common property institutions do differ from one another. I was working at the level of individual common property institutions for specific resources. The authors point out that they notice that even in the same community the rules and the likelihood of conforming to the rules vary by specific resource.

It is my fondest hope that this group can now go on to a second or third enterprise whereby they identify specific institutional arrangements that they hopefully could trace across time. All of us interested in this field are frustrated with the difficulty of studying failures and why some systems succeed while others fail. Hopefully, they will be able to identify sufficient resource institutions or resources that collapse after some time so as to begin to get a good quantitative assessment of the difference in the successful versus failed systems. Throughout this book they give us very good descriptions of some of this kind of information, but hopefully in future work they could each pick a set of institutions about which there is data at an early period and assess when the system appears to have disappeared or entered a very difficult time.

This may well be an impossibility, but it would be certainly worthwhile to try even if they were only able

to code eight to ten core variables for each of one hundred or so institutions.

I know I will be recommending this book to my graduate students in the future and I strongly urge readers of this journal to do likewise.

ELINOR OSTROM
Indiana University

WILLIAM W. HAGEN, *Ordinary Prussians. Brandenburg Junkers and villagers, 1500–1840* (CUP, 2002). xxxii + 679 pp. 22 plates; 3 maps. £75.

This is not a modest book, in any sense of the word. William Hagen has not only undertaken a momentous task in his ambition to convey the experiences of 'ordinary Prussians' over three and a half centuries and produced a monumental tome to match; he equally desires to banish forever perceptions of an interminably oppressive *Junker* regime east of the Elbe, and a perpetually cowed and submissive rural population. Such a conclusion speaks as much to twentieth-century history as that of the *ancien régime*. There is no direct line between the social relations of the absolutist or indeed feudal state and a receptiveness to Nazi ideology. Neither, according to Hagen, should we see ordinary folk of the eighteenth century as much different from ourselves. They are 'more brother than Other' in his terms. In these endeavours Hagen to some degree follows a trail laid out by Peter Blicke in his attempt to rehabilitate, still controversially, the consultative and at times querulous political traditions of southern and western German village life.

The means to do this is a 'micro-history' of the lordship of Stavenow in the Prignitz district of Brandenburg, only a few miles north-east of the Elbe. This lordship comprised several villages (in part subject to other lordships, though they appear in the story relatively seldom) and manors that passed through several families over these centuries. The most prominent owners, and those given by far the most attention in the record, were the von Kleists of both literary and military fame. Hagen follows the micro-historical tradition that has inspired numerous local studies in the past three decades, seeking large-scale structural change as manifested in everyday experience. Indeed, his approach perhaps owes more to the 'history of everyday life' (*Alltagsgeschichte*) as a genre, rather than the more demographically based studies associated with historians of early modern German villages such as David Sabeau, Jürgen Schlumbohm and Hans Medick. Hagen does not eschew quantitative approaches, but neither does he make rigorous use of them. Indeed, he does not appear to have actually employed the parish registers that apparently survive, but a summary drawn up by a twentieth-century local pastor. Aside from the implications for the reliability of the demographic

sections, this means that we are repeatedly told that people share the same surname, but not whether they are actually related.

The study proceeds, in part chronologically, through the developing estate economy, the conditions of life of the tenant farmers, the estate stewards, officials and workers, labourers and inmates, the regulation of village life and morals, and the dissolution of the *ancien régime*. Before the latter part of the seventeenth century, sources largely consist of estate surveys and lordly correspondence, but thereafter increasingly consist of court records, petitions, and inventories of various kinds. The lordship of Stavenow was as much of the east Elbian lands, although personal serfdom did not exist in this part of Brandenburg. 'Subject' status pertained to the (fairly onerous) terms of farm tenancies. More significant than demesne farming were fairly rigidly defined 'fullholdings' of up to 34 hectares, surrounded by smallholdings and a limited cottage economy. The three-field system of grain cultivation predominated until the nineteenth century, although forms of convertible husbandry made inroads on the demesne lands from the 1740s onward. The abolition of subject status and tenurial servitude, along with enclosure of the tenant farms, arrived in the 1810s.

Hagen's strategy is to use the Stavenow records to the full, and he presents us with an exhaustive account of all recorded aspects of life. He provides an archive unlike any other on the villagers of Brandenburg, especially in the English language. However, while many impressions are vivid, others are simply superfluous. The approach of letting the sources speak for themselves seems least productive in discussing conditions of material life, where Hagen for the most part simply lists the complete contents of numerous inventories. This might provide useful raw material for a study, but for most readers, one suspects, it will not be especially helpful.

This is despite the fact that Hagen repeatedly asserts the importance of comparison, claiming relatively bountiful conditions for Stavenow that compare favourably with other parts of Germany and western Europe. Yet comparative data are barely ever brought to bear, even from other areas of Brandenburg, or indeed lordships that shared the same villages, never mind other parts of Europe. Neither do they appear to any great degree in the footnotes. Hagen may well be right, and some of the material wealth of the farmers and widows, or wages of the labourers, are indeed impressive. But he does not provide the means to demonstrate this.

Among the welter of information, agricultural historians will have much to glean. We can see here a gradual improvement of yields, especially of livestock numbers and quality, and gradual innovation during the eighteenth century. Certainly the commercialized manorialism of

Brandenburg displays little of the inertia and under-investment long-argued for the manorial estates of Poland. Antagonism between the lordship and its subject farmers over *corvée* labour and rents gave rise to strikes, long drawn-out legal cases where the farmers at times won the backing of the 'enlightened' state, and all the usual arts of resistance in badly-performed and tardy labours. Hagen's sections on these are (literally?) striking, and evidence, he claims, of the real ability of Brandenburg farmers to meliorate their working conditions and dues. By the Napoleonic period both lordship and tenants unsentimentally sought to reap the most profit from the onrushing transition to free land markets and a liberalized world. There was little nostalgia for the old order on display. These trends, probably reflected in much of central Europe, hardly justify Hagen's adoption of the term 'agricultural revolution'; in this case a rise of seed to yield ratios from about 1:3–4 to 1:4–5.

This book will be important for a long time to come. There is no study like it in English, and it can rightly claim to make some original contributions to German history. The evidence for women's activities is particularly wide-ranging, although scattered throughout the book. One feels however that the volume may have been too long in gestation. The traditional divide of 'east-Elbian' and 'western' Germany is treated with suspicion nowadays, and peasant agency and vigorous, even violent, negotiation of terms with lordship are everywhere in the historiography. And as Hagen admits, the seigneurial regime often remained oppressive and violent although not arbitrary. The methodological strategy adopted indubitably strongly imprints the mind with much detail of the lives of 'ordinary Prussians', yet leaves the theoretical or macrohistorical generalizations (and generalizations they most certainly remain) feeling somewhat disconnected, while genuine comparison remains scarce. Nevertheless, the book is a significant challenge – in many senses of the word.

PAUL WARDE

Pembroke College, Cambridge

ERIC PAWSON AND TOM BROOKING (eds), *Environmental histories of New Zealand* (OUP, 2002). xvii + 342 pp. 4 tables; 77 figs. £18.99.

On the make or in the making, modern environmental history contrives to ignore, absorb, resurrect and elaborate any number of established scholarly pursuits, profoundly influencing most of them. It is difficult to predict the outcome in the world's older and larger academic cultures, but in the case of southern hemisphere groups, recurrent funding crises and coarse instrumentalism seem to favour pragmatic accommodations. The transition is reflected in this multi-disciplinary, five-part collection of

commissioned essays, which builds upon New Zealand's distinctive legacy of environmental narrations, academic and otherwise.

Encounters opens the proceedings with three interpretations of early Maori and Pakeha transactions with the new country, explaining that intercultural relations pivoted on contrasting modes of resource appraisal and environmental management. *Colonizing* and *Special Environments* consider environmental change between the mid-nineteenth century and the early twentieth century – on the grasslands, in the mines and forests – and the range of reaction in utilitarian and preservationist orientations to conservationism. A subsequent *Modernizing* bracket relates the evolution of the state's assertive application of science and technology to New Zealand's agricultural, pastoral, forest and water resources, deepening opposition from its largely urban environmentalists, and the gamut of hazard-prone town residence and comprehensive withdrawals into suburban gardens. A final section, *Perspectives*, supports environmental history's 'moral tales' characterization. It consists of four discussions of the longitudinal themes of pests and weeds, the problematical interweaving of cultural disruption and Maori attitudes towards environmental change, inherited legal biases towards development imperatives, and a sketch of radical alternatives nominating greater reliance on organic production and the confrontation of presumptuous global traders.

The editors (a geographer and a historian) reasonably suggest that this collection indicates a number of opportunities for increasing New Zealand's output of environmental history. If that claim warranted the insertion of more comprehensive guides to sources and national and international exemplars, perhaps the too-obvious rejoinder would be that it is better left to a companion volume. But the associated list is ambitious enough: it includes such topics as coastal management, environmental hazards, the changing roles of the state and its major resource agencies, the environmental impacts of transport and tourism, and the production and dissemination of environmental ideas. As for the organizational home or homes of those projected endeavours, the editors are less confident about the prospects of full-blown interdisciplinarity, inclining instead towards retention of individual essayist formats. That may indeed be the wiser course: the heyday of the specialist or connoisseur is far from spent. It remains to be seen whether the managerialists will approve.

In the interim, the old 'relevance' defence is strengthened by an attention to style as well as content in this welcome volume. Certainly, its accessible prose and rich illustration bid for a comparatively wide circulation, but on balance it seems more likely that an accusing gap will

be filled in the armoury of main and supplementary texts designed for geography, history and environmental studies programmes. Reward enough. Through similar sets of concise expositions, as well as by means of more extended individual inputs, New Zealand society may soon be encouraged to revise a troubled transaction with some of the world's most engaging environmental settings.

J. M. POWELL
Monash University

WILLIAM D. WALTERS JR, *The heart of the cornbelt: an illustrated history of corn farming in McLean County* (Bloomington IL: McLean County Historical Society, 1998). viii + 132 pp. \$25.

McLean County extends for about fifty miles from east to west, and half that from north to south, around Bloomington in Illinois, roughly halfway between Chicago and St. Louis. It has over 700,000 acres of glacial clay soil with a high lime and organic matter content, perfect for corn growing once drained, and its proud boast is that for much of its history (since the arrival of people of European origin) it has been the leading corn (i.e. maize) producing county in the United States. This book records that history, well illustrated with maps, prints and photographs.

The native American population fled this area between about 1812 and 1830, and the early settlers, many of them native-born Americans from Kentucky, Ohio and the eastern states, moved in. Most of the land remained in prairie grass, over which roamed herds of cattle and pigs. Keeping these scavengers out of the crops was a major problem, which was why prairie next to woodland that could be cut for fence posts and rails was most valuable. By the 1840s woodland was in short supply, and miles of Osage orange hedgerow were planted to keep arable fields stockproof. The corn in these fields was variable and low yielding, and mostly fed to live-stock, since transport was primitive and markets distant. The typical farm of 1850 covered 160 acres, half of which were improved, growing wheat, oats and hay, as well as corn, of which the county as a whole produced some three million bushels. At the end of the twentieth century the average farm size had trebled, most of the livestock had disappeared, along with the fences and hedges, and corn output had increased twentyfold, to about sixty million bushels.

The book tells the story of this transformation. It is essentially about a series of technical changes and their economic and social effects. The first was the arrival of the railroad in 1853, bringing timber and agricultural machinery in, and taking corn and livestock out. By 1895 few farmers were more than four miles from a railroad and the grain elevator was a common landscape feature.

Between the 1870s and the 1890s there was a tile drainage boom that dramatically increased the arable potential of the county, and by the end of the nineteenth century corn-planting machines were available. In the early years of the twentieth century the Funk Brothers Seed Company began to produce improved seed by selecting from existing strains of corn, and the general air of quiet prosperity was reflected in a rash of farmhouse and barn building. The inter-war years were much tougher, but they still saw the arrival of the tractor and the mechanical corn picker, and the spread of hybrid corn in the late 1930s, with its dramatic impact on yields. The disappearance of the horse also led to the replacement of oats by soybeans, and after 1950 fertilizers and herbicides came in and livestock and hedges gradually went out.

The ability of succeeding generations of McLean County farmers, and their counterparts in other mid-western states, to break the prairie, grow ever-increasing quantities of corn, and ship it to markets around the world, was affecting East Anglian grain prices and West Country feed prices by the 1880s. Their pride in producing corn and their ability and desire to keep on doing so is affecting markets in developing countries and the progress of world trade negotiations today. At first sight this is a local story, told from a local perspective. Nevertheless, its impact has been global.

PAUL BRASSLEY
University of Plymouth

TOM GRIFFITHS, *Forests of ash. An environmental history* (CUP, 2001). viii + 227 pp. Illus. £50.

Tom Griffiths begins this account of the mountain ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) forests of Victoria with reference to the devastating forest fires of 'Black Friday' 1939 and passes on to childhood memories of visits to ex-mill sites in the 1960s before reaching back into the colonial past to explain how the fires came about in such a devastating fashion.

Written with style and elegance that belies the author's command of a vast amount of source material, *Forests of ash* begins by establishing the characteristics of the fire-adapted sclerophyll forests of the Australian 'bush'. Subsequent chapters address the early colonial botanists' fixation with the mountain ash as tall trees, discuss the Victorian age's confidence in progress and improvement before moving to gold mining, the timber industry, water supply issues, and the emergence of field naturalists interested in the forest, as well as early tourists to the area. This first section of the book is also notable for a chapter that restores something of the story of the aboriginal people of the Kulin clans in this part of Victoria.

The culmination of the book is the chapter on the

'Black Friday' fires of 13 January 1939. Having set the scene in terms of nature of the forests, of European attitudes to forest management, particularly competing views of controlled burning, and noting a dry winter in 1938 and an exceptionally hot and dry summer in 1939, Griffiths views the resulting fires as a 'cultural creation, a culmination of a century of white settlement and environmental practice' (p. 135). He deftly uses a series of case studies to discuss the spread of the fire and to document how some remarkably enough survived it. Equally evocative is his use of Judge Leonard Stratton's Royal Commission report on the fires which extends to a useful concise biographical sketch of the man.

The 1939 fires are not however, the termination point of the book. Two subsequent chapters consider, first, long term botanical research into forest dynamics that answered some long unknown basic questions about growth rates and reproduction and, second, the former mill remnants and tramways as heritage sites. In these chapters Griffiths is able to explore something of the politics of both scientific research and conservation as well as heritage.

The volume is interwoven with what the author describes as 'spotlights', one per chapter, taking the form of natural history vignettes written by scientists from Museum Victoria. These can be read alongside the main chapters or as stand-alone essays.

Forests of ash is a revised edition of *Secrets of the forest. Discovering history in Melbourne's Ash Range* originally published in 1992. The revised edition follows a similar structure though with the addition of a prefatory chapter on forest and fire in Australia as well as a new chapter on the Kulin clan. The chapters have been shortened and more sharply focused. A second part on selected heritage sites has been deleted in favour of the natural history 'spotlights'. Finally in what he merely entitles 'Epilogue' Griffiths concludes with a short chapter of considerable expansiveness. It surveys subsequent fires, notably the New South Wales fires in 1983, reflexively considers the origins of Griffiths' own history in historical site surveys for Victoria's Land Conservation Council and finally offers an incisive discussion of the writing of environmental history in Australia. In itself this last chapter is thought provoking. *Forests of ash* is well illustrated and includes maps, though as a minor gripe I would suggest that the publisher's reproduction of the maps showing the extent of bush fires in Victoria in 1939 and 1983 lacks clarity.

This book is a pleasure to read and is likely to appeal to both specialist and general audiences.

MICHAEL ROCHE
Massey University

MARGREET VAN DER BURG, '*Geen tweede boer*'. *Gender, landbouwmodernisering en onderwijs aan plattelandsvrouwen in Nederland, 1863–1968* (A. A. G. Bijdragen, 41, 2002). xii + 468 pp. 7 tables; 26 illus; 4 graphs; 3 maps. €40.

Margreet van der Burg's Ph.D thesis not only satisfies a need but also signifies a break with the themes and approaches of the Wageningen School. Van der Burg researched the importance to women of agricultural education between 1863, when the first Dutch law on secondary education was adopted, and 1968, when another major law on secondary education was approved. She combines an anthropological approach with an historical perspective on culture and ethos. She chooses agricultural education for farmers' spouses, other rural women, and their daughters as her subject matter because this type of education was a means of involving women in agricultural modernization and rural development. Education is defined broadly here and includes the vast network of organizations and individuals who acted as advocates of the interests of women.

Two chapters introducing the topic are followed by five chapters that discuss the pioneers of women's agricultural education, the special position of women in dairy farming, the emergence and evolution of agrarian home economics and a concluding one with suggestions for further research. These five core chapters are drafted clearly and offer a wealth of new material. The introduction is a bit lengthy. After all, is not the lack of current historical studies of agrarian women evident to all?

Men had a large role in the debate about women's labour and training. Among the pioneers – A. M. M. Storm van der Chijs, W. C. H. Staring, B. W. A. E. Sloet tot Oldenhuis and J. P. Amerfoort – the feminist Storm van der Chijs (1814–1895) was the only woman. She carved a unique position for herself at the annual conferences on agrarian home economics with her pleas to expand the occupational roles and education of women. During the nineteenth century, these conferences constituted national forums on agricultural and rural issues. The events were dominated by men. In agrarian history, Storm van der Chijs' contributions to the agricultural debates were kept out of sight, the rare authors excepted who portrayed her as an eccentric. Van der Burg shows that this qualification was unmerited.

To some extent, the important themes of '*Geen tweede boer*' ('Not another farmer') trigger comparisons with today's debates about the double responsibilities of women. Family and farm being one, farmer spouses were often occupied by many varied tasks such as running the household, milking the cows, helping with the harvest, tending to chickens and young animals, growing vegetables and assisting with dairy processing. These tasks left

them little time for their tasks of spouse, mother and educator. The bourgeois, urban ideal that put the latter tasks to the forefront had little applicability to everyday life on the farm. Practical know-how and a hands-on mindset were considered more important than offering a cup of tea and an attentive ear. In the long term the supporting and educating tasks of spouse and mother gained the upper hand but even then they were viewed as strengthening the farming business.

The curricula for agricultural home economics that emerged after 1900 expressed this view. As debates were waged whether curricula should stress general home economics or agriculture, there was agreement that the training should not turn the spouses into 'another farmer', hence the title of the thesis. The 1919 law that made agrarian home economics a branch of general home economics was contested by agricultural circles. When protest proved ineffective, a few female teachers of agrarian home economics, inspired by experiences abroad and supported by farmers' leaders, expeditiously brought about the professionalization of Dutch agrarian home economics. They and the male leaders shared the view that modern agricultural education should benefit both the individual and rural society. Groningen native Theda Mansholt took the lead as director of the first national training institute for teachers of agrarian home economics (1913–41). She prepared farmer spouses and other rural women from the wealthier layers of rural society for missionary work among their less prosperous and less modernization-minded sisters.

The great merit of '*Geen tweede boer*' is that it establishes links between agrarian and rural history on the one hand and female and gender history on the other. Hitherto, the former neglected gender while the latter paid little attention to differences between town and country. In short, then, unambiguous praise for this Wageningen thesis that not only presents much new information on the history of agricultural education of the spouses of farmers and rural women but also provides a lead for scholarly debate on the gender dimensions of over one hundred years of agricultural modernization and rural development in the Netherlands.

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HELENE ALBERS, *Zwischen Hof, Haushalt und Familie: Bäuerinnen in Westfalen-Lippe, 1920–1960* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001). xii + 505 pp. €46.40.

In view of the now decades of prominence of feminism, the subject of women in German agriculture, and their importance in a country of predominantly 'peasant' farming, has attracted remarkably little attention from historians. On that ground alone Helene Albers'

contribution is to be welcomed. A particular focus in the available literature hitherto has been upon the strain of labour on the wives of peasants. Among nationalist and Nazi investigators the spotlight fell upon the impact of that labour upon female reproduction. In the Federal Republic, before the widespread adoption from the later 1950s of consumer durables, such as vacuum cleaners and washing machines, and the contemporaneous mechanization of farming, with its transfer of a number of former female tasks (such as milking and hoeing) to male hands, the same area of concern was expressed in terms of the impact on 'the family', 'family life' and the key role of the wife in the 'peasant household'. Dr Albers' pioneering work investigates the entire gamut of the 'peasant wife' in the rural economy of the Westphalia region of north-western Germany, around a micro study of two specific villages, with an extensive use of oral evidence. One village being Roman Catholic and the other Protestant permits confessional comparisons to be made.

A criticism that might be made of the work is the choice of time period for the investigation. A remarkable overall impression conveyed by the volume is that in respect of fundamentals relatively little changed in Westphalian peasant culture and even technology between the 1920s and the 1950s. It is remarkable in that the period covers radical regime changes, along with the disastrous aftermath of one world war and the impact and catastrophic (for Germany) outcome of another. A 'feminization' of farming occurred during the period, as wives increasingly replaced hired labour. Maids to care for children became scarcer. However, in terms of the basics the 'norm' continued to hold sway into the 1950s. The maintenance of the farm, including over generations, remained the central concern, especially in matters of marriage and inheritance. In the late 1950s the peasant wife had as little say in the operation of the holding as she had in the 1920s.

Peasant marriages continued overwhelmingly to occur relatively late in life and to involve locals, in spite of population displacement in the 1940s through conscription and deaths, as well as the influx of refugees from the Allied bombing campaign followed by those from the eastern territories. The arrangement might well hinge on the more or less precise acreage and soil quality of the farms involved. One marriage was thought inappropriate because the farm of the bride's father was on sandy soil rather than the higher-yielding clay the groom was to inherit. The nature of the bride's 'trousseau' was a matter of both private and public interest. The furniture a wife brought into a marriage was displayed at the wedding reception with the doors open for guests to inspect the contents. One wife's 'trousseau' in the 1950s included a reaping machine.

Peasant marriages continued to be more fecund on average. In matters of inheritance the passing of real property into the hands of sons remained the norm. The endeavour of the Nazi regime to develop this further, through the Farm Inheritance Law of 1933, had a limited impact in practice. Under the law brothers of a deceased peasant and their sons were given a superior claim to a farm over the widow and where a son was not of age for the duration of his minority. This law, which continued in operation for some time after 1945, was generally nullified by the courts' upholding pre-nuptial agreements to the contrary, as well as by general opposition among the peasantry.

Religion continued to play an important role in peasant life, in spite of the considerable Nazi effort to eradicate church influence, especially in Catholic areas. The sway of the rectory was reflected throughout the period in such vital statistics as the noticeably higher average size of Catholic families as compared with Protestant. Even with the influx of refugees from the east from 1945 inter-confessional marriage remained relatively infrequent. Even priest and pastor, however, had to bend to or merely bemoan peasant practices deemed necessary for sustaining the existence of the peasant farm.

Topics the author doesn't explore include the seasonality of marriage and of conception and birth. Substantial space is devoted to the peasants' reaction to Nazi persecution of the Jews, which was mostly one of indifference, whereas that to the equally and consistently persecuted gypsies is ignored. Nevertheless, the volume represents a very substantial contribution to knowledge of peasant life in the twentieth century.

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A. E. LULOFF AND R. S. KRANNICH (eds), *Persistence and change in rural communities. A fifty-year follow-up to six classic studies* (CABI Publishing, 2002). xii + 189 pp. 5 tables; 51 figs. £45.

Sociological re-studies of rural communities are relatively rare in the United States. In this instance, a team approach was used to examine six localities initially researched in the 1940s. All were communities in which agriculture played key roles when originally explored; all save one had fewer than 2500 residents in the population centre when first examined. The six were thought to represent various types of rural places existing at that time.

The current set of researchers summarize the agricultural and social situations observed in the earlier studies, cite changes that occurred, and highlight socioeconomic factors at work in these areas in the 1990s. A chapter introduces the initial studies and describes the rationale

for returning to them; this is followed by one that describes the theoretical framework that is employed by those conducting the follow-up studies. General sociological theories and concepts are set as the base for the six independent studies that follow, one for each of the study communities (Sublette, Kansas, by L. Bloomquist, D. Williams, and J. Bridger; Irwin, Iowa, by E. Hoiberg; Harmony, Georgia, by G. Green; Landaff, New Hampshire, by F. Schmidt, E. Skinner, L. Ploch and R. Krannich; El Cerrito, New Mexico, by R. Krannich and C. Eastman; and the Old Order Amish in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, by A. Luloff, J. Bridger and L. Ploch). A chapter providing a comparative assessment of what occurred across the six communities concludes the book.

Photographs are used sparingly throughout to provide contrasts between circumstances in the 1940s and 1990s. The original reports also included photos and many others are available at the US National Archives and Records Administration from that work; professional photographers were assigned to explore the communities during the initial studies although evidently not as part of the more recent ones.

Selected originally to represent various points on a stability/instability continuum, dramatic changes occurred during the last half century in these places, with some reporting constant growth while others experienced population loss only to gain residents later, had relative stability in the number of residents, or noted general decline for decades. Some of the authors found it necessary to expand the geographic areas studied, because the original locality had changed so much that the sense of the original community no longer existed. New forms of community had emerged, however, thus giving rise to the conclusion that both change and persistence occurred in these rural places.

The considerable fieldwork conducted in these places generates historical and contemporary insights into change in US rural communities. The extent of the sense of community, both in social and economic terms, is explored. In some, little of the previous organizational structure exists, yet residents claim that community persists; in some others, new economic and social organizations have emerged to enhance local life. Each of the six chapters on the specific communities yields results of importance, from one in which increased divisions of labour in agriculture are evident to another in which divisions by race that were in place half a century ago persist today. Some of the communities continue only because of the ability to attract new residents, while others undergo increases that they don't necessarily desire.

The independence of the authors of the re-studies is

evident in this volume; although they shared a guiding theoretical framework grounded in the idea that community is based on social interaction that is relevant to the locality, the extent to which it was put to use varies greatly from one chapter to the next. That may have been necessary given the diversity of the sites revisited, but it makes it difficult to draw comparisons across the individual re-studies, which is evident in the brief concluding chapter. It is not as detailed a comparative assessment of persistence and change across these six places as could have been anticipated.

At least two of the localities changed so much that arguments about persistence are hindered. Rather, the former places basically ceased to exist; residents who arrived later differed greatly from the original inhabitants and developed new communities. These emerging localities, while located in more or less the same geographic space as the earlier ones, have little if any relation to the former communities or their inhabitants. Indeed, in one case, no one in the area recalled the name applied to the former place. Seasonal residents add vitality in some of the communities, while migrants with characteristics differing from those of long-term residents contribute to new issues in others.

This volume is an important addition to the sociological literature on rural communities. Few books attempt to provide comparative information on various sites across time. The results suggest that agriculture remains a key factor in some of the six communities, while in others its role has been greatly diminished. Reviewing the original reports of the studies from the 1940s and those reported in this volume for the 1990s reinforces the diversity that characterizes rural places in the United States in the past, across the decades, and at present, suggesting that both change and persistence are appropriate dimensions on which they can be compared.

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NORMAN WIRZBA (ed.), *The art of the commonplace. The agrarian essays of Wendell Berry* (Washington DC: Counterpoint, 2002). xx + 329 pp. £15.95.

The *San Francisco Chronicle*, quoted on the dust-jacket of this book, describes Wendell Berry as 'an essayist in the tradition of Emerson and Thoreau'. While this description has some justice to it, a more pertinent comparison would be to Louis Bromfield, the novelist whose regeneration of Malabar Farm, Ohio during the 1940s turned him into a leading spokesman for rural communities and for a predominantly organic farming which would conserve natural resources. Like Bromfield, Berry was drawn back to rural life in middle age and he has written extensively on agriculture in its practical,

cultural, economic and religious aspects. In 1933, the year before Berry was born, Bromfield published *The Farm*, a curious novel without dialogue in which he traced the rise of industry and big business in the USA at the expense of the nation's agrarian population. Berry has in turn described the continued, relentless marginalizing of American agriculture over the past seventy years. The most recent essay in this collection, from 2001, finds him attacking the environmentally-destructive assumptions on which corporations base their enterprises.

Berry's work thus constitutes a link between the pioneers of organic husbandry and today's anti-globalization campaign, demonstrating that the ideas of the former have continuing relevance in the context of contemporary agricultural problems. Berry makes several references to the English botanist Sir Albert Howard (though the regrettable lack of an index means that they can be found only after a sustained search). Central to Howard's philosophy were ideas which Berry considers vital for the future health of agriculture: the Wheel of Life, a natural cycle of growth, death and decay requiring cultivators to return wastes to the soil; the importance of preserving forests, which can teach us nature's own methods of creating fertility; the need for humility in the face of a natural order which imposes limits on human interference with the created world; and the conviction that health is related to food quality and, therefore, to the vitality of the soil in which crops are grown.

Berry believes that farming should express care for the soil and for the particular locality and region where one tends it. The opening essay, 'A native hill', expresses his love of his Kentucky farm and his intimate knowledge of the landscape in which it stands; here he indeed reminds the reader of Thoreau in his descriptions of the paths he walks. In returning to his native state Berry sought, like Bromfield before him, to discover a sense of belonging. But his praise of a Jeffersonian democracy based on the family farm is also a severe critique of the rootlessness of American culture, which either marginalizes, sentimentalizes or mocks the rural.

The hoary charge of 'nostalgia' inevitably has to be addressed, and Berry deals with it ruthlessly: an agrarian culture based on respect for the natural world is both more ethical and more efficient than its technological alternative, and offers the means of long-term survival. It is less wasteful; it avoids dependence on corporations; it does not risk international instability and war for the sake of oil; it offers variety of scenery, species and crafts

as against mass-produced uniformity; it increases self-sufficiency in food supply, and it encourages local economies, re-connecting producer and consumer. Is it really preferable, Berry asks tellingly, to live in a nation where farmers are outnumbered by prisoners?

Like the British organic movement of the 1940s, Berry emphasizes the cultural component of agriculture: maltreatment of the soil is a cultural problem, caused by wrong values and bringing in its train the break-up of previously stable communities. Industrial farming's destructiveness is fuelled by commercial rapacity; the answer to environmental degradation is to be found only in values which curb rather than inflame human desires. Ultimately this is a religious issue, and Berry shares with many earlier members of the organic movement a Christian perspective on humanity's relationship to the natural world. In 'The gift of good land' he develops a thoughtful reply to the oft-quoted accusation made by Lynn White Jr, that the Judaeo-Christian tradition is to blame for our ecological crisis. While accepting some of White's criticism, Berry contends that there is no biblical basis for the dualism of nature and spirit which has led the Christian church to neglect its stewardship of the Creation. He calls for an earthly Christianity which will value Nature's abundance and celebrate bodily work and skills.

Given the growing resistance to 'fast food' and the recent compensatory emergence of a slow food movement, Berry's insistence, in an essay from twenty years ago, on the need to adjust to the slow rhythms of nature, takes on a certain prophetic significance. The western obsession with speed, he argues, makes it well-nigh impossible to exercise the patience needed to restore land to health and pass it on as an inheritance for later generations. Similarly, Berry's essays themselves demand slow reading. They are carefully argued, subtle and detailed, and written in a language whose literary cadences serve to emphasize rather than disguise the strength of his feelings and the radical nature of his dissent from American culture. Agrarianism is fortunate to have such an intelligent advocate, sensitive but uncompromising, to argue its case. Yet the opposing forces are more powerful than ever before, and it remains to be seen whether Berry's work will be remembered as rural America's swan-song or the inspiration for its renewal.

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