

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

EDWARD MARTIN and MAX SATCHELL, '*Where most inclosures be*'. *East Anglian fields: History, morphology and management* (East Anglian Archaeology, 124, Suffolk County Council, 2008). xviii + 276 pp., 44 figs., 72 illus., 38 tabs., 19 maps. £30. Available from Phil McMichael, Essex County Council Archaeology Section, Fairfield Court, Fairfield Road, Braintree, CM7 3YQ.

This book emanates from the project, funded by English Heritage, to characterize fields according to the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) developed by Roberts and Wrathmell. It does so by offering detailed reconstructions of the historic layout of fields in twelve selected parishes distributed around five eastern counties. Evidence gleaned from a variety of sources – mainly early maps, surveys, field walking and archaeological finds – is used to create 'an interpretation of the climax medieval land types' for each of the twelve case studies, which is then superimposed upon the first edition of Ordnance Survey map (1889–91): so, for example, the map produced for Frenze (Norfolk) reveals the location and extent of block demesne (occupying 16 per cent of the parish area), tenement blocks (4 per cent), common fields (57 per cent), demesne meadow (14 per cent) and so on, in a clear manner. The case studies are then used to draw wider conclusions.

Martin and Satchell, both archaeologists, thus extend our knowledge about the variety of fields that existed within pre-industrial East Anglia, all of which were very different to the classic Midland system. In particular, they provide a wealth of information about the complex ways in which fields were laid out – such as the compact nature of many landholdings, and the intermingling of closes with subdivided fields – and their evidence for, and discussion of, block demesnes is important. They also provide very good and accessible summaries of field terminology, of ploughing methods, and of hedgerow formation and management. Consequently they create a good academic foundation for recommending a number of future conservation initiatives that would 'secure the survival of an essential part of the historic landscape

of East Anglia' (p. 234). It therefore looks helpfully forward.

Although the reconstructions of the layout of fields are imaginative and innovative, they are more speculative than the authors admit. Extant sources simply do not permit a definitive reconstruction of the form and function of irregular field systems in their 'climax medieval' formation, and so the confident presentations of the exact location and proportion of each category of land type in each parish, summarized in a series of maps, tables and pie charts, actually conceal numerous assumptions about, and extrapolations from, (sometimes much) later documents. Nor is it clear when the medieval 'climax' was reached, nor what it actually means, and the facile use of this term underplays the capacity of irregular fields to change their form and function, even within the medieval period. The evolution of fields receives little direct attention and, on occasions, is ignored: the detailed case study of Walsham-le-Willows (Suffolk) does not mention the compelling and important evidence for the piecemeal enclosure of its open fields during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, documented separately by Dymond, and by West and McLaughlin.

Those with a close interest in how fields *functioned* will be disappointed. Martin and Satchell recognize that communal regulations over East Anglian fields were less formal than in the Midland system, but make little attempt to reconstruct them systematically in their case studies or, by extension, to draw contrasts between them. Hardly any use has been made of the documents which provide exactly this sort of information, namely manorial court and account rolls. Of the 114 sets of documents consulted by the authors in seven county record offices, only five are accounts or court rolls and the overwhelming majority are maps, surveys and terriers.

Hence this is really a reconstruction of the historic *layout* of some East Anglian fields, rather than of field *systems*, which is consistent with an attempt to characterise them according to the aims of the HLC project. Martin and Satchell do not question the various assumptions underpinning the wider project, nor do they

engage with the increasingly sceptical academic literature in this regard, yet their work provides evidence of some of the difficulties of subjecting complex irregular field systems to relatively simple characterization. Their own system of categorization does not engage with Bruce Campbell's important work on this subject. In addition, some of their claims are insufficiently documented, as when they argue for the presence of a highly distinctive and significant category of field system in south Suffolk, without the support of a detailed case study or any other compelling evidence: moreover, the case study of Walsham overlooks both an important medieval survey and some of the detailed evidence in court rolls for the operation of its medieval fields. The book is informative, provocative and stimulating, but it must be handled with care.

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B. K. ROBERTS, *Landscapes, documents and maps. Villages in northern England and beyond, AD 900–1250* (Oxbow Books, 2008). xvi + 336 pp., 83 figs., 7 tables. £48.

Planned villages form a key character-defining feature of the landscape of northern England, and have attracted the attention of historical geographers for many years. In the past, there has been a strong tradition of studying the morphology of village plans – seen most notably in the work of Brian Roberts – and a key question for this reviewer as he embarked upon reading this latest book on the subject was whether the debate has moved on. It has.

The focus of this study is County Durham where around 80 per cent of villages have a regular or part-regular plan (compared to just 30 per cent in Warwickshire, for example). Other parts of northern England receive rather briefer treatment, but in many ways this book is of far wider significance, not least for its discussion of planned villages across England and mainland north-west Europe in the later chapters. The opening chapters are also of great methodological value to anyone interested in landscape history. Chapter one discusses the nature of rural settlement in general, and specifically ways that it can be studied morphologically and mapped against other datasets such as a characterization of natural topography into a series of terrains. Chapter two starts to focus in on northern England with a case study of the North Yorkshire Moors that identifies a series of 'preferred settlement zones'. The discussion of settlement form embraces dispersed as well as nucleated forms, but while some illustrations extend to include their associated field systems, this aspect of the landscape is sadly neglected. The emphasis

is also very much on examining settlement plans as recorded on nineteenth-century maps, and makes little reference to archaeological remains such as earthworks that could indicate that a post-medieval plan was significantly different to that in the medieval period.

Chapters three to five provide a detailed discussion of plan analysis. The problem of dating is discussed, and this remains a key problem, such is the lack of archaeological excavation of northern English villages. The following three chapters use documentary sources to try and find a way forward, and, in doing so, provide the book with its wider focus. In chapter six Roberts discusses ancient territorial divisions of the landscape that are larger than a parish but smaller than a county: contemporary sources refer to them as 'shires', although the term 'small shires' has been developed by historians to distinguish them from modern shires. They appear to have been similar to the 'multiple estates' that Glanville Jones has studied in Wales, and it was their fragmentation that led to the formation of the parishes and townships into which the landscape was divided in the later medieval period.

These 'small shires' provide the context for a discussion of the tenurial relationships of people and settlements within the landscape, such as a small group of places that were described in 1183 as being 'in drengage', that is to say that they were held by an individual tenant who rendered to the Bishop of Durham particular and specified services. It is suggested that the 'drengs' acted in a similar way to *locators* on the continent, that is as land agents who acted on behalf of a superior lord in supervising the plantation of new villages. This section of the book culminates with a discussion of the context in which this replanning could have taken place: the series of occasions when documents tell us that rampaging armies devastated the landscape. The best known of these is the 'harrying of the north' in 1067–70, although there are others recorded as far back as the early tenth century. Indeed, the conclusion that Roberts arrives at – something he confesses was contrary to his original expectations – is that while some planned villages were almost certainly created after the Norman Conquest, 'there are ambiguous hints that amid the large numbers of plans there could be significant numbers of pre-Conquest settlement plantations'.

Much of the detail of this book is about County Durham, and there is a lot about village plans. As I said earlier, there is, however, much in this book that is of far wider interest including Roberts's methodology and the way that local case-studies in the northeast of England are placed in their wider regional, national, and in the final chapter, international context. The hypothesis that many planned villages are pre-Conquest, and that

'drengs' may have acted as *locators*, is a fascinating one, that certainly needs to be tested through further research across Britain.

STEPHEN RIPPON
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BEN DODDS and RICHARD BRITNELL (eds), *Agriculture and rural society after the Black Death. Common themes and regional variations* (Studies in Regional and Local History 6, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2008). xv + 265 pp., 21 figs., 29 tables. £18.99.

This collection of essays confronts issues surrounding regional diversity in agriculture in a European context following the arrival of the Black Death. In a period characterized by conflicting interpretations of decline, contraction or re-distribution, it is very useful to have works of synthesis alongside detailed case studies. The volume is divided into three sections, each introduced by a comparative essay that draws together the common themes and regional variations and provides the context for the subsequent case studies. It is here that the European dimension is strongest and here too where the editors draw out the significance of the detailed research.

Part one 'Markets, incentives and the role of prices,' begins with a contextualizing essay on the current state of research into agricultural change across western Europe. To this Britnell adds his own insights so that, whilst fully accepting the impact that the decline in population had on agriculture, especially the shortage of labour, he gives prominence to the effects it had on production for the market. In 'English agricultural output and prices, 1350–1450' he argues that the period was characterized by fluctuations and regional variations in agricultural performance with a series of upswings (usually led by pastoral husbandry rather than arable) and troughs with the general trend downwards in agricultural output. Schofield examines 'Regional price differentials and local economies in north-east England, c.1350–c.1520' by employing price data from Durham Cathedral Priory in comparison with data from southern England and finds that there were certain national high price years in the south which were not reflected in the Durham data. Regional differences were sufficiently divergent to carry implications for productivity and welfare in the different localities. In particular, the North was more vulnerable to dearth because the population was more heavily market-dependent, although it was surprising that the impact of attacks by the Scots is not mentioned. Gemmill contributes a meticulous case study of 'Town and region: the corn market in Aberdeen, c.1398–c.1468,' describing the strategies adopted by the town's council

to provision its inhabitants through the regulation of its corn market. The significance of this in a European context is established in the introductory essay.

The innovative use of evidence drawn from tithes lies at the heart of this volume. Part two, 'Output, productivity and the evidence of tithes,' is introduced by Dodds, the current authority on the subject, in a contextual essay that focuses on the English evidence and trends in the period before the Black Death. This is balanced by his comparative case study of 'Patterns of decline: arable production in England, France and Castile, 1370–1450' where sensitive comparisons reveal differences in the chronology of recovery, stagnation and decline which are linked to demographic change. The discussion of the evidence drawn from tithes is strengthened by Swanson's contribution, 'A universal levy: tithes and economic agency'. He writes with the authority of an ecclesiastical historian who engages with economic activity and questions whether religious institutions adopted a commercially-motivated policy towards tithes, suggesting instead that there may have been other moral and ethical considerations. Hare's study, 'Lord, tenant and the market: some tithe evidence from the Wessex region', involves a direct comparison between production and output from demesne and tithe. He finds that whilst these tended to follow similar trends, there were some notable differences in the relative balance of crops between lords and tenants. Local and regional differences were accounted for by the nature of environmental and commercial factors.

Part three, 'Land, lordship and peasant communities,' begins with Britnell's authoritative discussion of the Europe evidence. The choice of themes permits comparisons of the impact and consequences of population decline: deserted sites, labour costs, entrepreneurial activity, response to market opportunities, lord-tenant relationships, land tenure and the distribution of holdings. Throughout, he is keen to demonstrate the differences, in addition to the similarities, and highlights the significance of power relationships and social institutions. This pan-European essay is necessary because the three case studies in this section are all based on English evidence. In 'Changing land use in a moorland region: Spennymoor in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,' Harris provides a careful reconstruction of the trends in the development of 'marginal' land in response to depopulation and market demand. Mullan makes a comparison of customary landholdings on the manors of Taunton and East Meon in 'Accumulation and polarization in two bailiwicks of the Winchester bishopric estates, 1350–1410: regional similarities and contrasts' and explains them with reference to trade and additional employment opportunities. Conflict is

the theme that permeates Larson's 'Rural transformation in northern England: village communities of Durham, 1340–1400' where he compares conditions on the estates of the Priory and Bishopric. He argues for a pro-active peasantry who ordered their communities, struggled with their lords and neighbours, and initiated a new social order in the aftermath of the Black Death.

The volume's concluding essay draws together the differences and commonalities and suggests ways in which these aid our understanding of widespread historical change. Together these essays provide us with a fresh look at the evidence for agricultural change in this challenging period and suggest directions for future research.

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C. DYER, P. COSS and C. WICKHAM (eds), *Rodney Hilton's Middle Ages. An exploration of historical themes* (Past and Present Suppl., 2, 2007). 341 pp., 6 figs., 3 tables.

Mention of Marxist history seems to elicit more groans than excitement in present-day university seminar rooms. This collection of papers addressing the intellectual legacy of Rodney Hilton makes a fascinating case for the continued importance of aspects of Marxist history in ongoing work on the middle ages. The volume contains eighteen essays, an introductory discussion of Hilton as a historian by Dyer, a concluding overview by Wickham, and a bibliography of Hilton's work.

Conflict between lords and peasants was central to Hilton's understanding of historical change and is the subject of many of the essays in this volume. There has been much debate about the significance of unfree tenure in medieval England and its role in economic development. In particular, it has been argued that unfree peasants enjoyed certain economic advantages over their free counterparts. This view is tackled head on by Razi who argues that it is not sufficient to consider only the economic dimensions of relations between peasants and lords. Schofield uses an individual case study to great effect in examining peasants' views of lordship. Dyer makes an exciting case for the weaknesses of the seigneurial regime in England but is clear that, despite its limitations, lordship continued to arouse the resentment of those subject to it. Papers by Müller and Cohn address issues of class consciousness and revolt. Müller argues that, despite stratification within the peasantry, solidarity did exist and Cohn has used a wide survey of revolts to argue for important changes over the course of the fourteenth century. Müller's discussion of divisions in English peasant communities is accompanied by Alfonso's use of complex and often scant Spanish source

material in which she demonstrates the importance of dependence within peasant society.

In addition to these valuable contributions to debate, there are also wider discussions of the origins and later history of seigneurialism. Davies' discussion of tenth- and eleventh-century Spain uses evidence from an area very different from England to shed light on what is meant by 'seigneurialization' and its association with royal power. Likewise, Whittle's paper compares peasant resistance in 1381 and 1549, finding differences but also some illuminating similarities. Finally, Wickham's concluding comments provide a helpful international framework for these discussions, emphasizing the unusual situation in England.

Many of the essays in this volume are prefaced by a discussion of the conceptual basis of Hilton's work and the development of these ideas in later historical scholarship. Hilton became increasingly interested in urban development and this is reflected in a number of contributions. The importance of the urban property market is explored by Goddard. Dimmock indicates the importance of the network of small towns in England in the transition from feudalism to capitalism, providing not only a theoretical framework but also a case study. Similar themes are explored by Sánchez León who takes up Hilton's discussion of the different social relations in town and countryside and argues that, in Spanish towns, social relations were more comparable with those found in the countryside than elsewhere. Theory and historiography are deployed in a thought-provoking and nuanced way in Epstein's paper in which the transition of feudalism to capitalism is also considered. This demonstrates the development of Hilton's ideas on the influence of towns and markets and uses more recent work on the role of the state to provide a stimulating overall explanatory framework.

Contributions by Coss and Justice demonstrate the importance of Hilton's concern with social relations in areas of present-day historiography seemingly far removed from his work. Coss demonstrates the importance of a broad cultural history of the English gentry in the late middle ages which will shed light on the context in which political ideas emerge. This, he argues, cannot be achieved without knowledge of the gentry's relations with other groups in society. Justice examines the relationship between religion and the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and uses evidence for the vibrancy and depth of lay religious practice and belief to demonstrate that the clear religious imagery used by the rebels need not have been associated with heresy.

One of the aspects of Hilton's work and legacy which emerges most clearly from this collection of papers is the role of international comparison. Not only did

Hilton himself undertake comparative work on England and elsewhere, but Birrell's bibliography shows that his publications were widely translated. This influence is shown by the use contributors working on continental Europe make of his work. Roberts bases her paper on Hilton's last monograph on English and French towns and extends the chronological scope into the sixteenth century, revealing important continuities and evaluating their significance. One of the main difficulties with comparative history is created by differences in the available source material. This is surmounted in this collection by clear and helpful discussions of surviving documents and their contents, especially in Bourin's paper on Languedoc in which she describes the problems of working without the sources familiar to historians of other areas. Holt's stimulating paper uses work on a part of Europe unfamiliar to many scholars to show how differences in social relations and markets reinforced each other and led to low levels of urbanization and economic development in Norway. Van Bavel makes sharp international and inter-regional comparisons to examine the significance of waged labour in the transitions from feudalism to capitalism.

Many contributors to this volume recall fondly their personal acquaintance with Hilton. All have been influenced by his use of theory and development of conceptual approaches, by his achievements in opening up our understanding of history from the point of view of peasants, by his concern to remain close to the source material and by the sheer scope of his interests. All reflect on the way in which Hilton's ideas and methods have been taken up and developed in recent and current research. In short, this book represents an outstanding contribution to the field. It will be of great interest to those engaged in research and is presented in such a way as to convince students of the continued relevance and excitement to be found in the social history of the middle ages as Hilton conceived it.

BEN DODDS
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DEBORAH YOUNGS, *Humphrey Newton (1466–1536)*.

An early Tudor gentleman (The Boydell Press, 2008).
xii+ 257 pp., 2 figs., 8 illus., 2 maps. £50.

Humphrey Newton is unusual among early Tudor gentlemen in that his commonplace book survives. He may even have been unusual in that he kept a commonplace book. From this book, often cryptic and sometimes barely legible, Deborah Youngs has recreated a wonderful impression of the man and his affairs. He was an upwardly mobile Cheshire gentleman, who moved from the ranks of the mere gentry to the squirearchy. A landowner, local lawyer and part-time poet, he enjoyed

a successful career through his own skill, tenacity and good fortune. His somewhat down-market and cut-price effigy still lies in Wilmslow parish church to remind us that he made it into the upper reaches of society.

The foundation of Newton's position in eastern Cheshire was the management and exploitation of his property. He inherited the family estate of Newton, worth some £10 p.a. in 1498 and his wife, the co-heiress of the Fittons of Pownall, entered her inheritance in 1506. This tripled his landed income and involved a move from the large farmhouse that was Newton Hall to the more substantial manor house at Pownall. The commonplace book contains 25 folios, almost a quarter of its total, concerning the management of the Newton estate between 1498 and 1506. These pages, originally a separate notebook, contain rentals and accounts in the form of a series of annual summaries of key incomings and outgoings. From these, Youngs reconstructs its agrarian history over one short period. Newton was a compact estate of less than 500 acres. There were few tenanted properties; the primary resource was the home farm which Humphrey managed himself. It was a mixed economy of arable and pastoral husbandry. The principal crop was oats, supplemented by inferior barley and rye. Cattle and sheep were kept. Produce was primarily for consumption, though Humphrey also bought and sold regularly in the market. He employed a core of around five full-time general labourers in any one year, identified as servants, and a fluctuating number of casual workers, as many as twenty at harvest time. They were almost all local people. Women were paid less than men. The accounts reveal a personal relationship between Humphrey and his employees, all members of his extended household. He attended the wedding of one of them. Here then is the hands-on gentleman landowner.

He was also an improving landlord. He carried out and extensive and costly marling of his land between 1498 and 1502. He rebuilt his corn mill at considerable expense; and he developed a fishery and fulling mill. As a result he increased the output of his farmland by a third to a half and his rentable income from £11 to £14. But he was not only concerned to improve: he was also determined to extend his property. There was a deserted village at Newton, the tenements of which, he claimed, his ancestors had held. There had been, if not a manor, then an independent vill there. As he noted in his book, 'ther fell the pestilence and was a deth of people ... called the greate deth; after whose decessez the londes of Neuton wer in decay'. The abandoned tenements lay on Newton Heath to the east of the Hall. He spent a good deal of his time and money acquiring land that he claimed his ancestors once held, establishing five or six new tenements and building a chapel on the Heath. Not many landlords set

about restoring a lost village in the early sixteenth century: most hastened the destruction of what remained.

After 1506 Humphrey's main interest shifted to Pownall; he no longer preserved his Newton accounts. Should we call him an entrepreneur, or a capitalist? How typical was he? There is a view that the small, personally-managed single estates of the lesser gentry were in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries more efficiently managed to benefit from market opportunities. Maybe, but we tend only to know of a very few like Humphrey Newton whose accounts have survived. Is it the keeping or the survival that is unusual? But in Humphrey's case, as Youngs shows, the management, extension and improvement of his ancestral estate was but one aspect of a busy life. Other chapters on his family, his legal career, his religious beliefs, his lifestyle and cultural interests reveal him to be typical of the gentleman bureaucrat that emerged in the later middle ages. He is portrayed in his effigy in a fur-lined robe, not armour. To this extent he was of a new age rather than the old. This is an important study for all historians of early Tudor social history, not just those interested in agricultural history.

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W. G. HOSKINS, *The Midland Peasant. Economic and social history of a Leicestershire village* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2008). xviii + 322 pp., 5 maps, 4 plans, 4 plates. £18.99.

W. G. Hoskins' book on Wigston's peasant farmers has become a fundamental text, describing what happened when a rural population, rising in numbers, turned to an industrial occupation – framework knitting – to augment its income in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. At first, this was a welcome supplement to their living, but it led to increasing poverty, as the rewards for knitting were squeezed by economic pressures into meanly paid work that enslaved whole families.

Hoskins wrote it in the later 1930s and 1940s, as David Hey explains in an instructive new Foreword. But it was not published until 1957 when historians were taking more interest in the distinctive history of local regions. R. H. Tawney suggested that Wigston's story should be given a bolder, broader title as the history of *The Midland Peasant*. Thus it appeared, a telling example of industrial innovations that occurred elsewhere also, though each varied in the measure of poverty inflicted on one-time farming communities.

Regrettably, this re-issue of Hoskins' book does not interpolate anything of the more recent additions to our understanding of such developments. Historians in 1957 knew little or nothing about the way stocking knitting

became a major new occupation in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. At first it was a handicraft, but when William Lee invented – and others improved – the knitting machine, knitting became a machine industry as well, and that is how it arrived in Wigston. Hoskins gave no thought to the impact on women's earning power. As a handicraft at first it gave them an important chance to earn cash to contribute to family budgets. They could pick up hand knitting in almost any situation, in free moments at home, or when walking to the fields with their animals. Even when men took charge of the knitting frame, that still left many hand-working jobs that women could do at home. In 1957, however, historians disregarded women's contribution to industrial processes, and the early days of knitting await more research; Hoskins' text moves swiftly from the introduction of framework knitting to 1845, when the government investigated the depressed condition of framework knitters.

A criticism voiced in 1957 concerned Hoskins' meagre footnotes; that criticism remains. Nevertheless, the chronology of industrialization is clearly, indeed vividly traced out in Hoskins' story, and David Hey correctly underlines the originality in Hoskins' use of his sources. This is a welcome reprint.

JOAN THIRSK
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JENNIFER MUNROE (ed.), *Making gardens of their own: advice for women, 1550–1750* (Essential works for the study of early modern women, series III, part three, volume 1, Ashgate, 2008). 460 pp., £85; JENNIFER MUNROE, *Gender and the garden in early modern English literature* (Ashgate, 2008). viii + 137 pp., 7 figs. £45.

Academics with their zest for specialization have separated agricultural history from the history of gardening for food, to the detriment of both; our scholarly studies will benefit when those links are forged again. Such reflections are prompted by these two books on gardening, though they touch only briefly on practical gardening and veer quickly away.

Before 1500 gardening was the women's job: they grew the food to eat, and all male writers took it for granted that women attended to the herbs, greenstuff, roots, and soft fruit; much of the tree fruit came wild from the hedgerows. In the next hundred years gardening was transformed into a professional skill, and in public discussion it was firmly appropriated by men. Women were deemed unskilful, needing to work under male guidance.

At two different levels, these volumes under review present and analyse the evidence on the gendering of gardening; Jennifer Munroe is editor and author of

both. The first offers facsimile texts of relevant sections of farming/gardening books printed between 1574 (by Tusser) and 1718 (by Charles, not John, Evelyn), all (inevitably) written by men. Some of the facsimiles disconcertingly end in mid-sentence, but they readily offer a spread of viewpoints through a century and a half.

The reader sees the men-folk gradually becoming more and more confident of their superiority as gardeners, claiming to be the 'curious, cunning' ones, and cheerfully dismissing the skills of women, since, as Evelyn proclaimed, 'common observation, easily acquired' was enough to cope with kitchen gardening.

In the second book, Munroe closely examines the words and experiences of certain well-to-do, literate women who were enthusiastic gardeners, and voiced their discontent at being thus sidelined. It is a finely executed literary analysis, and extremely instructive in its information about these particular women. Munroe does not tackle directly the fact that gardening has two faces: one may garden for food or for the aesthetic satisfaction of designing a space filled with beautiful flowers. These women found their satisfaction in flowers. Historians are familiar with the differences between the two kinds of gardening yawning into a chasm in the seventeenth century.

Masculine viewpoints, claiming for men the dominant authority, are numerous. Munroe presents many examples, though she gives overmuch space to Edmund Spenser's critical words about Queen Elizabeth's policy in Ireland, which is interesting, but a diversion from the main theme. More relevant is the way women in general were praised for expressing their creativity in embroidery, depicting gardens on canvas. Thereby they kept themselves occupied in the house, and removed themselves from the public world. But the literate women fretted, feeling themselves caged, made invisible, their creativity ignored.

The four protesting women brought into view here were the Ladies Margaret and Anne Clifford, Lady Mary Wroth, daughter of the Sidney family at Penshurst, and most outspoken of all, the poet Aemilia Lanyer. It is likely that the Clifford ladies and Lanyer had had some sympathetic debates among themselves on the injustices of their lot; at some time, probably between 1604 and 1609, they had enjoyed close companionship in a country house with a fine garden, and, likely as not, they had discussed their frustrations at the status of women in their world. A second grievance vexing them was the injustice of having their legally owned land appropriated by the men in their families. The Cliffords fought long legal struggles to keep their property, and Anne Clifford did recover her lands in the end through the convenient

deaths of male claimants; Aemilia Lanyer, on the other hand, found comfort in her poetry, persuading herself that, while dispossessed on earth, the women would inherit the kingdom of Christ in heaven.

Sensitively interpreted by Munroe, these women's writings illuminate strands in the cultural/social background of the early seventeenth century that plainly troubled gender relationships. Tensions crystallized around gardens and gardening, when that activity was clearly expanding and opened new opportunities both to men and women. Indeed, Munroe could have delved even deeper into this turmoil about new chances frustrated, for it seems to have been unusually tempestuous among the upper classes in the period between about 1590 and 1630.

Agricultural historians do not ordinarily fasten on such literature, of course, but since the frustrations of upper class women have a place in the cultural canvas of the seventeenth century, their story enlarges our perspective on the age; moreover, professional women nowadays recognize the scene when they fret at 'the glass ceiling'. So it may console them to know that those seventeenth-century tensions did fade somewhat in a couple of generations, while workaday women meanwhile surely continued their routines unperturbed.

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Yorkshire West Riding Hearth Tax assessment, Lady Day 1672, edited by David Hey, Colum Giles, Margaret Spufford and Andrew Wareham (British Record Society, Index Library 121, Hearth Tax ser. 5, 2007).
xiv + 730 pp.

This, the fifth volume to appear in the Hearth Tax series published by the British Record Society arising out of the larger Hearth Tax project initiated by Professor Margaret Spufford at Roehampton, is a notable achievement. The West Riding is, for these purposes, one of the largest English counties and the book is correspondingly big in the hand at nearly 750 pages. At its heart is the transcript of the Lady Day 1672 return which, printed in three columns, fills 365 pages of text. The exhaustive tabulation of the return fills a further 103 pages. There are, in all, 39,267 households enumerated in the return. The index of persons fills 104 pages in two columns. Besides the editors, seven assistants are named on the title page. Congratulations are surely due to all of them.

There are some oddities about this volume though. The 1672 return has been published once before, in a series of stapled booklets by the Ripon Historical Society in 1990-94, based on a contemporary copy held at the Wakefield Metropolitan District Library. This copy is used to provide the return for the Ainsty in the present

edition and provides additional details of the poor, but it has not been collated with the Exchequer copy in the National Archives from which the remainder of the present text is taken. It is therefore too soon to throw away the pamphlets with their rusting staples for all local historians will wish to compare both lists. A quick check of Settle reveals that Roger Crombleholme (who the Ripon transcribers misread as Grombleholme) with six hearths is entirely missing from the new text, whilst the new edition misreads William Paley as Rayley. A bit of checking suggests that there are more than 'minor discrepancies' between the two texts. And whilst the return is described as being for 1672, the return for Osgoldcross is actually that for 1673 taken from a text in the National Archives and not the Wakefield version.

In addition to the transcript, there is an introduction by Professor Spufford describing the project to date, and a discussion of wealth and poverty in six counties by John Price. This gives Margaret Spufford great satisfaction as it shows a gradient nationally from north to south in the proportion of one-hearth households. But Spufford has yet to overtake Arkell's 2003 figures for the distribution of hearths and I might suggest that the county is far too blunt a unit for a discussion of this sort. Overall, the West Riding has 57.4 per cent, but the riding shows its own marked gradient. The southern wapentakes of Strafforth and Staincross have 50–52 per cent households with one hearth. The textile wapentakes of Skyrake and Morley have 52.0 and 52.1 per cent respectively but the northern wapentakes of Staincliffe, Ewcross (roughly the area of the Yorkshire Dales) and Claro (the area to the east, including Ripon in the north and towards York, have respectively 63.6 per cent, 65.6 per cent and 65.0 per cent. More puzzling is the extremely high level of one-hearth households in the Ainsty, at 71.9 per cent. This is roughly comparable with the average for County Durham (69.6 per cent), but even Ewcross is, on this measure, far more prosperous than Westmorland, which has 80.4 per cent one-hearth households.

David Hey contributes an account of the West Riding in the late seventeenth century, which focuses more on his end of the county than mine. Colum Giles writes an account of 'Wealth distribution, the Hearth Tax and housing', which concentrates exclusively on the metropolitan county of West Yorkshire and is derived from work undertaken on that county some twenty years ago. The problems of finding someone to write a discussion like this are not to be understated, but this is disappointing, given the amount of work undertaken in recent years on the vernacular architecture of North Yorkshire, including the northern part of the old West Riding. This matters, because the poorer parts of the Riding are those in which the vernacular rebuilding was

getting underway in the 1670s. There are then accounts of the administration of the Hearth Tax by Elizabeth Parkinson (whose monograph on the first phase of the tax has recently appeared), an appendix of surviving West Riding Hearth tax documents and a selection of exemption certificates. The bones of the return is presented in an elaborate statistical appendix. Some of the data is also presented in a series of gorgeous colour maps, although it would be churlish to complain that they are a little bit small and working out which township is which (which requires getting the key number from the rear end papers, then using the tabular key) is not easy. I might add that Settle has also been moved by some cataclysm six or seven miles eastwards on Map 12, possibly the same calamity which has headwaters of the river Aire going in the wrong direction. The photographic illustrations of the documents are welcome, but uniformly poor.

The index is a major achievement in itself, but is an exact index, with no attempt to bring together variant forms of surnames under a single head surname. At some moment past or present, the name of Hugh Armitstead of Twistleton and Coldcoates was misread as *Arnistead*. He is indexed as the sole Arnistead in the volume, but Armitstead is indexed, as is also Armitstead. Three entries then for the one surname, but five for Appleyard: Apeleyard, Apleyard, Apleyard, Appleyard and Appleyard. This practice is justified in a headnote to the index, but I think that it is mistaken and an abdication of editorial or indexers' duty. If it is an economy, then it is a false one. One might add that an indexer ought to have queried the misreading of Rayley for Payley mentioned before, and perhaps others too.

Reviewer's gripes of this sort apart, the whole book is attractively designed and a joy to use. Having it is a great boon for future work. I look forward to the appearance of the other Yorkshire ridings and a few further southern counties for comparative purposes, Essex for instance.

R. W. HOYLE
University of Reading

LARRY PATRIQUIN, *Agrarian capitalism and poor relief in England, 1500–1860. Rethinking the origins of the welfare state* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). ix + 254 pp. £50.00

This book seeks to argue that English poor relief was unique, developing from the sixteenth century as a direct product of the 'exploitative social relations' (p. 4) of agrarian capitalism. It is intellectually stimulating, and to the unwary or misinformed might be a convincing account of the rise of capitalism in England and the role of the coercive forces of the capitalist state in this process. It is argued that state-controlled social welfare first developed in England as a product of the class

relations of agrarian capitalism. State-controlled welfare is portrayed as being the corollary of privatized exploitation, and a means by which to remove the economically 'useless' from the labour market. By providing this economic safety net, poor relief delivered long-term social and political stability within which capitalism could flourish, marking England out as singularly unique.

Patriquin writes from a decidedly Marxist perspective. Chapter one briefly introduces and summarizes the main arguments of the book. Chapter two provides the theoretical basis, not least of which is a summary of Brenner's thesis regarding the emergence of agrarian capitalism – discredited by some, but clearly not by Patriquin. Chapter three reviews the development of capitalism in England from 1300 to 1860, discussing the rise of agrarian capitalism, the decline of customary law, tenurial systems, the impact of enclosure, and the advent of industrial capitalism. The chapter finishes with a discussion comparing the 'capitalist state' of England with the absolutist state of France. Chapters four and five review English poor relief from c.1350 to 1834, within the context of the theoretical framework, agrarian capitalism, privatized exploitation and the capitalist state. It is argued that poor relief was compensation for the loss of common land, and for the 'landed classes ... was the price to be paid for an "improved" method of exploitation' (p. 115). The loss of status, detachment from the means of production, and the subordination of the working class were confirmed by the 'crowning achievement' of capitalism: the New Poor Law. Chapter six emphasizes the uniqueness of the English experience by drawing comparisons with Ireland, Scotland, France and Germany. The conclusion summarizes the main argument, briefly discusses the post-1860 period, makes some observations about America's social welfare reforms of recent years and speculates about the future of social welfare.

As an empiricist, I value historical evidence and the careful construction of evidential arguments; as a theoretician Patriquin is less concerned about balanced evidence, and concentrates instead on *thinking* through his grand narrative, drawing on selected secondary texts when deemed to be available or appropriate. My concern is that many (but by no means all) of these secondary texts are either elderly, or would not be considered mainstream by most British scholars. Indeed, there are some very notable gaps in the literature, leading to conclusions and statements that readers of this journal might find somewhat surprising, simplistic or dismissive of wider debates, including statements such as: 'All enclosures ... had a detrimental effect on the village economy' (p. 56); or that 'Large farms ... meant that a subsistence crisis would never happen again' (p. 60).

In the discussion on enclosure, the work of Neeson is prominent, but no mention is made of Leigh Shaw Taylor's criticisms, or of Michael Turner's contributions. Alan Macfarlane's work on English individualism is not acknowledged, and the output of many British agricultural historians too numerous to mention is simply not referred to at all. Such omissions are unforgivable and are not mere oversights. Patriquin simply does not engage with any literature that detracts from his argument.

My criticism here is not merely a form of intellectual xenophobia. Patriquin's version of the rise of agrarian capitalism in England out of which emerged the first industrial capitalist nation is simplistic; his understanding of rural social structures and agricultural change are unconvincing; his awareness of the complexities of English society and economy simply not sufficiently demonstrated. The role of the market and of demography is largely unacknowledged. There is no real coverage of the debate over the periodization, scale and pace of agricultural change; and no attempt at all is made to understand the significant regional variations in the development of rural society, agricultural practices, and, crucially, in social structure. In common with much Marxist history, people are represented as classes who either act, or are acted upon by others, according to predetermined economic functions.

Thus, the emergence of agrarian capitalism is deemed important, but the processes of agricultural change, the nature of the agricultural revolution, and the role of landlords, farmers and labourers (and servants) in agricultural change, are poorly developed. This leaves us with largely meaningless statements such as '[after 1650] Improvements were made in husbandry, drainage, irrigation, fertilizers, crops and breeds of animals ...' (p. 59). This skirting over the surface of much of the detail of agrarian development is a major weakness of the book. Indeed, Patriquin generalizes in ways that are entirely unconvincing, even though to the unwary or misinformed they might be seductive.

It is undeniable that the welfare system formulated in the sixteenth century strived to serve the welfare needs of society until the early nineteenth century. However, Patriquin's explanatory framework is based entirely on an unquestioning assumption that Robert Brenner was right both in terms of the agrarian origins of English capitalism and the periodization of English (and European) history. This argument might be more convincing if Patriquin had addressed the concerns of the Brenner's detractors. That he did not is much to his discredit.

Similarly, there is sleight of hand in the discussion of the emergence of industrial capitalism. Even if we accept

(and many do not) that England could be considered a fully-fledged agrarian capitalist economy in 1600, this does not in any way apply to the northern half of the country. However, a causal link is made between early modern agrarian capitalism and the emergence of modern industrial capitalism without any discussion of the nature of this link and the intervening developmental stages. There is a lengthy discussion on enclosure, suggesting that this was a crucial aspect of this process by establishing private ownership and eradicating common rights. However, when put under close scrutiny, comments such as '[The] massive reorganisation of the economy, concentrated in the years 1830–1880, was made possible by the capitalization of agriculture that had been taking place since the sixteenth century' (p. 68) are not convincing.

Enclosure is clearly an important aspect of English rural history in the period 1750 to 1850, and Parliament's involvement in this is crucial to Patriquin's argument, but the chronology, nature and location of parliamentary enclosure shows that it had almost no connection at all with the emergence of industrial capitalism. Patriquin simply fails to provide a convincing account of exactly how agrarian capitalism developed into industrial capitalism. In the literature generally there is little evidence for the large-scale transfer of surplus food, capital or labour, or even political ideas, welfare systems (i.e. Speenhamland) or culture, from southern counties of 'agrarian capitalism' to northern counties of 'industrial capitalism'. Despite the discussion on welfare systems and protest (ch. 5), Speenhamland was confined to a relatively small region; Swing had no northern counterpart; anti-poor law protest was largely confined to the north of England; the industrial regions of Lancashire and Yorkshire were sustained by thriving, commercial family farms; farm service flourished as part of northern capitalist farming long after it had been virtually eradicated from the south. Within this context, it is difficult to sustain an argument about the direct relationship between the emergence of a fully-fledged agrarian capitalist economy in 1600 and industrial capitalism in 1800.

What is more convincing is Patriquin's argument regarding the role of the state in economic development. Indeed, whereas his understanding of British economic history is greatly hampered by his theoretical perspective (and his lack of original research), it enhances his insights into the role of the state, providing much food for thought about the role of the state in economic development. However, whether or not the English state was simply a tool of the capitalist is open to question:

The English state changed over the course of a few centuries, from a body that allowed for the possibility

of capitalist development, to one that was more eagerly involved in clearing away the social impediments to this new mode of production ... [The] English state was also, especially at the local parish level, an active participant in helping those who bore the brunt of socioeconomic changes. (p. 78)

The idea that fulfilling ones parochial duty by serving a period as an overseer of the poor made a ratepayer an extension of the state is not convincing to anyone who has spent any time with parochial records. True, overseers *may* have been unwitting (and, in some cases, unwilling) agents of the state, but most had very narrow horizons, and were concerned with parochial affairs and fulfilling their duties of office. These 'middle sort' undoubtedly saw themselves as being part of parochial 'society', but I doubt that many of them saw themselves as being part of even regional 'society' and certainly not members or representatives of a local state: unpaid parochial office simply does not make an individual a state official.

There may, of course, be a dissonance between the capitalist state's requirement for a system of social welfare and the aims of the local individuals charged with implementing national policy. Indeed, with the latter there is considerable scope for welfare to be altruistic, theologically based, humanitarian, paternalistic, or simply motivated by a desire to preserve social stability. Nevertheless, the above quote suggests that social welfare provided by capitalist states is by necessity underhanded, dishonest and self-serving. Analysis of the old poor law has long been subject to the vagaries of the political outlook of the historian, but it is undoubtedly the case that the lot of the English poor, both before and after 1834, would have been considerably worse had a system of social welfare not been in existence.

Overall this book is intellectually stimulating, if only for the profound sense of disagreement I find with the overall argument. It is a book that encourages reflection, and I would recommend it to anyone with an interest in economic development and social welfare, but I would urge that it ought to be read with great caution. The unnecessary explanations that litter the text, such as the definition of what a settlement examination is (p. 130) or even the fact that Patriquin feels it necessary to define for the (American?) reader that a stile is 'a series of steps on each side of a fence' (p. 114) should not detract from the fact that there is much else within this book that requires considerably more detailed explanation: 'Poor relief was an important component of the transition to capitalism, notably in southern England' (p. 203). The appended qualifying comment comes a little late in the book, but for Patriquin's argument to be convincing

he needs a conclusion, and a theoretical model, that holds true for England as a whole – and one that can be supported through empirical research. If agrarian capitalism provided the basis for the transition to industrial capitalism, with poor relief being instrumental in that process, then why is it that the economic fortunes of much of southern and eastern England in the period 1600 to 1850 contrasts sharply with that of much of the north of England in the same period? Rather than industrial capitalism springing from agrarian capitalism, counties which might be regarded as more advanced in 1600 de-industrialized over the following two centuries. It was the fragile economic system of northern counties, with a population vulnerable to harvest failure, very low capitalization of farmers, and poor internal communications that was to witness the emergence of industrial capitalism alongside commercial small farms and extremely low levels of pauperization. So, as an intellectually stimulating book, this is worthwhile reading. But as a contribution to our general understanding of the agrarian economy and the role of social welfare within economic development, this book offers little. Indeed, there is empirical research not referenced by Patriquin that does this job much better.

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PETER RAZZELL, *Population and disease: transforming English society, 1550–1850* (Caliban Books, 2007). xviii + 314 pp., 3 figs., 84 tables. £45.

For a considerable period of time Peter Razzell has continued to make important contributions to English historical demography, specifically in relation to the role of mortality in determining demographic change in the period from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. This volume brings together ten separate essays, together with a brief conclusion, structured around four interrelated themes: methodology; the structure of demographic change; causal factors in mortality decline; and the consequences of population change. Three of the papers were originally co-authored by Christine Spence; two have appeared in *Local Population Studies*; two were published in the *Social History of Medicine*; chapters four and seven were initially book contributions (in the latter case the introduction to the revised edition of Razzell's *The conquest of Smallpox*). Inevitably, particularly in the current economic climate, both individual scholars and university librarians will question whether such a collection of papers offers any significant value-add, but some of the new material certainly develops ideas and hypotheses which might repay further investigation, even if the general thrust of the book is already well known.

The core of the book is devoted to refuting the findings of the Cambridge Group and rehabilitating the earlier belief that the process of demographic change between 1550 and 1850 was 'largely shaped by mortality patterns and the disease environment'. As might be expected, Razzell's approach is predicated on a deep scepticism towards mathematical models and theoretical constructs, particularly when they are not based on detailed empirical research using local sources and rely on data 'too uneven to be reliable'. Indeed, one of the implicit strengths of Razzell's case is the incorporation of a wide range of alternative source materials, including, for example, marriage licences, apprenticeship records, and the reconstitution schedules of Quaker communities. But an underlying problem throughout this collection of papers is a strong degree of overlap between individual essays and a rather eclectic approach to data derived from other studies which are seldom analysed in sufficient depth. This is particularly evident in the treatment of the relationship between poverty and disease, where the case for the existence of an inverse social class mortality gradient in the period between 1600 and 1750 is attributed to environmental factors, rather than negative life-style influences. The wealthy were 'forced to reside in unhealthy disease environments for economic reasons', while a higher travel frequency, whether a result of business considerations or leisure choices, resulted in an inflated exposure to epidemic disease. But the later decline in adult mortality among élite groups is simply explained by residual arguments, including improvements in sanitary conditions and public hygiene, the more effective washing of both furniture and clothes, and the increasing use of brick-built housing. Unfortunately, none of these are examined in any detail. Razzell does offer a more focused assessment of the impact of poor personal hygiene and adverse environmental factors on the mortality of members of the royal family, but again the evidential base is relatively thin and the need for more research in this field only too apparent. Nor does it appear realistic to claim that the new standards of hygiene in the eighteenth century were disseminated throughout the country by the domestic servants of the aristocracy visiting their relatives, particularly when this is based on a single (and rather dated) secondary source. However, the relationship between adult mortality and life-style choices is re-examined in an interesting discussion of the hazards of wealth using some of the savage cartoons of Gilray and Rowlandson which, by definition, were intent on exaggerating some of their victims' characteristics. But the emphasis on the adverse effects of 'status stress' or the excessive consumption of alcohol and tobacco on life expectancy of the aristocracy and

other élite groups within English society is difficult to sustain in a context where the available data are limited in scope, both in sample size and geographical coverage, and the evidence for the adverse health consequence of wealth-holding is essentially anecdotal.

Overall, this collection of papers offers some promising insights into wider debates relating to the process of demographic change in England between the mid-sixteenth century and the late-nineteenth century. But it would be overstating the case to argue that it contains 'a number of unexpected and new findings' which subvert the 'current consensus on England's demographic history'. Razzell's critique of the work of the Cambridge Group is well known and some of his arguments undoubtedly merit further consideration and debate. But the evidential basis for some of the hypotheses advanced in this volume is seldom substantial enough to sustain his conclusions and although considerable use is made of alternative source material and local case studies, there is no opportunity to examine the evidence in sufficient depth or to extend its geographical coverage in a systematic manner. Moreover, the publication of collected papers is seldom a straightforward undertaking. There is too much overlap between the various essays and no real attempt has been made to restructure the available material in order to generate a more cohesive and focused argument. But even if the volume as a whole has its faults, Razzell should be commended for highlighting a number of areas which would undoubtedly repay further analysis and exploration.

ROBERT LEE
University of Liverpool

AVIS R. WILSON, *Forgotten labour. The Wiltshire agricultural worker and his environment, 4500 BC-AD 1950* (Hobnob Press, 2008). x + 306 pp., 115 illus., 2 maps. £14.95 from Hobnob Press, PO Box 1838, East Knoyle, Salisbury, SP3 6FA.

In attempting to trace the history of agricultural labour in Wiltshire over more than seven millennia the author has set herself a remarkably ambitious task. This is agricultural history for the non-specialist, with information and examples culled from numerous secondary sources which are listed in the bibliographies, but without detailed references to any other sources. The long time-scale means that each period has had to be considered briefly. Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon agriculture in the county is inevitably dealt with rapidly, although with good examples and numerous illustrations, as well as considerable supposition. The wealth of surviving archaeological evidence which Wiltshire possesses has been carefully considered, and there is interesting discussion

of Saxon landscape developments and estate boundaries, with examples drawn from all parts of the county.

Detailed examples from a range of secondary sources are provided for the medieval period, with examination of manorial farming systems, the effects of the Black Death in the county and labourers' discontent, protests and riots during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The influence of the church on the social and economic life of rural communities is discussed, again with numerous examples. This recognizes the fact that much of Wiltshire was dominated by the estates of the west-country monastic houses. The importance of the large sheep flocks and the sheep fold in the farming of the county, especially on the chalklands is discussed.

For later periods the author can provide much more local detail and includes material on the part played in labourers' lives by the parish church, seasonal festivities and the poor law. Again, it would have been useful to have references to some of the sources. The labourers' lot from the sixteenth century onwards is depicted as a slow inexorable decline, until the county became notorious for low wages, poor housing and a demoralized work force. There are numerous illustrations and examples, with material drawn from the author's detailed study of Cocklebury, near Chippenham, her earlier study of cheese production in the county and personal experience of farm work. The bibliography for the modern period is more selective than for the earlier chapters and does not mention such crucial sources as John Aubrey or Thomas Davis, although both are referred to several times in the text, and there are no detailed references to other sources. More use might have been made of the authoritative *General view of the agriculture of Wiltshire* by Thomas Davis (1794).

The life of rural workers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is discussed, together with the influence of religious nonconformity, especially in the 'cheese' area of north Wiltshire. The author provides details of workers' lives on the large tenant farms of the chalklands during the nineteenth century, with discussion and examples of rural housing, village schools and allotments. This includes material culled from the numerous reports of parliamentary commissioners on many aspects of Wiltshire farming and rural society. More stress might have been laid on the profound changes in chalkland farming during the later nineteenth century as grain prices collapsed and farmers turned to milk production, using the recently-built railways to transport the produce to the towns. The account is continued up to the mid-twentieth century with illustrations and descriptions of the author's own experiences of farming, working alongside Land Girls and Italian and German prisoners-of-war.

This is a clearly-written general overview of farm life in Wiltshire, based on a mass of secondary sources which will appeal to local readers and others interested in the long story of what has always been by far the most important economic activity in the county. The well-produced book is published by the Hobnob Press, based near Salisbury which, during the past few years, has produced an impressive list of books on aspects of the history of Wiltshire.

JOSEPH BETTEY
Bristol

MARTIN BODMAN, *Devon leather. An outline history of a lost industry: nineteenth-century tanners and tanneries* (Leat Press, 2008). 165 pp., £22.

Tanning was by far the most common method of turning skins into leather in post-medieval times. Martin Bodman's study identifies 180 sites in the larger cities, market towns and villages of Devon. Tanneries once relied on hides and skins from the stock farming of the county but increasingly made use of imports from Ireland, western Europe and South America. Other local linkages were with woodland management – each hide required twice its weight in bark in processing – lime-burning and the local foundries that provided plant.

Martin Bodman came to industrial archaeology as a spare-time pursuit and has been particularly energetic in searching old newspaper files, often un-indexed, to augment our understanding of the physical evidence of past industry. His previous publications have been concerned with watermills in the west, but an earlier interest in the Woollard Tannery near Bath has now been extended to Devon.

Devon Leather does not intend to provide a business, industrial or technical history of tanning in Devon in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Neither does it deal with the associated trades of the fellmonger, currier, harness-maker or cobbler. Brief chapters introduce the history of the trade, the operation of a Devon tannery and a case-study of one family, the Sharlands, who produced 13 tanners over three generations. The bulk of the book is a gazetteer of sites from Alphington to Woodbury. Sale notices and occasional reports from newspapers provide much of the detail in these entries, with use of census data, trade directories, local histories and such primary sources as the journals of Bodley's Foundry in Exeter that supplied bark mills and steam engines to some of the larger concerns.

Good use is made of tithe maps and apportionments, and the Ordnance Survey 25-inch and 1:500 plans from the 1855–7 Plymouth survey onwards. Parts of the 25 inch plans have been redrawn to show the location of the sites and a brief highlighted summary for each entry

provides a six-figure grid reference, date of closure, the number of bark mills, tan-pits and staff, and output wherever this is possible. The fate of the buildings and the present state of the site, or details of surviving buildings in a few cases, are described and illustrated with photographs. Some tanneries worked until quite recently – Swimbridge closed in 1965 and the one at Colyton remains as a unique example of a traditional oak-bark tannery at work.

The book concludes with a brief list of nineteenth-century sites that could not be identified and earlier tanneries with the date of the earliest known record. There is also a useful glossary of technical terms and an appendix which lists, by parish of origin, Devon-born tannery workers living in Bermondsey, the major centre of the trade, in 1871. Some 31 men were born in Bow and the exodus seems to have started after the death of a long-serving tannery foreman here in 1854. There is a detailed index and end-notes for each chapter.

Great care has been taken with the production of this A4-format book which can be strongly recommended to local historians and archaeologists working on the history and evolution of their communities. It will also serve as a good starting point for scholars working on the business, technical or industrial history of a once widespread and important industry that has been somewhat neglected by historians of our rural economy.

MIKE BONE
Bristol

JONATHAN BROWN, *Steam on the farm. A history of agricultural steam engines, 1850 to 1950* (The Crowood Press, 2008). 190 pp., 120 illus., 1 table. £19.95.

The history of the steam engine exerts a powerful fascination on the public mind, and that of the agricultural steam engine especially so. However, previous work on the subject, largely concerned with technical and engineering aspects, has fought shy of answering the central and most interesting question. This is, in Jonathan Brown's words '... the story of the application of steam power to British agriculture – its use and extent, and how the promise of the new technology of steam was turned into reality' (p. 6). To answer these questions is his aim, and he succeeds triumphantly in doing so.

The story of the agricultural steam engine may be said to have begun in the first decade of the nineteenth century, when some fixed engines were used for threshing. But this was a false dawn, and interest in steam threshing waned thereafter, to resurface in the 1840s. By then, some manufacturers were developing the wheeled 'portable' engine, which could be moved around the farm by horses, and was capable of powering a threshing machine, and performing ancillary operations

(feed preparation, drainage, sawmilling). Many of the leading firms in the business had begun in earnest by the end of the 1840s. Thereafter, the portable achieved astonishing success, and by the early 1870s almost all the farmers who were going to use one had bought their engines.

Steam ploughing was a particular, although limited, success story. This had been a dream of many inventors, and the holy grail of some of the early steam enthusiasts such as Alderman Mechi. However, in the damp climates of northern Europe, the use of the heavy steam engines to plough directly on the land would have been very harmful to the soil. The solution to the problem was the cable ploughing system, chiefly that sold by John Fowler of Leeds, whereby one or two engines on the field boundary hauled a plough or cultivator across the field using an iron or steel cable. This was operational by the early 1860s, although it was much improved in later years.

By the 1870s almost all hand threshing by flail had disappeared, to be replaced by the fixed or portable engine and threshing box (usually operated by threshing contractors). The portable engine had won an indispensable place in the stackyard and barn of the larger farm; many acres (chiefly in the Fens, eastern and south Midland counties, and in Sussex) were now worked by steam plough. Steam power seemed to have conquered British farming.

But there were limits to its success. As Brown remarks (p. 36), given the enormous output of steam engines in the late nineteenth century (what was probably the largest manufacturer, Clayton and Shuttleworth of Lincoln, had produced 40,000 by 1914), '... one might expect farming to have been awash with steam engines ... the reality was different'. He estimates that there might have been about 20,000 on British farms around 1880 (so that about 10 per cent of all farms may have had a steam engine), before the agricultural depression weeded out some, finishing up with the 16,959 recorded at the 1912 British farm census. In addition, there must be counted the engines used by the threshing contractors, amounting to a (roughly) estimated 15,000. There were only about 700 cable ploughing sets by the late 1870s (almost all double-engined by then), which were used to plough (and especially cultivate) about one million acres. This sounds a lot, but was only about seven per cent of the cultivated land of England and Wales, so, as far as field operations was concerned, the farm horse still reigned supreme.

The apogee of steam's success was in the 1880s. Thereafter, a saturated home market and the financial depression in arable farming led to a slowly declining domestic stock of engines, and the manufacturers turned

to export markets. The First World War provided a short-term boost, but after 1918 the story was one of steady decline, as the tractor made halting headway in British farming. The manufacturers' horizons were sometimes brightened by the odd special order; Mussolini's famous drainage of the Pontine Marshes in 1927 was done by eight very large Fowler engines. But the shrinking domestic stock of steam engines was ageing, and was not being replaced. The Second World War would not be as profitable for the steam contractors and manufacturers as the First had been. In 1939 the Ministry of Agriculture's officials needed to be reminded as to what the 'Steam Cultivation Development Association' stood for. It was the Fordson tractor which was the preferred technology in 1939–45, and not the double-engined steam ploughing system.

The appearance of Jonathan Brown's book is to be warmly welcomed, as being the first to address seriously the question of the actual role and significance of the steam engine in British farming. His treatment is judicious, pithily written, and full of knowledge lightly worn, drawing extensively on the rich collections of steam engine makers' records held at the Museum of English Rural Life at Reading University. These have been augmented by many excellent and apposite illustrations from the MERL collections. In all, this is a book which will become indispensable reading for all historians of modern British farming, and will undoubtedly be the standard by which future work on the subject is judged.

PETER DEWEY
Oxford

P. BARTROP, *Myxomatosis. A history of pest control and the rabbit* (Taurus Academic Studies 2008). xii + 288 pp., 11 illus., £52.50.

This informative study reviews the history of Myxomatosis, a highly infectious sub-cutaneous viral pox disease specific to the rabbit, and unparalleled in the annals of agrarian history. This was only the second animal virus identified after Foot and Mouth disease. Following the introduction of Myxomatosis to Britain in September 1953 at Bough Beech, near Edenbridge in Kent, mortality rates in excess of 99 per cent were recorded.

The text starts with a critique of the pre-Bough Beech period, outlining the history of the disease before investigating various methods which have been used to control the rabbit, as well as considering changes in the legal status of the species. These introductory sections are possibly the least satisfactory parts of what is otherwise a very impressive book. There are a number of issues which might have merited more detailed consideration, for example, the reasons for the long term

increase in the rabbit population. Here we may identify the consequences of declining game preservation and rabbit trapping, which both contributed to reducing the rabbit's natural predators. Similarly the work of the internationally renowned, Oxford-based Bureau of Animal Populations which, during the 1930s and Second World War period, had undertaken extensive research into methods of rabbit control, merits a more evaluative appraisal.

In the pre-Myxomatosis era the rabbit population was determined by a number of interrelated factors including the demand for rabbits as a source of meat, and the perceived effect of the damage caused by the species. As the text illustrates, quantifying the magnitude of the damage was problematic, resulting in considerable variations in the estimates, and this is again worthy of more detailed attention in the future.

The main focus of the text, the history, transmission and effects of Myxomatosis, are analysed in a thorough and persuasive way. It is in these sections that the author really begins to show his extensive knowledge of the subject. The chapter dealing with the 'Narrative of the Disease' is particularly impressive. It provides a comprehensive review of the explanations for the influx of the disease from France and its subsequent spread across the country. The book makes a valuable contribution to enhancing our understanding of Myxomatosis and, in particular, addresses a number of key questions about how the disease initially reached Britain, and the controversy surrounding the dissemination of the disease. As the author acknowledges, many of these issues remain shrouded in mystery. Given the paucity of reliable primary sources and the multitude of unsubstantiated allegations which have obfuscated these hotly debated issues, the author should be congratulated for his impressive summary of the existing evidence. A minor reservation is that in places it reads more like a synopsis of the explanations which have been previously suggested, rather than a synthesis of the author's own views. Such a criticism is, however, of minor significance given the vast amount of literature which has already been produced the subject.

The author should be congratulated for the detailed analysis he provides of the Myxomatosis Advisory Committee and, in particular, the debates which took place about the ethics of the deliberate transmission of the disease. I would, however, take issue with the author's claim that the extinction of the rabbit by deploying virulent strains of Myxomatosis strategically to wipe out the surviving colonies of rabbits was ever a feasible option. Technical and logistical constraints would have prevented the total destruction of the ubiquitous rabbit.

The chapter dealing with 'Agriculture and the

Environment' draws attention to the effects of Myxomatosis on agricultural output, an issue which has been largely ignored by most agricultural historians. While his evidence about the effects of the decline in the rabbit population on productivity is circumstantial rather than conclusive, this issue too merits further research. The chapter also provides a perceptive critique of the multi-faceted consequences of the reduction in the rabbit population.

Overall this is an impressive account of the history of the most devastating animal disease ever reported. Extensive endnotes bear witness to the controversial nature of the incidence and transmission of the disease. It is an account which will provide an invaluable source not only for rural historians and scholars from a wide variety of disciplines including politics, biology and veterinary science, but also for those with a general interest in the countryside. In order to ensure more effective dissemination to a wider readership, a paperback copy of the text is a desiderata.

JOHN MARTIN

De Montfort University, Leicester

1. ROBERTS, *Telling tales out of school. A history of education and school life in North Tyneside and Redesdale from 1870 to 1944* (Northern Heritage Publishing, 2008). 208 pp., 1 fig., 53 illus., 1 tab., 1 map. £12.99.

Before the local education authorities took over most aspects of elementary school finances under R. A. Butler's celebrated 1944 Education Act, schools were supported by church foundations (of various denominations), local families and charities, school boards and County Councils. Between 1860 and 1902, when the school leaving age was raised to fourteen, elementary school grants were awarded on the basis of attendance and the ability of children to pass tests administered by Inspectors on their regular visits. There is little new, then, in the notion of payment by results. A generation later, efforts were made to extend the activities of the larger 'Type B' elementary schools to embrace such excellent subjects as needlework and hygiene for the girls and science classes for the boys in which gardening played a prominent part. While Dr Roberts' finely illustrated book does not offer a picture of the lads at work in the garden or out on an improving 'nature walk', there is an edifying photograph of the spotless girls of Otterburn School making what appear to be good wholesome mince pies. The illustration of the tawse in use at Billingham Council School in the 1930s and the discovery that the highly-respected headmaster of Otterburn School steeped his strap in vinegar to harden it remind us, like the cookery and nature lessons, that common sense rather than

expediency dominated educational thought at primary level. A couple of generations ago the idea of 'pupils' rights' would have been dismissed as absurd beyond belief while the prospect of sex education and 'civics' would have been greeted with incomprehension, if not horror. You learned about the former in the farmyard and the latter in your history lessons.

Preceded by two brief introductory chapters setting out the geographical and educational background, the book comprises detailed sections covering the history of seventeen schools. Files from the National Archives, Inspectors' reports, school Log Books, Admissions Registers and Managers' Minute Books have been trawled to provide data, while structured interviews with surviving scholars offer fascinating detail of the daily life of the schoolchild in the inter-war and wartime years. Each school has been researched by Roberts' WEA students, a cohort of mainly middle-aged and older people, who, under their tutor's watchful eye, have produced a volume which will be of interest both to historians of the North and to students of education more generally.

Virtually every aspect of school life is covered, from curriculum to playground games and from morning prayers to evening hymns. We read of scanty resources, earth closets, seasonal absences linked to the farming year, of slates and 'dip' pens, and of epidemics of measles, scarlet fever and diphtheria. There were teachers of varying degrees of eccentricity and competence, some of them loved and others passionately loathed. Either way, they often had to deal with uncomfortable situations as they confronted petty rivalries and rural jealousies linked to local management of the school. If teaching itself could be a challenge, so was the almost daily problem of working in buildings, many of which remained relatively primitive even into the 1950s. Hott School had no flush lavatories or wash basins before 1958; Kielder School was so cold in January 1945 that ink froze in bottles, as did the Elsan lavatory and its contents. As the children snuffled with colds, the east wind blew beneath the floorboards with such keenness that lessons had to be regularly interrupted so they could exercise and warm their feet. But everyone soldiered on; they were tough up North. Perhaps tobacco helped? In 1914, the headmaster of Plunkett's Colliery School managed to get hold of a football and he fervently hoped that enthusiasm for the game might 'counteract cigarette smoking which is still prevalent among the boys'.

Books like this should be read by trainee teachers and those in post who are in the habit of moaning about their working conditions. In common with teachers in many less-developed countries who manage extraordinary feats with negligible equipment, the old-style

village teacher understood not only how to instil respect among his charges, but how to get the best out of them despite limitations of resources and a tough working environment. This worthy study has much to teach us, and, in supporting the publication, the National Lottery is to be congratulated on allocating funds to so admirable a cause.

R. J. MOORE-COLYER
Aberystwyth

PAUL READMAN, *Land and nation in England. Patriotism, national identity and the politics of land, 1880–1914* (Royal Historical Society, Studies in History, new ser., 64, Boydell, 2008), xiv + 242 pp. £50.

Until fairly recently it was quite commonplace to suggest that the English, whether politicians, intellectuals, writers, wealthy industrialists or the 'common man', were uncomfortable with modernity, and tetchy with urban, industrial, capitalist Britain. Martin Wiener's book, *English culture and the decline of the industrial spirit, 1850–1980* (first published in 1981), was the most influential book amongst this literature, a cultural analysis of economic history that placed the prevalence and popularity of nostalgic arcadian versions of national identity at the heart of its explanation of Britain's decline. Wiener's conclusions spawned an industry in cultural history aimed at uncovering this reactionary form of 'Englishness'. A number of historians have undermined this argument from various angles. In cultural history Peter Mandler has constructed a more nuanced and persuasive interpretation of 'Englishness' and raised serious questions about the prevalence, meaning and significance of 'rural nostalgia' in British culture. Paul Readman's impressive volume on the politics of land enriches this debate (which he rightly points out has often been neglected by political historians) as well as a number of other key discussions in modern British history.

Readman's main argument is that political discussions on the land question, whether on the part of Liberals, Conservatives or the left, were 'deeply coloured' by patriotic rhetoric and discourse. He finds a significant connection between the politics of land and the politics of 'Englishness'. Political engagement with the land question and rural England interacted closely with ideologies of national identity. However, such discourse was not reactionary but rather a means of preserving links with the past in the context of rapid and profound change, a source of social cohesion in the face of a broadening electorate and the rise of radical political philosophies. The importance of the rural in the public articulation of national identities reflected a desire to find a way forward whilst avoiding radical upheaval, providing a political

anchor in a period of realignment. Although some of those on the left sought just this type of upheaval, the focus on cohesion and continuity was as true of radical liberalism as it was of conservatism. For instance, Liberal policies were not based on collectivist or 'socialistic' principles. Instead, much of this discourse was framed as an appeal to a national tradition stressing the primacy of the state in ultimate responsibility for landed property, articulated in patriotic terms. Such socially conservative, yet progressive, aims lay behind the discourses of a diverse range of thinkers and politicians, from Brodrick and Arnold to Collings and Chamberlain.

Readman's thesis is set out in a clear and incisive introduction and developed over eight chapters. The first chapter provides a chronological discussion of the main events in the history of rural society and politics. The further seven chapters are divided into two thematic parts. Part one focuses on four key 'national issues' in the politics of land as they were articulated by politicians and pressure groups; the importance of land reform for 'national stability', the 'English national character', agriculture and property rights. Part two provides an analysis of the development of thinking and policies on agriculture, property and rural society by the three main parties. Readman finds a range of discourses on the land question, both between the different parties and within them, perspectives that developed across the period in response to broader events as well as shifts in their own fundamental principles. Consideration of the full range of political discourses on the issue is one of the strengths of this volume.

A further strength is the way that Readman imbricates high politics with extra-parliamentary agitation and pressure, in a manner reminiscent of the late Ewen Green. The relationship between Conservative policy and broader conservative thinking on agriculture as 'the national industry' is a particularly interesting case of this. Under Lord Winchilsea the National Agricultural Union was one amongst a number of organizations in the late nineteenth century seeking to protect agriculture and bolster the tri-partite rural social order. This approach was popular amongst mainstream Tories, including Lord Salisbury, and the wider public since the NAU sought the same objective as the parliamentary party, to effect 'national renewal' through 'agrarian means' (p. 88). In the later 1890s, however, as Conservative politicians sought a more progressive means of attracting the lower orders, they focused on smallholdings rather than large-scale farming, a policy priority that fed into the Edwardian Conservative focus on tariff reform. As a result the NAU declined from 1896 onwards and Conservative policy moved towards more radical policies such as smallholdings.

There are several criticisms to be levelled at this volume. The structure of the book, in particular the slightly cumbersome first chapter, leads to a disappointing level of repetitiveness in the argument. At points the author draws over-simplistic distinctions between 'socialism' or 'collectivism' and 'patriotism', which slightly undermine his argument on both the traditionalism of Liberal politics and the peculiarity of British radicalism in a European context. Also, whilst Readman emphasizes the range of opinions in the political culture of rural society and the land, he does not always clarify the social range of such discourses, particularly in reference to radicals. For instance, he often refers to the landed origins of Conservative politicians and thinkers but fails to identify the gentry origins of radical Liberals such as Arthur Herbert Dyke Acland, scion of a wealthy gentry family with over thirty thousand acres and protagonist for radical change articulated, for instance, through his reference to the 1894 Local Government Act as a 'charter for self government' in rural parishes (p. 65). These, however, are generally minor points. Readman's volume makes important contributions to a range of crucial debates in modern British history. It will interest a range of scholars and students of politics, rural society, agriculture, national identity and land reform and provide them with a thoroughly good read.

MARK ROTHERY
University of Exeter

ANDREW G. NEWBY, *Ireland, Radicalism and the Scottish Highlands, c.1870-1912* (Scottish Historical Monographs, 15, Edinburgh University Press, 2007). vii + 224 pp. £45.

In the 1880s the Scottish Highlands were characterized by unrest amongst the crofters or small tenants, with direct action and resistance giving rise to the Crofters' War or Highland Land War. An organized political movement pushing for land reform and centred on what became known as the Highland Land League quickly spread and, following extension of the franchise, achieved the election of several Crofter MPs. The long term grievances of the crofters included the (often forcible) loss of land, overcrowding, and lack of compensation for improvements. Government recognition came in the form of a Royal Commission and the Crofters Act of 1886 (the first of a series of measures intended to benefit the crofters).

The role of external agitators in rousing the crofters was played up by the enemies of land reform. Recent studies of the period have mainly pointed to a varied group of outside sympathisers, many of Highland descent. Newby's study focuses on the activities of a loosely associated group of radicals comprising Irish,

city-based Highlanders, and lowland Scots, mainly based in Glasgow.

In the 1870s it was not at all obvious that there would be common ground on the land question between Ireland and Scotland, although the development of Irish political organization in Glasgow was to be crucial for what followed. Between the Battle of the Braes in 1881 and the 1885 General Election there was significant activity in the Highlands by external agitators who maintained links with Ireland, although these often had to be downplayed given its associations with agrarian outrage and Catholicism.

A fierce debate arose amongst land reformers as to what the future should look like. There were some who supported dual ownership under which the existing system of landownership would be retained but the crofters would be allowed to own whatever improvements they made. Such men had little time for any connection with the Irish agitation. Then there were some who supported free trade in land, condemned the continuance of entails and primogeniture, and supported peasant proprietorship. Others looked rather vaguely to land nationalization. For many, Henry George's *Progress and poverty* and his 'single tax' approach were, for a time at least, very influential. As Newby points out, it was support for George which linked the radicals in the early 1880s but which, in turn, alienated them from mainstream Irish nationalism.

Agitation continued after the 1886 Act and the radicals maintained an interest in the Highlands. The anxiety about support for the Irish cause was partly overcome and enthusiasm for home rule grew amongst the crofters. As Newby stresses, there was a complex relationship between home rule and land reform politics, and home rule was to be a significant factor in creating splits amongst Highland land reformers.

The influence of 'Land Leaguism' was, as Newby points out, felt in the first county council elections in 1890. However, the success of crofter candidates was varied and the League was soon to become a declining force. For the crofters, the 1890s were to be a decade of peace, and urban Highland societies also pulled back from political activity. For the radicals, broad labour questions were becoming of greater interest. The elimination of the Irish element meant that in the twentieth century, debates over land reform could take on a broader aspect.

In assessing the impact of external agitators on the crofters, Newby notes the inspirational influence of Ireland but acknowledges that the crofters were well aware of Irish developments. The arguments put forward by the radicals may well have encouraged consideration of how the crofters' grievances should be addressed

and helped to identify a range of options. However, the crofters turned down radical solutions in favour of the provisions of the 1886 Act.

Newby concludes that the agitation was essentially maintained by local communities. Certainly it is notable that the county of Caithness, where there was a strong and active Land League, hardly figures as a scene of radical endeavour. On the other hand, it is difficult to accept fully Newby's argument that one of the radicals, Angus Sutherland, alone awoke the politically dormant Sutherlandshire crofters. Not only did anti-landlord activity pre-date Sutherland's involvement but there were other influential figures at work, unconnected with the Glasgow radicals. Newby largely views events from the perspective of the external agitators: local political developments require further consideration.

Newby rightly alludes to the difficulties in examining the nature of the Irish and radical dimensions, especially given the confusing retrospective statements by some of the protagonists. Furthermore, the radicals left little account of themselves in the form of personal papers. However, the author has managed, mainly by drawing on a wide range of newspapers, to identify what was a diverse group, neither wholly Irish, nor wholly concerned with the rural land question in Scotland, and uncover the complex motives of the leading members. They were not, as Newby emphasizes, seeking only a solution to the Highland land problem, rather they also looked to bring about social reform in Ireland, lowland Scotland, and Britain as a whole.

This book unquestionably breaks new ground and provides by far the most thorough and sophisticated analysis yet attempted of any aspect of the Crofters' War.

MALCOLM BANGOR-JONES
Achfary, Sutherland

JONATHAN BELL and MERVYN WATSON, *A history of Irish farming, 1750–1950* (Four Courts Press, 2008). 344 pp., 127 figs., 17 illus. £30.

In the last decade or so there has been a mass of books about Irish history and Irish agriculture. In many, perhaps in most, there has been a concentration on the famine of the 1840s, and the lead up to that famine, but particularly the immediate causes and then the far-reaching consequences for the wider economic and social well being of Ireland. Other studies have looked less at the famine crisis *per se* and more at the underlying economic structures, for example as illustrated through the study of prices. Those that take the longer view look at externalities such as the international consequences through the migration of not only displaced famine victims and their families, but also

those with a spirit of adventure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who willingly, optimistically, emigrated. Yet other studies have looked at the internal long term recovery of the Irish rural economy and some of the difficulties it faced, not least the land wars that culminated in greater Irish land independence as tenants replaced their former Anglo-Irish landowners, and the extremes of poverty through the Congested Districts legislation which identified many of the western counties as the most deeply impoverished sections of the rural community.

Yet there is something missing from these studies, or at least it is missing in terms of technical detail. While touching upon farming as the context of the underlying bigger picture, they do not tell us very much about the business of farming – the day-to-day grind of waking up, going to the fields, tending the animals, marketing the produce. It is true that there have been studies of some elements of Irish farming society, such as the creamery industry, and of spade cultivation, but the broad business of farming is largely absent. This study nicely fills that space. Not many other studies have chapter headings that are so simple yet so descriptive of the art of farming. We have 'Hay-making' (chapter nine). 'Ridges and drains' (chapter three), and 'Harrows, rollers and techniques of sowing seed' (chapter seven). The book and its chapters uncover and explain the history of Irish farming between 1750 and 1950. It derives from the authors' collection, interpretation, and synthesizing of work they conducted over three decades at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. They have a special knowledge and insight of that particular collection having been respectively head curator and curator at the museum. The authors openly admit that the weight of evidence derives from the nine counties of the historic province of Ulster. Nevertheless, all 32 counties, and many individual places within those counties, are represented in the index, to a greater or lesser degree. In addition, many of the illustrations and items of evidence come from collections in the Irish Republic.

The book is sponsored by the Irish Food Board which again says something about filling a need in the literature, but this is also a book that raises academic or scholarly issues. Besides, the changing structure of the plough and of the spade and the virtues of labour-intensive relative to capital-intensive means of production are all factors in the more technical measurement of agricultural output and productivity. Elements of this book will allow agricultural and economic historians to marry some of these relatively mundane developments to the more technical objectives and assessments of economic and agrarian history research. Finally, the book is lavishly illustrated with nearly 150 photographs and illustrations,

though the squeamish might beware of the slaughter of the pig in county Antrim in c.1900 which is portrayed on p. 274!

MICHAEL TURNER
University of Hull

S. SHEEHAN, *Jack's world: Farming on the Sheep's Head Peninsula, 1920–2003* (Cork University Press, 2007). xi + 228 pp. £39.

This lyrical post-modern biography set against the quiet beauty of Bantry Bay is much more than the mere chronicle of a virtuous life on the land. The author, who is the nephew of the principal character John Sheehan, sees his subject's life and fate as being intimately connected with the fate of Ireland herself and accordingly, homely agricultural images soon become metaphors for incisive social comment. In describing the rites of passage of Jack's farming life, which was generally untouched by the cultural issues preoccupying the Irish intellectual classes, Sheehan offers a critique of three generations of modern Irish history and of the shifting values underlying it. His farm was the result of Jack's labours and the embodiment of what he did, while he himself was the product of centuries of geographical and historical processes. The Anglo-Irish War, the creation of the chaotic Free State with its obscurantist alliance with the Catholic Church, the class divisions and social attitudes of the western Irish community and, much later, the venality and corruption at the heart of the late twentieth-century Irish body politic, were principal 'contexts' for the quiet drama of Jack's bachelor life. But, as befitted a man who wisely eschewed both television and telephone before 2001, these issues seemed of less importance than the daily farming round. Jack was on the land and *of* the land and imbued with a deep spiritual understanding of its history, rhythm and mysteries. Revolutions, guerrilla warfare and de Valera's concepts of romantic nationalism were all very well, but like Falstaff, Jack was a realist, knowing perfectly well that radical change usually has little relevance to the essentials of working the land.

As one might expect from the author of a guide to anarchism and a student of Lenin's writings, Sheehan's book is richly larded with the language of class warfare. Commercial farmers, the ten per cent of Irish society controlling more than half of its wealth, the builders of holiday homes and 'the canker of consumerism', all come under attack in a work which sees capitalism at the root of so many social ills. In stark contrast, Jack's non-materialistic, non-capitalist world was based upon a system of values which accorded wealth not to the accumulation of material things, but to the quiet contemplation of nature and a deep immersion in the land itself. For Sheehan, Jack's world fell into decay

when 'all that was solid (was) melting into property prices' and the countryside of western Ireland became commodified. As the farmer became both physically and psychically separated from the land that had nurtured him, so the soul of the land itself was in danger of perishing. But perhaps there remains something left to recover? As Sheehan puts it, in terms not unlike those used by the English ruralist Right of the 1930s, there may be 'survivors of a peasantry with values that now acquire a new value and provide an axis of hope'. Jack himself rejected the idea of embracing the market and selling to speculators once his small farm became unviable. He probably agreed with his nephew, though he might have put it a little more simply,

... that history is not so linear as to make this the only possibility and that in the whirligig of time a new dialectic may emerge, when the viability of life on a small mixed farm like Jack's will reassert itself, redeeming the principles on which he made some of his choices.

This is a truly happy thought, doubtless shared by many a middle-class good-lifer and many a part-time organic/organicist hobby farmer. Sadly I suspect that Jack's world and the values it embodied have disappeared beyond recovery.

This is a wholly delightful and charming book. It is a brilliantly written and lusciously illustrated account of a man whose life began in dire poverty and ended in ease and contentment, but who never deviated from the principle that duty to the land and those relying upon its bounties was a fundamental to the farmer's existence.

R. J. MOORE-COLYER
Aberystwyth

Europe and elsewhere:

JEREMY HAYHOE, *Enlightened feudalism. Seigneurial justice and village society in eighteenth-century northern Burgundy* (University of Rochester Press, 2008). 309 pp. £45.00.

This book attempts to explore the workings of seigneurial justice in rural France on the eve of revolution. It aims to rebut notions that the seigneurial system was in decline or had been replaced by more central, royal courts. In doing so it offers an interesting analysis of social relations in the French countryside. There are similarities and differences with the administration of justice in Bourbon France and Hanoverian England and Hayhoe's study offers an interesting comparative perspective for any scholar working in the field of criminal justice history in both countries.

Enlightened feudalism is structured in two main

sections. The first sets out to demonstrate the role of seigneurial justice in rural affairs while the second looks at the ways in which the system changed or developed in the late eighteenth century. One of the central conclusions that Hayhoe reaches is that 'seigneurial justice functioned effectively to allow village communities to regulate themselves', and that villagers preferred the mediation of their local lord to that of the central state. This localized view of 'justice' – where individuals choose to bring their complaints before a respected authority figure who was connected to them (by long established ties of fealty and patriarchy) rather than some distant, and distinctly *urban*, outside authority – echoes very loudly with the role of justices of the peace in England at this time.

The peasants of northern Burgundy were also very familiar with the process of 'going to Law' as Hayhoe's careful study of individual villages reveals. He rightly points out that the numbers of cases that reached the courts represents but the tip of a legal iceberg, for most people would have attempted to resolve their differences without recourse to the formality of law. However, as the author makes clear, most 'property-owning families could expect to be involved in a court case at least once or twice per decade, and virtually everyone [was] likely [to have] had a friend or relative who [had] been to court within the previous year or two'. Hayhoe might find it interesting to look at comparative caseloads from English petty sessions in the period, especially in Bath, London and the Essex countryside. Here too lower middling and plebeian persons were very familiar with the process of restorative justice and the mediation of disputes.

Hayhoe's work demonstrates that rural communities in Burgundy in this period were keen to regulate their own affairs as much as possible. Thus we see that they made important decisions about the use of common land, taxation and the election of local officials. They appeared at the assizes to prosecute and participate in the judicial process and were, like their contemporaries in England at this time, seemingly well versed in the intricacies of the law. Villagers welcomed the authority that the courts could bring, recognizing that the factional nature of village life could be divisive and hamper less formal attempts at conflict resolution. However, when attempts were made to impose unwelcome policies on rural communities (such as the prohibition on drinking alcohol in public), these were strongly resisted. As France neared revolution in 1789, it would seem that relations between the seigneurs and the village communities were more strained, with less acceptance of the right of these aristocrats to use the justice system to control and tax their populations.

This a well researched and impressive study which offers a fascinating view of rural France in the mid-to-late eighteenth century.

DREW GRAY
University of Northampton

JAN BIELEMAN, *Boeren in Nederland. Geschiedenis van de Landbouw, 1500–2000* (Boom, 2008). 671 pp., 45 figs., 84 illus., 72 tabs., 18 maps. €39.90.

Historically, the Dutch economy is mainly known for its commercial success. Names like the Dutch East India Company (VOC), and the Amsterdam Exchange Bank may come to mind, more recently (and perhaps less favourably) ABN Amro Bank. Less obvious, but perhaps even more remarkable, however, are the achievements of Dutch farmers. Despite their nation's small surface and high population density, the Dutch are still among the world's largest agricultural exporters, at least in terms of value. Jan Bieleman's book traces the history of this extraordinary success over the past half millennium.

Population densities, which were already high in the Low Countries during the middle ages, were in fact one of the main reasons why Dutch farming became so productive. Urban markets, first in Flanders and Brabant, later in Holland, provided opportunities for farmers in their immediate hinterlands. The soils in those hinterlands were not particularly suited for grain growing, and, as a result, the agricultural sector in these parts switched at an early stage to industrial crops, such as hops, flax and madder, as well as cattle breeding and dairy farming. All this helped to make Dutch agriculture highly commercialized at a relatively early stage. Dutch farmers in the sixteenth century managed to achieve yield ratios that were attained only in the nineteenth century in many other parts of Europe. During the Dutch Golden Age the impact of the urban markets was felt not only in Holland itself, but also in the landlocked provinces that Jan de Vries, in his well-known *The Dutch rural economy in the Golden Age* (1974), pictured as peasant territory.

Bieleman goes on to demonstrate that the improvements of the Golden Age were maintained after prices declined during the second half of the seventeenth century. Dutch farmers sought their way out of problems through innovation. This would prove to be a recurring pattern. In the nineteenth century, when the Netherlands industrialized late, agriculture was, together with colonial profits, the mainstay of the Dutch economy, and Dutch industrialization was in many regions an off-shoot of the agricultural sector. In that era the early commercialization of Dutch agriculture proved to be an asset once again, as the effects of American grain imports had relatively little impact on Dutch farming, much of which

had already moved into other products. The whole idea of applying new technology in farming practices was, moreover, already well-established in the Netherlands' village communities.

During the nineteenth century, a plethora of public-private initiatives also created a network of institutions devoted to the improvement of Dutch agriculture. One outcome was the establishment of a Veterinary School in Utrecht in 1821, later incorporated into the local university, and a special Agricultural Polytechnic in Wageningen in 1918, which would obtain university status in 1986. These two institutions were to provide cutting-edge knowledge and technology, as well as breeding specimens, for Dutch farmers. In 1935 a Department for Agriculture was created, providing the farming interest with a voice at the Cabinet table.

This produced more government intervention after World War II, when farmers were confronted with mounting labour costs and stagnant prices. Mechanization and increased business sizes were the two main strategies to combat this scissors effect on farmers' finances, supported by the government and farmers' organizations. The book has, on pages 354 and 482 two tell-tale pictures. In the first we see the labour force on a 100-hectare farm in 1905, which amounts to over thirty people. On the second we see a farming family of four, including two boys of primary-school age, who together with one hired hand managed to run a 75-hectare farm in 1980. The transformation of farms into agribusinesses was actively stimulated by the government, which in the 1960s took the lead in this process through massive *ruilverkavelingen*, or 'plot swaps', in which plots of agricultural land were re-distributed between farms to create large-size units suited for combines and other machinery, and also ruining the historical landscape in much of the country. The policy was repeated at European Union level by Sicco Mansholt, EU-commissioner 1958–1973, a former Dutch Minister of Agriculture, and one-time farmer himself. It was so successful that soon after all kinds of quotas had to be imposed to limit agricultural production, not mention the dumping of EU farm products on world markets.

Boeren in Nederland 'Farmers in the Netherlands' is a new edition of a book first published in 1992 as *Geschiedenis van de landbouw in Nederland, 1500–1950*. It contains a 100-page additional section on the post-war period, but the rest of the text has also been substantially revised. In many ways this is a new book, superseding its predecessor in all areas. The author is one of the Netherlands' best-known and most knowledgeable rural historians, much of whose work is unfortunately only available in Dutch. He has been employed in the Department of Agricultural History at Wageningen

University, a university devoted exclusively to agricultural studies, home of the famous Wageningen School of rural history, and the AAG *Bijdragen* with which many readers of this journal will be familiar. Bieleman was able to use a goldmine of books and articles, produced by his current and former colleagues. His own book, as a result, abounds with tables and graphs and detailed analyses of the agricultural developments in the various regions that Bieleman has used to subdivide his material. Although this regional focus allows him to do full justice to the variety of developments, it also somewhat obscures the larger patterns. Some might find the author's focus on farming methods and business models somewhat narrow. In spite of its title, this book about farmers is definitely not a social history of the farming community.

Nonetheless, this is the only comprehensive study of Dutch agriculture. Given the unique features of the sector in the Netherlands, and the excellent quality of the text, a translation into English would be most welcome. Perhaps some of the detail could be skipped, in favour of a more systematic discussion of the European background, against which this story so clearly stands out.

MAARTEN PRAK
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De l'estime au cadastre en Europe. Les systèmes cadastraux aux XIXe et XXe siècles. Colloque des 20 et 21 janvier 2005 sous la direction scientifique de Florence Bourillon, Pierre Clergeot et Nadine Vivier (Comité pour l'histoire Économique et Financière de la France, 2008). 423 pp., 20 figs., 16 illus., 9 tabs., 18 maps. €35.

It is about 45 years since I first set eyes on a French cadastral map. It was housed in the old taxation offices in Rouen and depicted the early nineteenth-century pattern of property units for a *commune* in the Pays de Bray whose marshes and uncultivated land had been divided, reclaimed and converted into improved pasture after the Revolution. That cluster of processes, set in a wider context, became the centrepiece of my first piece of research in historical geography. It also made use of cadastral revisions dating from the early and middle years of the twentieth century, as well as summaries for two dates in the second half of the nineteenth century. Detailed registers, indicating ownership, land use, land quality and tax to be levied, were complemented by cadastral maps. With a measure of patience that I now find unbelievable, I waded through vast amounts of cadastral data to chart the emergence of the Pays de Bray as a focus of livestock husbandry, dairying and cheese making. In later years, cadastral information entered into other projects but my youthful patience, which allowed information to be plotted parcel by parcel, had become very much a thing of the past.

In 1992, Roger Kain and Elizabeth Baigent edited *The cadastral map in the service of the state* (University of Chicago Press), which traced the history of land-ownership mapping in various parts of Europe and in colonial territories overseas. Their handsome book is now complemented by three volumes under the general title *De l'estime au cadastre en Europe*, which examine medieval, early modern, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century cadastral surveys, and assemble the proceedings of conferences held in June and December 2003 and in January 2005. The 20 essays that comprise the third volume explore the diversity of cadastral surveys in Europe, chart the 'invention' of the new cadastre in France after 1789, offer examples of land-ownership surveys in selected cities, and present wide-ranging reflections on cadastral experience.

Between 1718 and 1757 a cadastral survey, incorporating detailed investigation and recording of individual plots and buildings, was undertaken in the Duchy of Milan as part of the fiscal reforms introduced by Charles VI, Emperor of Austria. The Duke of Savoy instigated a comparable survey in adjacent territories between 1728 and 1738. Modern cadastral activities in continental Europe partly owe their origins to these enterprises but also to rather more generalized attempts to link taxation to land quality, use and ownership instigated in the Paris Basin, Corsica and many other parts of Europe during the eighteenth century. Napoleonic conquests brought versions of the French cadastral system to the Low Countries (F. K. Buisman), the German lands (W. H. Stein) and Italy (A. Buccaro). Projects to introduce cadastral surveys *à la française* in Spain (M. Perez Picaza) and Bosnia (A. Y. Kaya) were not successful, and the continental style of cadastral survey was not implemented in England and Wales, although tithe records and maps offer interesting points of comparison (R. Kain, E. Baigent and D. Fletcher).

The second cluster of essays traces French experience in some detail from the initial need to devise new forms of taxation to replace the diverse fiscal systems of the *ancien régime*, through very early nineteenth-century surveys of land use and quality from which tax levies were to be projected, to the harsh realization that every plot of land and every building in the country would have to be surveyed if this method for raising revenue were to be equitable and efficient. This massive task was completed in every *commune* in the land between 1828 and 1845 (N. Vivier) but soon became out of date as property changed hands or was consolidated or fragmented, as land uses changed, and as land was improved or abandoned. After lengthy debate, intricate revisions were introduced in the early twentieth century and after 1950, with new maps and registers being drawn up (S. Devigne).

Current cadastral information is now computerized in France and is subject to constant revision. Lawyers and property developers may undertake their enquiries at the click of a mouse (and payment of a fee) but for historians and historical geographers the muscle-building days of working with enormous registers that relate to earlier times are not over (P. Jaillard, M. Kasser).

The six essays that make up the third and final sections of this volume focus on early nineteenth-century cadastral surveys in Paris, Bordeaux, Naples and Rome, and revisit the on-going challenge of generating an accurate land-ownership record in France and Spain. The text of *De l'estime au cadastre* is complemented by an array of maps and facsimiles, eight of which are in full colour. The editors are to be congratulated for drawing an array of conference papers into a fairly cohesive book that will provide good service to researchers as a reference volume.

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LISA H. SIDERIS and KATHLEEN DEAN MOORE (eds), *Rachel Carson: legacy and challenge* (State University of New York Press, 2008). ix + 287 pp. \$24.95.

Rachel Carson's final book, *Silent Spring*, deserves its reputation as a key text – if not *the* key text – of the environmental movement of the late twentieth century, at least as it developed in the western/developed world. Published in 1962 and serialized in *The New Yorker*, public reaction to Carson's warning about indiscriminate use of bio-accumulative and environmentally persistent pesticides forced governments in North America and Europe to acknowledge scientific concerns about ecological and human health risks. Lest we forget, to this day wild bird populations remain lower and cancer rates in humans higher (to mention just two of many impacts) thanks, in part, to persistence in the global environment and contamination of all food chains by the organochlorinated compounds against which Carson railed so eloquently.

The underlying premise of *Rachel Carson: legacy and challenge* is a sound one; essentially, that Rachel Carson matters. As Sideris and Dean Moore state in their introduction, 'It is difficult to overestimate the importance of *Silent Spring* in shaping our environmental consciousness'. However, the approach taken by Sideris and Dean Moore to demonstrate the significance of Carson and her writing is, at times, too woolly to be of much use to historians. Several of the essays in this book are light on analysis and/or new information and, instead, act more as tributes to Carson as exemplary 'green heroine'. For instance, Terry Tempest Williams' essay, 'One Patriot', links the terrorism of 11 September

2001 with the 'terrorism' of on-going environmental degradation. It doesn't work.

This book is one in a series focusing on 'environmental philosophy and ethics' and, thus, several essays examine Carson's writing, including her earlier books about the marine environment, in order to argue that she deserves a place within the pantheon of environmental ethicists, alongside the likes of Aldo Leopold and Albert Schweitzer. Collectively, these essays assert that Carson should not simply be classed as a scientist who used her already-established public profile as a popular science writer to rouse the world to the dangers of DDT and other organochlorinated pesticides. Instead, Carson should be seen as a writer with a sophisticated ecological vision of lasting relevance. These arguments are persuasive.

Rachel Carson's most important legacy is the change that occurred in public and official attitudes to pesticide use following the publication of *Silent Spring*. Indeed, it could be argued that Carson will one day come to be viewed by agricultural historians as one of the 'biggest' names in the history of industrial farming, although it is too early to be certain of this. Given the regulatory steps that were taken to restrict use of certain pesticides in North America and Europe after *Silent Spring* proved a bestseller, it is disappointing that this new book fails to discuss post-*Silent Spring* changes in the way farmers used chemical pest control products, or the way agro-chemical companies marketed pesticides, or the extent to which the environmental and human health impacts that pesticides bring have lessened or expanded. A four-page essay by David Pimentel on the 'ecological effects of pesticides on public health and on birds and other organisms' is frankly inadequate.

There remain many unanswered questions about the impact of widespread use of agro-chemicals during the second half of the twentieth century; surely, one or two essays focusing on what happened in the years prior to and after *Silent Spring* is not asking for too much. How quickly did routine aerial spraying of DDT over residential areas in America come to an end, for example? Is there any information about how farmers reacted to public fears about pesticide-laced food? If Joni Mitchell was singing about it in her hit song *Big Yellow Taxi*, we know this was an issue discussed by people up and down the land.

Anyone interested in learning more about Rachel Carson as an environmental ethicist should take a look at this book. However, those seeking a better understanding of Carson's life and body of work would do better to read Linda Lear's painfully comprehensive biography, *Rachel Carson: witness for nature*.

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