

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

CHRIS BRIGGS, *Credit and village society in fourteenth-century England* (Oxford University Press, 2009). xiv + 254 pp., 10 figs, 23 tabs, 2 maps. £45.

This, the first detailed study of rural credit in fourteenth-century England, is an important book. Through an investigation of inter-peasant pleas of debt in manorial courts Chris Briggs makes an invaluable contribution to our understanding of medieval rural, as opposed to mercantile, credit. Briggs, an established authority on the subject, presents a cohesive analysis based on the evidence drawn from seven detailed case studies which are located firmly within the wider context of our understanding of European and early modern credit. Throughout the book he is at pains to give careful consideration to the limitations of the investigation and its evidence.

Briggs presents a data-rich study in which he argues in support of the 'new view' of credit with its stress on the ubiquity and sophistication of rural credit mechanisms and their positive effect on traditional economies, although he does not discuss the role of rural credit in the economy generally. This forms part of the bottom-up perspective of the Middle Ages in which peasants are depicted as proactive and innovative in meeting the economic challenges they faced. Briggs argues against the pessimistic view, often associated with the work of M. M. Postan, of the impoverishing and exploitative nature of medieval rural credit. He finds many similarities in his evidence with the conclusions drawn by recent European scholars and argues against the view of credit as a marker of poverty and crisis.

The book is constructed around a series of questions about rural credit: who was involved as creditors and debtors; how and why did the debts come about; the changing availability of credit; the times and conditions of the transactions; the role of credit within social relationships. These are placed within broader concerns about the consequences of debt and credit for rural society, especially the creation and perpetration of social inequalities. The evidence is drawn from six village case studies located in Cambridgeshire and that of Great Horwood in Buckinghamshire. Briggs argues that

together they are representative of 'Midland' characteristics of landholding and tenurial arrangements. He has developed an innovative and effective methodological approach to the thousands of debt claims found in the manor court rolls and constructs many hundred personal biographies of the peasant participants. Throughout the book Briggs draws out nuanced local and chronological distinctions within the data which are presented in a wealth of graphs and tables.

The efficiency of the institutional context of the manor and its court for these transactions forms a central plank to Briggs' arguments. He argues that medieval rural credit grew out of the highly personalized nature of local society, the continuity of long established social relationships and the manorial system of personal sureties or pledges which were employed to protect the lender against default. The manor court provided the debt recovery machinery and was used to enforce the claim and, if necessary, to seize the debtor's goods. He argues that the court provided an effective method of enforcing repayment, justice was rapid and the duration of the loans was short. Credit relations were essentially oral, as opposed to written. Contracts such as these fell within the jurisdiction of the manorial court which was very different to the notary system in Europe.

This book outlines for us many detailed features of rural credit. The most common form of credit was the giving or receiving of a commodity (sale) or the performance of a task or service for another person on the basis that payment would be made later. Loans of money did not form a prominent feature of the evidence, in contrast to the situation in Europe. Nevertheless, a debt was normally claimed in the litigation as a sum of money. Briggs discovered that rural creditors and debtors were usually male heads of households who held land, but sometimes servants were observed in pursuit of arrears of wages. Credit-debt relationships were horizontal, individuals could be both creditors and debtors, and entwined with virtually everyone else in their community, although the landless were noticeably absent from the data. Briggs was unable to identify any individuals living purely from lending. From a study of the landholdings of the litigants he argues that it was

the possession of land and the ability to sub-let it which made individual borrowers credit worthy.

Another important contribution of this study is the examination of the supply of credit during periods of dearth, crisis mortality and variations in the money supply both before and after the Black Death. Briggs argues that the fast and efficient debt recovery mechanisms provided by the manor court encouraged lending when conditions were otherwise unpropitious and bestowed advantages on credit markets in the English countryside that were not shared with other regions of rural Europe. Despite local differences he is able to conclude that English rural credit was a success and, apart from the exceptional years of the Great Famine, differed from mercantile credit in its ability to withstand these adverse conditions.

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P. L. LARSON, *Conflict and compromise in the late medieval countryside. Lords and peasants in Durham, 1349-1400* (Routledge, 2006). xx + 293 pp., 11 figs, 3 tabs. £65.

The historian of the medieval peasantry is spoilt by the availability of excellent sources from the later thirteenth century onwards in manorial court records, which, though not without their problems, allow unparalleled insights into the daily lives of peasants in their communities. To study such communities in the aftermath of the first arrival of the Black Death is an interesting and potentially illuminating prospect, allowing the exploration of issues such as the nature of the changes in feudal relationships between lords and peasants, the crisis of feudalism and the notion of the feudal reaction, and inter-peasant relationships after demographic collapse.

Larson's study, based on the rich manorial records of Durham, allows us some fascinating insights into the changes the Black Death brought to the peasant communities of the estates of the Bishops and the Prior and Convent of Durham in a comparative context.

The book is in two parts. Part one contains a useful and engaging discussion of the historiography of the peasantry and lord-peasant relationships, while also providing the essential context and background of the workings of the estate structure of Durham and the role of various greater and lesser estate officials.

Part two of the book covers the period after the first arrival of the Black Death in Durham, tracing the fortunes of the manorial communities living on the estates through the resulting socio-economic upheaval. What follows is a lively and insightful study of the peasantry and their lords living and struggling through the trauma of the Black Death and the subsequent social

and economic adjustments the stricken communities and their lords had to make.

Larson paints an image of communities and seigniorial power in crisis, with increasing numbers of vacant holdings and acres of untilled land, and tenants reluctant to pick up empty holdings. In this context Larson's discussion dovetails into the wider debate of the nature of the feudal reaction and the question of the crisis of feudalism. Some of the arguments raised here have been touched on previously by Richard Britnell, particularly in *Past and Present* 128 (1990): the idea of an immediate and aggressive feudal reaction, which split the peasantry asunder. Larson's comparative approach indicates that there were some differences between seigniorial policy and peasant reaction on the different estates. An interesting aspect of the study is the conclusion that communal cohesion was a crucial factor in the peasantry's ability to resist and unite against seigniorial demands.

The seigniorial policies of the Priory of Durham, it is argued, helped to divide the village community, especially between the wealthier and poorer members of the peasantry. Thus, on the main estates of the Priory, Larson observed a marked increase in violence between tenants, which was not so much in evidence in the villages of the bishopric. This development was however not solely due to inequalities between the peasants, but rather stemmed from weaker communal cohesion, evidenced by the inability of the peasantry to unite, an abundance of cases of petty disputes between neighbours, and the need for seigniorial officials to intervene actively in the regulation of village agricultural affairs.

In the later fourteenth century Larson also notes a corresponding increase in the number of cases of violence between tenants recorded in the court rolls. There are some very interesting titbits of information, including which kind of insults were considered to be particularly offensive to villagers and resulted in accusations of defamation, such as 'neif' or 'bitch of a neif' (p. 187) – or indeed how games of football could spark off violence (p. 190).

Larson rightly calls for a greater appreciation of local differences in our understanding of the changes in lord-peasant and inter-peasant relationships across the fourteenth century. In comparing the communities under the respective jurisdictions of the Bishopric and the Priory, Larson concludes that while conflict was in evidence in all of these, a stronger communal spirit seemed to prevail in the Bishopric than in the Priory's estate, where the upheaval witnessed in the latter half of the fourteenth century created a community characterized by stronger individualism.

A potential weakness of the book is that the detailed study of the communities only commences with the

arrival of the Black Death, as a substantial pre-plague comparison of the communities would have been of great interest. At times it would have been helpful to have some more precise information at hand, such as figures for changing seigniorial incomes across the century or more data on the types of offences committed against lordship or against other tenants. However, this does not distract from the fact that this is a very satisfying book, which not only makes an important contribution to our understanding of peasant communities and the effects of the Black Death, but which will appeal to undergraduate students and experts alike.

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ANNE ROWE, *Medieval parks of Hertfordshire* (Hertfordshire Publications for University of Hertfordshire Press, 2008). xiv + 255 pp., 55 figs. £18.99; HUGH PRINCE, *Parks in Hertfordshire since 1500* (Hertfordshire Publications for University of Hertfordshire Press, 2009). xiii + 334 pp., 51 figs, 12 tabs. £18.99.

'The most parky county of all' according to Oliver Rackham in *The history of the countryside*, Hertfordshire is the focus of two important new park histories published by the University of Hertfordshire Press. Originally conceived as a single volume, the weight of research demanded two separate books that explore, respectively, the parks of the middle Ages (Anne Rowe) and those of the period 1500–1970 (Hugh Prince). Together, the volumes make Hertfordshire one of the most intensively studied counties in terms of its parks, and they present a multifaceted view of the subject. Parks were more complex and multilayered entities than is sometimes presented, characterized by an array of sometimes competing and contradictory functions: live larders; status symbols; venues for entertainment and elite discourse; and aesthetically pleasing backdrops for country residences.

There were about 70 medieval parks in the county. These were ever-changing entities whose extent and internal form varied depending on ownership, landscape context and the period of their creation. The introductory survey in Anne Rowe's volume investigates not only everyday park functions (notably there are only two records of recreational hunting in the county's medieval parks, both in 1362) but explores their wider contexts in several ways – their place in society, in the economy and, especially, the environment, which reveals some intriguing patterns of regional variation within the shire. The economic viability of parks is assessed critically, and the spatial relationships between elite residences and parks (becoming increasingly intimate through

time) untangled. A valuable gazetteer of medieval parks, arranged by parish, takes up more than three-quarters of the volume. Well presented and usable, it incorporates impeccable surveys of documentary and cartographical evidence for each park alongside observations from fieldwork. Accompanying maps for each individual park, based on the Ordnance Survey First Edition with judicious use of colour, show the extent of each unit. Immediately striking is the complexity of internal park landscaping, with patchwork-type arrangements of woods, launds (or open areas) and common paddocks, invariably punctuated by features such as ponds, lodges and warrens. The large-scale format is attractive and the gazetteer is a model of its type.

Hugh Prince's complementary volume charts the complex changes in fashion that underlay emparkment in the post-medieval and modern periods and examines the role of the park in the projection and negotiation of power. Chronologically based, the volume is particularly strong on the economic role of the park in estate management. The story of the Hertfordshire park after 1500 is a rollercoaster: from dramatic changes in the Tudor period as new parks accompanied sweeping changes in land ownership and partnered a fresh generation of gentry houses, through to a somewhat downbeat assessment of the landscape heritage of parks in the modern era, given the destruction of many and the degradation of others as tourist attractions and golf courses. The seventeenth century is shown to have witnessed widespread park destruction (and defacement in the Civil War), while the golden age of eighteenth-century emparkment saw the key figures of Lancelot Brown, Nathaniel Richmond, Richard Woods and Humphry Repton make their distinctive mark on the Hertfordshire landscape.

It would be invidious to pick out one volume as superior to the other for they are complementary and both shed new light on the subject, showing the fruits of detailed fresh research and highlighting the potential for future work elsewhere.

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DAVID JOHNSON, *Ingleborough: landscape and history* (Carnegie Publishing, 2008). xxi + 265 pp., 59 figs, 56 illus, 4 maps. £14.95.

As both a Scot and an environmental historian I was pleased to be offered this book for review. We Scots have historically recognized the economic potential of valuable real estate in northern England and the inhabitants of the Ribbles Valley were invited on a number of occasions to contribute to the medieval Scottish Exchequer. Although the author of this book describes such invitations as

'ravages from the north', they should instead be viewed as a compliment upon the relative strength of the local medieval economy.

Economics aside, this book must have been a difficult undertaking. The author has attempted to discuss the physical, cultural, and historic landscapes of Ingleborough from the Pre-Cambrian Era to the present day in just ten chapters. At the outset, the author states that this book was not aimed at an academic audience but was instead written to enthuse a 'broad church' of readers. This is no easy task so it is to the credit of the author that he has largely succeeded in his aims: the book progresses logically from geology to landform processes, and from Mesolithic archaeology through to modern land use. At all times the arguments are underpinned by syntheses of recent research. Each step on these journeys is clearly explained and good use is made of photographs to illustrate particular points.

There are further aids for the reader. Coming from North Britain, where we have a mix of Pictish, Gaelic, Norse, Anglo-Saxon, Scots, and English historical place-names, it was a relief to find an extensive glossary of place-names at the rear of this book. Here, Ingleborough place-names are alphabetically listed, their etymology explained, and they are attributed to a particular language or languages. This is followed by a further reading section so anybody interested in a particular topic can follow up their interest in more detail.

Given the author's training as a geographer it is understandable that fully one third of the book (four chapters) has been devoted to the geology and landscape of Ingleborough, yet the prose is always interesting and never dulls. Indeed, I wish other books of this ilk could explain geology and landform processes as clearly as this author has done. These first four chapters are then followed by a further two chapters devoted to the archaeology of North and South Ingleborough. These contain both thematic and site-specific studies that serve to illustrate the varied history of the hill and environs, as well as highlighting the pitfalls of labelling a particular rectangular site-type as 'Norse'.

This section is followed by a discussion of monastic properties and influences in the Ribble Valley and it is at this point that a noticeable weakness in the book becomes apparent: throughout this part of the text there is almost no discussion of medieval secular lordship in the area. This rather odd omission continues in the post-1541 landscape sections where there is actually much more information about the tenants of Ingleborough than the upper echelon of landowners. It would have been nice to see how monastic and secular lordship co-operated and argued about exploiting the landscape across time.

The next chapter, 'Routes through the Landscape', is well put together and informative but it is again rather spoilt by jumping straight from tenth-century road systems into the early modern period with its drove roads, turnpikes, and coach roads. Nothing is said about the medieval road systems in the area and how they related to earlier route ways.

The next two chapters cover the development of the Ingleborough landscape with sections on stinting rights, enclosure, turbary rights, and quarrying (among other topics). These discussions contain much useful information and here again the author seems to be more comfortable in using early modern and later historical material. Occasionally, the thread is interrupted by local stories and legends. Though not strictly 'historical', these tales enhance the storyline and add a touch of 'local colour'.

The final chapter covers modern land use around Ingleborough and it is in this section that the author really emphasizes just how much the local landscape has changed in the relatively recent past. Here, there are some thoughtful reflections upon the future of this landscape – not all of them positive. Among this is a horribly familiar discussion of shooting estates and the future of Red Grouse populations.

This is not a perfect text: some faults have been noted and it might also have been useful if the author had included a discussion of palaeoenvironmental data, assuming that such data is available for Ingleborough. Nevertheless, this book also has much to commend it and it has certainly encouraged this reviewer to visit the Ribble Valley.

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MARK BOWDEN, GRAHAM BROWN and NICKY SMITH, *An archaeology of town commons in England: 'a very fair field indeed'* (English Heritage, 2009). ix + 101 pp., 73 figs. £17.99.

I first became interested in the subject of urban common lands more than a decade ago, when I assumed, naively, that somewhere there was to be found 'the' book on the subject. This, I imagined, would probably be a large quarto volume, with a guilt-embossed spine, published some time in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. To my considerable disappointment, though, I found that apart from Maitland's majestic 1897 account of Cambridge's common fields in his *Township and borough*, this was one area where our Victorian ancestors had let us down. They were much more concerned with the defence of Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest than the history of the Strays of York or Port Meadow in Oxford. There was no 'big book' on urban commons; nor, sadly,

was this deficiency remedied in the three volumes of the *Cambridge urban history* published in 2000, which mentioned the topic only in passing.

Now, though, in many respects the gap has been filled. This volume is the result of a three-year research project by English Heritage, into the history, archaeology, topography and modern development of urban commons in more than 300 towns, large and small. Although this is not a dense monograph, the work's great strength is its inter-disciplinary methodology and its chronological range. Where a historical account would be constrained by written sources to the last 500 or 700 years, the archaeological surveys employed here allow the study to range over more than 2000 years, from the surviving prehistoric earthworks on Newcastle's Town Moor, to the damage caused by Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show on Worcester's Pitchcroft in 1903, or from early medieval enclosures on Westwood Common in Beverley, to the archaeological remains of the Greenham Common Peace Camp of the 1980s.

The study looks at a range of themes, which reflect the complex, multifaceted nature of the town common. There are eight chapters. The first deals with the pre-history of these lands, before they were managed and farmed in common. The second and third deal with the economic functions of commons, in both arable and pastoral agriculture, and as sources of stone, clay, gravel, metal, lime, coal, grazing, turf, game, flowers, and water, and sites for industrial activity, or such mundane activities as getting the washing dry. Chapter Five considers an important, and perhaps less obvious, use of urban green spaces in the last 500 years – military training and defence, from early Tudor archery practice to military airfields, tank testing grounds, anti-aircraft gun emplacements and nuclear bomber bases in the twentieth century. The next two chapters reflect upon the social, recreational and political uses of urban commons, as sites of fairs, 'polite' urban parades, agricultural shows, sports, religious revivals and Chartist demonstrations. The final chapter looks at the present and future of these lands, particularly their value, and their fragility as ecological and archaeological preserves. There is also an extensive gazetteer of towns thought to have once possessed common lands, and a detailed and helpful bibliography.

The work reveals urban commons as a palimpsest, where all these different layers of activity have been inscribed on top of one another. This is revealed most strikingly in Figure 2.7, of Lincoln's South Common, which appears, to the untrained historian's eye, as an incomprehensible jumble of Roman Road, medieval field boundaries, and twentieth-century trenches and tank traps. The thematic range of this work also indicates the

importance of viewing urban commons (and, perhaps, their rural counterparts, too) as spaces in which a variety of activities could be undertaken sequentially and as neither wholly 'rural' nor exclusively 'urban' in function. This is an important recognition, comparable with the recent historical interest in field sports as a rural land-use. It also offers the prospect of agrarian and urban histories that begin to talk to each other and also to illustrate the relationship between these two research foci.

Inevitably, this broad-ranging 100-page study leaves the agricultural historian wanting to know more, whether about the mysterious origins of many town commons, stocking rates and management regimes, processes of improvement, extraction of wood, lime, clay and game, and the chronology of their decline as functional agrarian resources. However, these are the stuff of local studies rather than general surveys, and are often very difficult to undertake using urban records that tell us less than manorial sources about entitlements, customs, stints and trespasses. In this respect, then, while there is probably more to say about the agrarian history of urban commons than is presented here, any such study would be a drier and less well-balanced affair than the current study.

This book is a well-produced, and modestly-priced, addition to the shelves of those interested either in urban or in rural history (and the ecumenical who dabble in both), from the early medieval to the late twentieth centuries. Ironically, in fact, the book is likely to be used rather like the lands it surveys, with practitioners of agrarian, economic, military, social, cultural and political history all jostling together to extract their rightful share of its resources, mine nuggets of information from its reserves and advance their competing, often incompatible interests!

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DANIEL C. BEAVER, *Hunting and the politics of violence before the English Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2008). xii + 174 pp., 4 maps. £48.

It is quite hard to know what to make of this book because it is uncertain about its aims. At one level it is a contribution to the perennial discussion of the origins of the English Civil War. At another it is about forests as 'special places'. It is also about masculine honor [sic] in the early seventeenth century seen through hunting and acts of violence in forests; and it is about defence of custom by the communities within the forests, which leads Beaver into questions of popular politics. The first chapter is about the hunt as a male pursuit: then we have detailed discussions of four locations in southern England all of which were convulsed by disputes over

forests in the generation before the Civil War. The introduction takes the book in one direction: the first chapter in another. So there is no lack of ambition here, but this is not a satisfactory book. The four studies are closely wrought and yet it may be asked whether they actually convey the meaning that Beaver attaches to them. He has drunk deeply at the fount of anthropology and I am not always convinced that his explanation of events is necessarily the most obvious. Not everyone will be persuaded by his discovery of the 'sacrificial aspect' of the hunt. He persistently reads honour as a leading motive in gentry behaviour when more base questions of possession sometimes seem to be at the forefront of the cases he discusses.

This may be seen in the first of the four studies, 'Honor, property and the symbolism of the hunt in Stowe, 1590-1642', an account of the conflict between the Temples (of whom we have heard) and the Dayrells (of whom we have not). For Beaver, '... the imbroglia of the Temples and Dayrells evokes the violent competition for honor at the heart of orderliness and power in the seventeenth century' (p. 52). Beaver wants to read the dispute as a competition for honour when it is really about possession. What happened was that Sir Peter Temple, having decided to enlarge Stowe Park, and having had an offer to exchange land for Dayrell's declined, simply went ahead and enclosed Abel Dayrell's land in his park. The Dayrells were left with no option but to try and prove their rights at law whilst maintaining their possession by violence. The dispute then became confused with counterclaims over Temple's depopulation of Stowe and Dayrell's overgrazing. As Beaver acknowledges, Temple humiliated the Dayrells and it is hard to see that he was anything but in the wrong. Overall though, Beaver seems to lean to Temple's side. At one moment he comments that 'Contests over the power to keep or recover economically marginal slivers of land reveal the extent to which honor represented an end in itself in the political economy of gentility ...' (p. 38) but in a petition of 1642 the extent of the land in question is given as 40 acres, hardly a sliver. It is a considerable weakness of the essay that Beaver does not view the Dayrells' hunting in terms of its exact location. It seems entirely plausible to think that they were not hunting in the park, but on their own land within the park. Without this spatial dimension, my sense is that Beaver cannot fully understand what is happening.

The second of the four essays, on Waltham Forest, 1608-42, is also rather an odd piece. Here the body of the essay concerns a dispute between Edward Denny, lord of the manor of Nazeing, and his copyholders over the use of a substantial (600-acre) wood pasture within the manor which fell within the bounds of Waltham

Forest. Beaver's account is given up-side-down. His interest is caught by a riot in 1622 after Denny had ordered the common to be driven: a rescue of some of the animals caught by this drift took place, led by a number of village women. Denny's officer was mildly beaten and died later in the year, and this gave Denny his opportunity to bring a Star Chamber suit against the women. What is admitted only some pages later is that Denny had sought to make an enclosure of the wood, but when the copyholders refused to be a party to his plans, he threatened either to open up the wood to the deer of the Forest or turn it into a warren. The drift and the Star Chamber suit was all part of a process of intimidation of the villagers, and the drift was a clear affront to village and manorial authority. The dispute is, it seems to me, only peripherally about the deer or the forest: it is, as the copyholders understood, about them standing in the way of Denny's enclosure project.

The account of Windsor Forest, 1603-42 is, like the others, rich in detail, but it is not always clear what Beaver thinks he is proving. Certainly there is much of interest on the way, on organized poaching for the meat trade, the crackdown on turf cutting in Winkfield and Wargrave in the early 1620s and the implementation of revived Forest Law after 1632. The crown's officers assumed they had rights in the 1630s which were historically unverified: in 1640 the Earl of Holland went so far as to challenge the customary rights of common in Windsor Great Park. The final study is an account of events on Corse Lawn Chase in the 1630s which led to the mass slaughter of deer in the chase in October 1642. Lionel Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex acquired the land in 1629 and tried repeatedly to establish discipline in the chase, excluding both hunters and poachers and thoroughly alienating the neighbourhood. But again, by concentrating so exclusively on the deer, Beaver cannot fully understand the dynamics of the politics surrounding the chase: Middlesex, it seems, was evidently oppressing the tenants of Forthampton at the same time. While Beaver tries to connect the slaughter of October 1642 to the 'blood month' of November (do we, as rural historians, believe in such a thing?), the evidence seems to suggest something quite different. The deer were slaughtered and left to rot. There seems to be no suggestion that they were taken for food. To carry them away would have been to diminish the force of the rejection implicit in the massacre.

This suggests a further blindness in the book. Beaver is interested in hunting as a manifestation of gentry honour and gentry ethos. Hence he is very interesting on gentry purlieu hunters in Essex and elsewhere. What he does not consider is just how hated the deer were by those who had to cope with them on a day-to-day

basis eating their crops but who might be prosecuted for driving them off their land. Deer may well have been the objects of aristocratic desire, if not perhaps a ritual sacrifice: but for many others they were merely particularly large vermin. There is some interesting data on the number of deer found dead within Windsor Forest, some of whom had certainly died from gunshot wounds, and the appearance is that there was a great deal of illicit destruction of the animals. (This is less clear-cut than Beaver acknowledges. He attributes the unusually large numbers of deer dead in 1624 to the commoners' actions in defence of their common rights, but the deer may simply have starved in this unusually severe year.) Hence we can suggest that the king's deer had three enemies who are not sufficiently distinguished in the book; those gentlemen who subscribed to the aristocratic ethos and who, rightly or wrongly, claimed a right to hunt; those who poached the deer for profit; and those who regarded the animals as a nuisance and were desperate to be rid of them.

What is also fascinating is the extent to which the crown attempted to create new powers (under the guise of a revived Forest Law) in the 1630s, how these powers were implemented locally in and around Windsor without any regard for the established relations of commoners to Forest, and how bullying landowners (Temple or Middlesex) took their cue from this to make their own claims over the deer. The revival of forest law was a sufficient grievance for parliament to legislate on it in 1641, but it is plain that this did not satisfy, and in the breakdown of law and order in the following months, a great many people had their revenge on the deer in ways which showed their rejection of aristocratic assumptions. Some (not all) were maintaining one set of property rights over another and taking back what they regarded as theirs, including rights of common, but moreover, they were claiming an exclusive right to their land without the intrusion of someone else's deer into their corn. Whatever else, deer did not roam over the post-Restoration countryside and those who wanted something to chase had to look to the fox.

Beaver's book has its moments and will be ransacked for its detail. But its purpose is far from clear, and its judgements sometimes quirky. It is neither the book on aristocratic hunting nor the study of the royal forests in the 1630s that we need. As a study of the royal forests, Beaver never acknowledges the scale of disafforestation in the 1620s and 1630s: whilst the crown was extending its authority in some locations, it was pulling in its horns in others. Odd to say, the outcome of both policies – popular violence – was probably much the same.

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ELIZABETH PARKINSON, *The establishment of the Hearth Tax, 1662–66* (List and Index Society, Special Series, 43, 2008). x + 186 pp., 3 figs, 4 maps, 24 illus. £33.

For a source that consists normally of two columns, one of names, the other of numbers of hearths, the Hearth Tax continues to throw up a surprising range of problems. As with all taxes, perhaps the most complex of these is not the object of the tax itself, but rather the *processes* by which this levy was administered. As Elizabeth Parkinson shows in her excellent new study of the early years of the Hearth Tax, for historians wishing properly to understand the form and scope of this apparently simple impost, the devil really is in the detail.

Although the Hearth Tax endured through various administrative regimes from 1662 to 1689, this volume covers the years when it was collected by the Exchequer, through parochial and county officials. Thereafter, apart from the period between 1669 and 1674, the tax was 'farmed' to private City collectors, who paid the government an agreed sum, and reimbursed themselves through gathering the revenues directly. Periods of Exchequer and county administration have left records, while, on the whole, periods of private collection have not.

Elizabeth Parkinson's study covers all aspects of these first years, including the legislative history of the tax, the three collection regimes instituted in the 1660s, followed by three chapters that explore the implications of these regimes for under-payment and arrears, the question of exemption and the problems of non-payment. As with Arkell's study in the 1992 volume *Surveying the people*, this analysis is buttressed by an appendix which illustrates the various categories of document generated by these collection regimes, plus further appendices examining the internal consistency of some sample listings.

The study charts the legislative genesis of the Hearth Tax, setting it effectively in the context of the Crown's financial problems after 1660. It explains the emergence of this 'poll tax' on fireplaces, and details very carefully how questions about categories of exemption arose rapidly, and how the initial problems with collection in London in 1662 led to refinements in the assessment process. In many respects, Chapter Three of this study may become the most quoted because it explains more clearly than in any preceding account how the 'direct' collection phase of the tax was actually three distinct regimes, each with their own difficulties. In the first year of the tax, assessment and collection methods placed a heavy responsibility on amateur parochial officials possessed of variable standards of literacy. In

1663, this system of local government was modified, so that the Constable was to be assisted by two 'substantial inhabitants', and to report assessment and collection to the High Constable. Finally, in 1664, the Exchequer appointed its own Receivers, who were to choose their own sub-collectors to manage the process of assessment and collection at the parish level. Gradually, control over the tax was taken out of the hands of normal system of parochial and county administration, and handed to appointed collectors.

Dr Parkinson shows that this shift amplified many of the resentments against the tax, which thwarted each collection regime. She demonstrates that across the whole country, between Michaelmas 1662 and Lady Day 1664, an average of 77 per cent of the anticipated yield was collected. Eight counties managed a 96 per cent return, while the complexities of London house holdings limited it to 56 per cent. These variations were accompanied by delays in collecting arrears, so that in Hampshire, for example, the Lady Day 1664 payments were not received until seven months later in October. In Gloucester, the first payment in the same assessment was received in March 1666! These delays meant that in many counties the final accounts for each assessment were not resolved for many years. In Shropshire, the 1664-5 accounts were only finally signed off on 4 July 1683! This may have been in line with the normal capabilities of the early modern state, but it implies a degree of bloody-mindedness as well.

Part of the problem was the criteria for exemption, which had always been multiple, and to some degree inconsistent. This left scope for different parishes, assessors and justices to interpret the rules in a variety of ways. Dr Parkinson also suggests that there was a widespread recognition that the first assessment in 1662 had been too strict, and needed to be modified in practice. It was easier to collect from those who definitely could afford to pay, than it was to waste too much time chasing those who definitely could not. This analysis shows in considerable detail how the interpretation of exemption criteria varied county-by-county, often deviating from the statute norms, and even hundred-by-hundred within particular counties. The other issue was a wider reluctance among taxpayers to pay a direct tax that was imposed in perpetuity and (increasingly) collected by individuals originating outside, and unaccountable to, the localities in which they operated. This resentment was generally expressed in foot-dragging and evasion, rather than large-scale disturbances, although there were riots in the depressed weaving districts of Gloucestershire in the winter of 1665-6.

These issues are explained clearly and fully in this

impressive volume. It is truly a national study, drawing examples from all over the country, and tabulating results that encompass most of the counties of England and Wales. It represents a formidable amount of work on the E 179 class in the National Archives, and it deserves to be accompanied, in due course, by a comparable volume on the years 1669-74. There is only one frustration – that a volume produced by the List and Index society should lack an *index* of its own! However that is a minor quibble. Instead it is far better to conclude by saying that this book is sufficiently important that anyone who wishes to use the Hearth Tax in any kind of historical study *must* read it before proceeding further.

H. R. FRENCH
University of Exeter

DONNA LANDRY, *Noble brutes. How eastern horses transformed English culture* (The John Hopkins University Press, 2009). 240 pp., 12 figs. £27.

A rum sort of world, that of the bloodstock breeder. Some years ago I listened to a group of Thoroughbred owners discussing bloodlines, and as the port circulated for the second time I made so bold as to raise the issue of meiosis and gene segregation. My interjection was greeted with a stony silence until one particularly choleric old gentleman snorted that while it was all very well to talk about meiosis in respect of *mice* (he emphasized the word contemptuously), horses were different! And it was ever thus. Noble beast or noble brute; the horse has long been perceived as being somehow superior to other creatures and therefore deserving of special treatment. If ignorance of and indifference to the basic facts of biology may pervade some sectors of today's bloodstock world, students of the history of the Thoroughbred horse have to wade through a miasma of lies, half truths and terminological confusion. It is a tale of mercantilist thuggery, thieving, appropriation, imperialist bullying, danger, huge expense, and excitement. But however controversial the precise genetic origins of the Thoroughbred, the creation of the breed itself was a very British affair, leaving in its wake a powerful and profound influence not only on art and connoisseurship, but upon the way in which the British, or more particularly the English, saw themselves.

Noble brutes, which is at once scholarly, original and provocative, reviews in some detail the changes in English riding styles and training methods as the manege gave way to the growing popularity of racing and hunting from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. As time went by, training methods came increasingly to emphasize the notion of partnership rather than forced submission which Professor Landry sees as a

metaphor for the governance of the post-Restoration state. Moreover, as racing and hunting demanded free forward movement and all that that implied for the riding seat, saddle and bridle, another powerful metaphor was forged. Freed from the shackles of *manège* riding with its 'foreign' show and trickery, the Englishman sped across country, controlling his mount with the lightest of hand. Consonant with contemporary developments in landscape gardening which emphasized the natural against the formal, free forward movement of horse and man stood for the liberty of the English gentleman and even, perhaps, for the flexibility of the constitution. The paintings of John Wootton, Sawtrey Gilpin and the great international masterpieces of Stubbs, not only celebrate the great horses of the day, but carry about them powerful political messages.

To achieve the necessary combination of speed, elegance and strength required for hard riding across country, the English needed horses of rather better stamp than the somewhat lumpen seventeenth-century native animals. Since the time of the Crusaders they had admired the desert Arab horse, which had originated in the Central Asian steppe and had been developed in various shapes and forms in the sprawling reaches of the decaying Ottoman Empire. These fast, thrifty and biddable animals had long been important elements in gift exchange, but between 1650 and 1750, numerous stallions were purchased or purloined by English merchants engaged in the Levant trade and shipped to the British Isles and the stables of aristocratic horse breeders. A dodgy and dangerous business, often carried out under the threat of arrest by the Ottoman authorities, the accumulation of oriental stallions allowed for the eventual creation of the Thoroughbred. Precisely *how* this was achieved is a matter of some controversy and is discussed in detail by Professor Landry, but the fact remains that the English Thoroughbred, that ultimate symbol of authority and power, was forged essentially from alien elements. What was to become an imperial icon and a symbol of British splendour arose from a blending of the blood of a bunch of naturalized foreigners! The lordly representatives of a fledgling empire had appropriated animals from an ancient and decaying Oriental empire to create their own icon and, incidentally, to found an entirely new and original school of landscape and animal painting.

The saga of the creation of the English Thoroughbred is underpinned by a single glorious irony. For all the talk of the 'purity' of the desert Arab horses in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and of the sacrosanct nature of bloodlines today, the Darley Arabian was probably one of the few genuine desert horses to have found his way to these shores, and even

his ancestry was known only to a few Bedouins sipping tea in their tents. The fact was that the many stallions shipped from the various ports in Ottoman territory were just as likely to have been bred from Turkic steppe bloodlines in Anatolia as from the deserts of Syria and elsewhere. No one really knew the true origin of many, if not most, of the early stallions in what was to become the General Stud Book. Molecular biology might eventually settle the issue, but, for the present, the origin, or even the breed, of the root mares in the Stud Book is shrouded in obscurity. It could even be argued (perish the thought!) that English Thoroughbred horses, rather like the English themselves, are a mongrel race with the good fortune to have been nourished on the wholesome fare of this happy isle!

Donna Landry has produced a brilliant book. It is beautifully written, mercifully free of all but the slightest whiff of cultural theory, and includes a valuable critical essay on source material. She can occasionally be accused of stretching a metaphor too far, and I get slightly worried when she celebrates the 'rationality' of horses. I spend part of each day in the company of horses – Thoroughbreds to boot – and I am less than impressed by their rationality or, for that matter by '... a confidence in their own superiority, founded on myths of blood'. But none of this matters. Professor Landry has given us a fine contribution to equine, imperial and cultural history.

R. J. MOORE-COLYER
Aberystwyth

ROBIN STANES, ANDREW JEWELL and RICHARD BASS, *The husbandry of Devon and Cornwall* (Stanes, 2008). xi + 165 pp., 24 figs, 6 tabs. £8.50 incl. p&p from Deep End, Deepdene Park, Exeter, EX2 4PH.

In this handy little volume Robin Stanes draws together a lifetime's work on the husbandry of the south-west, with particular reference to Devon. Apart from two short pieces by Andrew Jewell on south-western ploughs, and Richard Bass on Devon's unique hedge banks, the book consists of six chapters by Stanes written between 1946 and 2008. Five of these have been published before, but they are mostly in sources which are not well known, or are not readily accessible. Stanes has unusual qualifications as an agricultural historian. With a degree in agriculture from Oxford, and a few years experience working on farms, he bought a 67-acre farm near Slapton in south Devon in 1952 and farmed it for 15 years before taking up school teaching and historical research. His experience as a 'hands-on' working farmer thus gives him a rare insight into writings on agricultural history.

The earliest chapter in the book is an edited version

of the 'A Geographical account of Devon and Cornwall' written by Samuel Colepresse in 1667 and published in the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* in 1964. In it Colepresse attempts to answer some questions about farming in Devon circulated by the Royal Society. Colepresse was a clergyman who may have farmed his glebe near Plymouth and he seems fairly knowledgeable about the ley farming system in Devon, but it is disappointing that none of the questions he was asked concerned livestock or dairying, which were probably the mainstays of south-western farming.

The next chapter is 'Devon agriculture in the mid-eighteenth century: the evidence of the Milles enquiries', first published in *Exeter Papers in Economic History* in 1969. Although a relatively short chapter, the analysis is based on a great deal of work, for the Rev. Jeremiah Milles, who was Precentor, then Dean of Exeter from 1764 to 1782, proposed to write a history of Devon and sent a vast questionnaire, including questions about farming, to the clergy of 450 parishes, of whom 257 (57 per cent) replied between 1747 and 1756. This produced some interesting maps, about such issues as the use of lime (widespread in all areas of Devon except Dartmoor) the production of cider and the colour of cattle as well as much else. The replies about cattle colour were most surprising – they were almost universally black. This indicates that the famous brown and red breeds had hardly developed before about 1760.

In 'Landlord and tenant husbandry covenants in eighteenth-century Devon', published in *Exeter Papers in Economic History* in 1981, Stanes shows that contrary to Habakkuk's belief, covenants were increasingly introduced to ensure that farmers kept good rotations and manured their land properly. This was based on a sample of some 340 leases.

In *Uffculme. A peculiar parish: a Devon town from Tudor times* (1997) Stanes had a unique opportunity to look at Devon probate inventories, for being a 'Peculiar' Uffculme's inventories survived the 1940s air-raid that destroyed the rest of Devon's inventories. The 179 surviving farming inventories show a pattern of small farms very similar to those in Cornwall.

The book ends with two pieces based on Oliver Cromwell's famous remark of 1658 'I have been in all the counties of England and Devonshire husbandry is the best', in which Stanes shows why he thinks this was so. It is good to have this compilation of Stanes' long career as an agricultural historian in one book, and at the reasonable price of £8.50 it should appeal to those with an interest in farming history in general as well as of the south-west in particular.

MICHAEL HAVINDEN
University of Reading

GEOFFREY BALL, *Land, agriculture and industry in north-west Essex. Spotlights on a land remembered* (Saffron Walden Historical Society, 2009). 85 pp., 41 illus. £7.50. Available from the Hon. Editor, Mrs. Jacqueline Cooper, 24 Pelham Road, Clavering, Saffron Walden, Essex, CB11 4PQ.

It is ironic that, although Essex has featured so heavily in a wide swathe of economic and social research, its agrarian history remains overshadowed by that of Suffolk and Norfolk. This has been partly a matter of sources (fewer great monastic or landed gentry estate records), and partly because other themes (such as the cloth industry and the growth of London) have overshadowed agricultural subjects. As a consequence this book is a welcome addition to the stock of knowledge on the county's agrarian economy and society over the last 400 years. More particularly, though, it is of special interest because it deals with a significant, but often overlooked portion of the county, the north-west. This area, extending from the Cambridgeshire-Hertfordshire border, through its hub, Saffron Walden, and encompassing the three small Hundreds of Clavering, Freshwell and Uttlesford, represented a small corner of the 'Midland' open-field sheep-corn, chalk-belt husbandry in a county renowned since Tusser for its clay-bound farming in 'severalty'.

Geoffrey Ball's essays provide a concise, but incisive and detailed illustration of this agrarian region. They are strengthened considerably by the author's own experience of the farming economy of the region in the late twentieth century, and his ability to understand and explain historical farming and rural industrial techniques from a practical viewpoint. This means that the overall impact of the work is greater than the sum of its parts. The parts themselves consist of seven short essays, linked more by their common concern with various aspects of the area's rural life than by any overt thematic unity.

The first four essays cover aspects of farming in the area, beginning with a brief overview of open-field cultivation around Saffron Walden, and followed up by three very interesting farm histories, of the Home Farm at Audley End, Horham Farm at Thaxted, and Mitchells Farm in Little Walden. These three studies provide interesting contrasts. The voluminous home farm records provide a very detailed picture of production for the 'big house' in the mid-nineteenth century. The study of Horham Farm concentrates on the inventory of the goods of its owner, Mary Buttle, particularly the evidence of continuing large-scale cheese production by this single female proprietor. The history of Mitchells Farm is more ambitious, giving a series of snapshots of its cultivation over four centuries, with particular emphasis on acreages, rents, and buildings after 1750.

The subsequent chapters are also useful in locating this farming activity within the wider agrarian economy. North-west Essex was well known, from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, for the production of malt for the London market, an industry that has subsequently disappeared, its buildings subsumed into housing developments. The chapters on the malt trade and its effects (notably the plan to build a canal linking Saffron Walden to the Great Ouse, and ultimately to the Wash) provide an insight into one half of the sheep-corn equation. The final, longer chapter on the area's woollen industry supplies information on the other half, particularly the Norfolk sheep and the carding and combing of their wool that predominated in the area.

This is a restricted study of a particular region. However, its insights are very valuable, and they demonstrate the author's painstaking research, his eye for detail, his ability to set these facets in both a wider economic and social context, and his understanding of the practicalities of these processes. As such, it should certainly find its way onto the shelves of those interested in the agrarian history of Essex, and of those interested more broadly in the histories of East Anglia and lowland farming in the last five hundred years.

H. R. FRENCH
University of Exeter

WILLIAM D. RUBINSTEIN, *Who were the rich? A biographical directory of British wealth-holders. Volume One, 1809–1839* (The Social Affairs Unit, 2009). vi + 516 pp., 3 tabs. £20.

Professor Rubinstein is the doyen of academic researchers in the much neglected area of British wealth, a subject normally abandoned to the print media. Even in that area he has been seriously influential, partnering Dr Philip Beresford at the *Sunday Times* to give Dr Beresford's extraordinarily popular annual Rich List deep roots in British history. In this work Professor Rubinstein commences the creation of an essential academic resource for those who wish to discover more about what manner of people created modern Britain in the early nineteenth century. The criterion he uses is a sum of £100,000 left between 1809, when data about wealth at death first appeared in usable form, and 1914. He uses data he has gathered from PROB 8, the National Archive collection of probate calendars at Kew. These mostly consist of the probate records from the Prerogative Court at Canterbury, the Prerogative Court at York and the probate records from the Episcopal Court of Chester, and of Richmond and those of Scotland dating from 1825. Professor Rubinstein points out that until 1858 the probating of estates in England and Wales was wholly a monopoly of the Church of England. In all,

the 818 records in this book make fascinating reading. The base-line of £100,000, the modern equivalent of which would be £8 million, gives an idea of the people catalogued there. A typical entry is that for the Hon. Henry Cavendish, a famous scientist who never married and died in 1810 leaving £900,000 (£72m). Cavendish, like many of the wealthier testators recorded here, was high aristocracy. His grandfather was the Duke of Devonshire and his mother was the daughter of the first Duke of Kent. More typical of the group as a whole is Sir Francis Baring, a banker from Exeter who died, also in 1810, leaving £250,000 (£20m) probated, but a further £426,000 (£33m) in other forms. Despite these biographical details, it is quite astonishing just how many people then worth the equivalent of £8 million or more, particularly in London, where much mercantile and retail wealth was concentrated, are completely unknown to us today. There is much work here for future historians, and for those interested in how the wealth of the Empire returned to the UK. Many of the wills, such as that of Charles Snell Chauncey, who died in 1809, have led Professor Rubinstein to 'trade with the West Indies and estates in Grenada and St Vincent' which in turn leads to slavery, which is never mentioned even though not abolished until 1833. In an amusing note on the difficulties he encountered in trying to read the clerks' copies of wills, known as 'copywills' Professor Rubinstein writes that 'The first time I tried to read one [a copywill], at Somerset House, where they were kept at the time, I assumed at first glance that they were in Arabic and were the wills of British Levant merchants'. There are many forward references to the Return of Owners of Land, and to Bateman's 1883 summary of that great work, which are used to indicate where the wealth left in the early 1800s may have gone, and to try and make up for lack of other references in any other place to the life of the deceased.

The book is mainly for scholars and academics, but should be of special interest to all economic historians and social historians and to people interested in genealogy and social history.

KEVIN CAHILL
Exeter

DAVID NEAVE and SUSAN NEAVE, *A history of the County of York: East Riding VIII, East Buckrose: Sledmere and the northern Wolds* (The Victoria History of the Counties of England, Boydell Press, 2008). xvi + 284 pp., 94 figs, 30 tabs. £95.

The latest addition to the long running VCH *East Riding* covers nine parishes in the northern Wolds, a remote and rural corner of the county today characterized by large arable fields, straight enclosure roads and broad

sweeping vistas. This is the first of the East Riding 'red books' to benefit from the recently revised VCH format and the inclusion of an introductory essay. Organized chronologically, the introductory chapter opens with a detailed overview of the archaeology of the region which makes good use of the published literature, a recent aerial photographic survey and the findings from the long-term excavations at nearby West Heslerton and Wharram Percy. Less is said about settlement and agriculture in the medieval and early modern periods, although the authors briefly touch upon wider debates about the date of the region's planned villages and the impact of William I's 'Harrying of the North'.

Yet, as elsewhere in the volume, David and Susan Neave's great strength lies in their research and analysis of the later period. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a key period of change in East Buckrose, when the open fields were enclosed, sheep-walks and rabbit warrens converted to arable, new isolated farmsteads constructed and village houses, schools and churches rebuilt. By far the most important figures in these changes were the Sykes family of Sledmere, prodigious improvers who, according to an inscription in the village, transformed 'a bleak and barren tract of country [into] one of the most productive and best cultivated districts in the County of York'. The introductory section on the Sykes family is one of the most readable and engaging in the book, and an excellent outcome of the VCH's decision to talk about people as well as places.

The rest of the book is made up of the parish entries. Here the basic structure of the earlier volumes is retained, but additional sub-titles make individual chapters easier to navigate – surely a plus for those less familiar with the VCH way of doing things. There are also useful new sections on local politics and religious history, the latter offering a far less cursory discussion of non-conformity than was present in the older volumes, as well as longer entries on settlement layout, which – like the introductory essay – help to place the villages in a longer historical perspective. Perhaps most importantly, each of the parish entries includes a new section on its buildings covering the parish church, village houses, non-conformist chapels, and distinctive 'Sykes' farmhouses, farm buildings and schools. Each of these sections is well illustrated with plans and elevations from the archives, and modern and Victorian photographs, many of them taken by the Sledmere schoolmaster Henry Thelwell (1844–1923).

Overall, this is an important addition to the existing corpus of work on the historic East Riding. The 50-page introductory essay is a valuable attempt to offer a more interpretative perspective on the information presented in the individual chapters, although there

is necessarily some repetition of material between the parish entries and the introduction, which is at times a little 'fact-heavy'. This notwithstanding, the new-style VCH *East Riding* will surely prove itself useful not only to academics, but also to the legion of local, family and community historians in the county.

BRIONY A. K. MCDONAGH
University of Sussex

HENRY BUCKTON, *The lost villages. In search of Britain's vanished communities* (I. B. Tauris, 2008). vii + 246pp., 77 illus. £20.

Readers of this book will look in vain for references to the long-lost settlements identified and described some fifty years ago by Maurice Beresford and others since it deals only with those communities which met their end during the twentieth century. The author, who claims his production to be 'an exercise in social history', offers a series of pen portraits of deserted villages from St Kilda to North Wales, from Lancashire to Cornwall, from Pembrokeshire to Dorset and from Montgomeryshire to Devon. People are driven from their homes by geological accident, industrial decline due to exhaustion of mineral reserves, flooding for reservoirs, demand for land in the interests of national defence and, in the case of several remote Scottish communities, what seems to have been sheer exhaustion.

Skipping along like a fly over summer water, Buckton leads us from places like Clicket in Exmoor, (whose name, he chastely reminds us, 'refers to the copulation of foxes') through Imber in Wiltshire, requisitioned by the military in 1943, via the Tryweryn valley in Montgomeryshire, (stolen from the people to provide water for Liverpool in the 1950s), to the tiny island of Mingulay in the Outer Hebrides which was finally abandoned in 1912, eighteen years before the grimly austere folk of St. Kilda turned their backs on their bleak and treeless homes. In telling the tale of each community, Buckton relies substantially on oral reminiscence and residually on websites and a few 'popular' local books and pamphlets. He manages, for example, to relate the rather tragic tale of Tyneham on the Isle of Purbeck without a single reference to Patrick Wright's celebrated *The village that died for England*. This apart, there is nothing inherently wrong with Buckton's approach, although to call it 'social history' is a step too far. While recording the recollections of residents of these places may be a valuable exercise in itself, 'social history' demands some sort of analysis, some attempt to get to the bottom of what is really meant by the 'close bonds', village 'spirit' and 'sense of community' and kindred phrases which crop up throughout the text. Why, when faced with the loss of their homes, did some communities meekly accept their lot while others

showed some spine and raged against the dying of the light? If life in Marwellham in the Tamar valley was 'more about survival than enjoyment', folk were probably only too glad to leave when the minerals ran out in the early twentieth century; likewise the wretched miners at Dylife in the wastes of upland Montgomeryshire, most of whom 'died tragically young' from the effects of lead poisoning. Elsewhere in Wales, nationalist sentiment strengthened the backbone of the people to contest the seizure of land for military purposes by insensitive and unsympathetic authorities, and to react with no little violence against the flooding of the Tryweryn valley. The profound depth of feeling over this issue gave added stimulus to the nationalist movement of the fifties whose efforts were partially instrumental in moulding today's Wales.

Somehow, though, the English seemed to have shrugged their shoulders and accepted their fate, in much the same way as they unquestionably swallow the alarming lunacy regularly spewed out from Brussels today. Moorswater in Cornwall, Buckton tells us, has been wrecked by the dual cancers of industrial parks and motor cars. Why has this been allowed to happen in the name of 'progress'? Why do we stand back and allow our towns to be homogenized and surrounded with warehouses in primary colours stuffed with goods which none of us really *need*? Surely the time has come for the English people to stop this madness and concurrently to call a halt to the squandering of our land, the one *real* resource available to us.

If Henry Buckton's book causes readers to reflect upon these issues, he can probably be forgiven his liberties with Welsh orthography while the proofreaders of I. B. Tauris can be excused the seemingly slapdash approach to their craft that is exemplified in the production of this book.

R. J. MOORE-COLYER
Aberwystwyth

S. ANTROBUS, *'We wouldn't have missed it for the world'. The Women's Land Army in Bedfordshire, 1939–1950* (Book Castle Publishing, 2008). xv + 304 pp., 130 illus, 1 map. £16.99.

Using both words and images the author explores the development of the Women's Land Army in Bedfordshire in the Second World War. The text is based on personal memoirs collected through interviews and is illustrated with over 160 photographs. Antrobus's detailed account constitutes an informative insight into the topic which, until relatively recently, has received scant attention by historians. Drawing on a wide variety of primary sources and recent interviews by the author, this book provides an interesting and pertinent illustration of the wartime activities of the Bedfordshire WLA.

It explores in detail the way in which the state-directed food production campaign was undertaken at local level by the Bedfordshire War Agricultural Executive Committee and how it impinged upon the WLA. Individual chapters are devoted to issues such as recruitment and training, the variety of accommodation available for the girls, as well as parades and other major events. It should be commended for the concerted attempt it makes to differentiate between the experiences of the members of the WLA who lived on private farms and those who resided in hostels. The text also contains a diverse array of the recollections of individual girls during this period. The extensive collection of photographs provides a vivid insight into everyday life on the farm in addition to the many portrait photographs of the individual girls.

Although the book deals with the Bedfordshire WLA, it cannot strictly be regarded as a conventional academic book with a sharply focused central, all-embracing story to tell or view to argue. Instead, as the text constitutes an extensive collection of diverse memoirs, its merits should not be judged primarily, or even exclusively, by those ascribed to the more conventional historical study.

This detailed encyclopaedic account of the role of the Bedfordshire WLA constitutes an invaluable resource for local historians. It provides a comprehensive list of all the recorded members of the WLA, as well as résumés of the many detailed interviews the author undertook with members of this crucially important organization. The strengths of the book are provided by the meticulous way in which the author has tracked down details of the membership. A comprehensive alphabetical list of nearly 3500 maiden names will provide an invaluable source for family historians investigating land girls who worked in Bedfordshire between 1939 and 1950. In addition the author very astutely provides a website to enable revisions to be inserted. The time line in the book is also particularly useful in clarifying the chronological changes which took place during this period.

There are a number of relatively minor points of criticism; in particular, it would have merited contextualization of the work of the WLA in Bedfordshire compared with other regions. As Bedfordshire was a county distinguished by its market gardening activities as opposed to simply agriculture, these differences would have merited more detailed consideration. There is also a tendency to accept at face value contemporary accounts of the wartime achievements of the food production campaign which have, until recently, dominated our understanding. Incorporating, or at least acknowledging, the revisionist critiques which have recently emerged would have enhanced the level of analysis. In a similar way the overall contribution of

the WLA to the wartime transformation of Bedfordshire farming deserves more detailed evaluation. Nevertheless these weaknesses do not fundamentally undermine the value and relevance of this book.

This account will have considerable appeal not only to former land girls and their families in the locality, but also to a much wider audience.

JOHN MARTIN
De Montfort University

GILL CLARKE, *The Women's Land Army: a portrait* (Sansom & Company, 2008), 216 pp. £24.95.

The Women's Land Army has often been depicted as the 'Cinderella' service of the Second World War. As a volunteer civilian force, it was not recognized as a service organization and excluded from service gratuity schemes, medals and demobilization benefits. This marginalization was belatedly amended by the government in 2008 when DEFRA bestowed commemorative badges on the surviving members of the WLA in recognition of their contribution to the war effort. Gill Clarke argues in the introduction to her book that this neglect has also been perpetuated in academic circles. Her premise is that although the work of the WLA represented a 'vital contribution to keeping the nation fed' in both wars, 'the history and role of the organisation has been largely overlooked' (p. 8).

This book, like the exhibition it is based upon (held at St Barbe Museum and Art Gallery in Lymington, Hampshire in 2008), sets out to rectify this neglect by providing an insight into the history of the WLA and the artists and illustrators who portrayed them. It is divided into three main parts. The first part traces the emergence of the various organisations and societies that promoted women's work on the land in the First World War, leading to the formation of the WLA in 1917, which, at its height in September 1918 had placed 16,000 Land Girls in agricultural work. The second part tracks the reformation of the WLA in the summer of 1939 and, interweaving the life stories of the various women who served, provides an overview of the key duties and challenges they encountered. The final part provides biographical portraits of the leading artists and illustrators who have left behind a rich and varied representational account of the WLA including Evelyn Dunbar, Laura Knight and Randolph Schwabe.

As would be expected, this is a beautifully illustrated book packed with colour and black-and-white reproductions of a wide range of paintings, drawings, recruitment posters, cartoons and photographs. Some of these are well known but many have rarely seen the light of day since the end of the war. They provide a fascinating insight into the various ways the WLA

was recorded and represented in both wars, from the sanitized and glamorized vision of agricultural labour promoted in government posters to the heroic and stoic women workers depicted in Schwabe's First World War paintings. They make this a delightful addition to any bookshelf. However I do have reservations. The book is aimed at a wide audience including students and researchers of art, social and cultural history and biographical studies, but such a broad brush approach may leave some readers unfulfilled as it provides neither an in-depth historical analysis of the work performed by the WLA, nor a critical assessment of the life histories of ex-Land Girls, and not even a thorough critique of the artistic representations presented. In terms of work on the land, Clarke argues that it is vital to recognize the diversity of experiences and prejudices faced by members of the WLA but glosses over many of these. Initial intolerance and rural conservatism was 'largely overcome relatively early on' in the Second World War. Work on the land was often arduous, isolated and monotonous but it was tackled with 'gusto' and was central to 'winning the Battle of the Fields'. This narrative of courage and endeavour largely confirms that produced in other popular histories of the WLA.

This book raises some interesting questions about the representation and meaning attached to the WLA. It provides a thorough account of the evolution of the service in both world wars, of its personnel, recruitment processes and training procedures. This, along with the visual images reproduced in the text, provides a useful and appealing introduction for a wide audience. However, the WLA still awaits a national academic study to stand alongside those already produced for women in the armed forces and munitions industry, which have so successfully utilized innovative methodologies to analyse the controversies wartime women workers provoked over class, gender, sexuality, and regional and national identity.

NICOLA VERDON
University of Sussex

C. JAMES and J. A. FITZGERALD (eds), *Of the land and the spirit. The essential Lord Northbourne on ecology and religion* (World Wisdom, 2008). xxiii + 249 pp. \$19.95.

The writings of Walter Edward Christopher James (1896–1982) – better known as Lord Northbourne – are not especially well known, although historians interested in the early organic farming movement in Britain may know his 1940 book, *Look to the land*. Meanwhile those with an interest in the development of British agriculture after the Second World War may have encountered his name as provost of Wye Agricultural College.

A new collection of James's writings, *Of the land and the spirit: The essential Lord Northbourne on ecology and religion*, provides an opportunity to gain a taste of his views on a range of topics, including agriculture, spirituality and ecology as well as 'philosophical' questions, focusing on the nature of beauty, what constitutes art, the ageing process and how best to live with pain.

The first of *Of the land and the spirit's* five sections is devoted to James's writings on agriculture and includes four abridged essays taken from *Look to the land*, which was a key text for the early British organic farming movement. Indeed, the editors of this collection assert that it was James himself who coined the term 'organic farming', and one of the contemporary organic movement's most fêted writers, Wendell Berry, has penned the book's foreword.

Many of the arguments of early organic campaigners, including Gerard Wallop (Viscount Lymington and later Lord Portsmouth), Rolf Gardiner and Eve Balfour, are present in these essays, supporting Philip Conford's assertion that by the time the Second World War began the organic movement in Britain had developed a coherent set of beliefs and arguments. For example, James writes: 'The health of man and the health of his land are not two distinct matters ... Farming is the external mechanism of human biology; it is an essential part of the process of nutrition' (p. 9). This was one of two key arguments explored by Eve Balfour in her *The living soil* (1943) and it is also an idea present in Wallop's writings of the period.

Excerpts from *Look to the land* emphasize James's and other organic supporters' idealism. Those who resisted the industrialisation of British farming dreamed of an agricultural sector driven less by finance and more by beauty and love of the land. James asks:

Is farming merely a necessary drudgery, to be mechanized so as to employ a minimum of people, to be standardized and run in ever bigger units, to be judged by cost accounting only? Or is the only alternative to national decay to make farming something real for every man ... and something in which personal care, and possibly even poetic fancy, counts for more than mechanical efficiency? Mechanical efficiency is all very well – it is good, but life can be sacrificed to it (p. 21).

The two final agricultural essays included in *Of the land and the spirit* were written in the late 1960s and mid-1970s and offer insights into James's understanding of and unease with 'modern' farming. According to his son, who contributes an introduction, James no longer saw himself as a supporter of organic farming when these pieces were written. Nevertheless, he eloquently

articulates his concern about the way 'increasingly all natural rhythms are violated' (p. 57), admitting that 'I don't like pumping sheep full of drugs (though they appear to thrive on it); nor killing weeds with hormone sprays (they show every evidence of torture in the etymological sense of the word); nor forcing crop yields to the limit with chemicals' (pp. 59–60).

James's profound religious belief is clear, even if one chooses not to read the pieces that focus specifically on religion. Less obvious are James's racist views, which he held at least for a time. However, a close reading offers some indication of these. An excerpt from *Look to the land*, written in the late 1930s, includes a discussion about various peoples (all non-European) who were alleged to have achieved perfect health through perfect nutrition. James writes:

They may not have been endowed with the highest potentialities of the human race ... [but] within the limits of their potentialities ... they have attained ... a state of harmony with their environment and with each other ... We may flatter ourselves that our potentialities are higher than theirs: that is poor consolation if we allow ourselves to degenerate in peace or to be annihilated in war' (p. 11).

The introduction written by James's son, the fifth Baron Northbourne, offers useful snippets of biographical information. However, these are rather vague and require checking. Reference is made to James buying a farm in the 1920s with a 'rowing friend' from Oxford but 'when the recession struck they sold out at a loss' (p. xviii). No location or dates are offered. There is also mention of James following biodynamic methods of organic farming as manager of Home Farm on his family's estate during the interwar period. He is also described as having been chairman of the 'War Agricultural Committee'. Given the complex structure of County War Agricultural Executive Committees (CWAEC), this is much too vague a description; my thanks to Brian Short for confirming that James was chair of two Kent CWAEC district committees and also sat on Kent WAEC's technical sub-committee. In May 1946, James became chairman of the county committee.

Of the land and the spirit is clearly designed to generate new interest in James as a religious and ecological thinker. For historians, this collection is more likely to offer insights into the role James played as an early organic ideologue as well as, possibly, raising questions about the ambivalence some members of the post-war agricultural 'great and good' may have felt about the industrialization of British agriculture.

ERIN GILL
Aberystwyth University

MARY YOUNG with Abernyste Heritage Group, *Abernyste. The Quiet Revolution* (Abernyste Heritage Group, 2008). Published by Perth and Kinross Libraries and Lifelong Learning, 2008. viii + 207pp., 16 figs, 3 tabs. £12. Available from Abernyste Heritage Group at www.Abernyste.org.

This book is a history of the parish and community of Abernyste, one of the smallest parishes in Perthshire, in the first half of the twentieth century. At that time, the parish was primarily an agricultural one, dependant on agricultural employment from the farms and estates; it was well served by local tradesmen such as the blacksmith and sawmill. It had a declining population (from 241 persons in 1901 to 192 in 1951), as the inhabitants were attracted by the better employment opportunities, higher wages and better prospects that Dundee could offer.

The focus of the book is an exploration of 'what made this small rural community, and how it faced population loss, economic depression, two world wars, massive social change and, in the abolition of parish councils, the removal of the immediate level of local government' (p. 1). Its chapters focus on the place, the people, the landowners, the community at work, at play and in need as well as at church during the significant period of change. All are themes that are vital to the understanding of a community and its development.

The book has the community at heart. Mary Young, the author, 'has long lived in the district, and has a familiarity with farming' (p. iii), while the Abernyste Heritage Group, which has collected extensive oral testimony from members of the community who lived in the area between 1900 and 1950, is the driving force behind the book. It 'has been written in the first instance for the people of Abernyste, past as well as present' (p. v). It has helped to shape the community: 'not least, it has fashioned links between those whose roots are in this beautiful corner of Perthshire and those who might be classed as "incomers"'. The community has gained a better understanding of itself: 'it is a glimpse of from whence we came and, in this fast changing world, we hope that it will help in the understanding of where we are' (p. v). It is a community venture by members of the community for the benefit and well-being of the community.

The book displays a sound understanding of the methodologies of local history. It draws on a wide range of sources of evidence, including the official records that would be normally used for a parish study. It also makes extensive use of personal testimonies from members of the community who lived in the area between 1900 and 1950; this is so important in bringing the parish and its inhabitants to life, which this book

does so well. The book recognizes the need to place the parish within its broader regional, social and economic contexts (whether of the neighbouring parishes, eastern Perthshire, Perthshire or even Lowland Scotland as a whole) and its wider historical context, to understand how the community came to appear in 1901.

The book is an intimate and personal history of the parish of Abernyste at a significant period that has generally received little attention from rural and agricultural historians in Scotland. The parish is also located within an area that has rarely been discussed even within surveys of Lowland Scotland. It shows that, even within a small parish located some distance from the nearest town, there is much valuable evidence to be found of the everyday lives of ordinary folk.

Mary Young and the Abernyste Heritage Group have written and published a gem of a parish and community history. The book is well written (and very readable) and the research is expertly undertaken, displaying a sound understanding of research methodologies. It is illustrated with numerous illustrations of the people and their activities in the parish. The book is beautifully produced and attractive. It makes a valuable addition to our knowledge on rural Scotland in the first half of the twentieth century.

HEATHER HOLMES
Livingston

TOBY BARNARD, *Improving Ireland? Projectors, prophets and profiteers, 1641–1786* (Four Courts Press, 2008). 192 pp., 16 illus. £45.

By the standards of some recent books on Irish history – including Barnard's own – this is slight volume but one which is nonetheless replete with interest. The theme of the book – improvement – is approached from a number of angles. Barnard offers no precise definition of improvement, and what contemporaries thought it might be changed over time. It was a part of the otherness of Ireland – the very fact that it was not England – that meant that English observers and Irish landlords familiar with England could always see room for additional improvements and engaged in a sort of progressive catch up. In every generation there were some who reflected on how little had been achieved and how much more remained to be done.

Improving Ireland? falls into seven chapters of which four are, in essence, biographical studies. So we have Sir William Petty, surveyor, landowner, political arithmetician, a man so clever he was kept at arm's length by government. Then Richard Lawrence, who also arrived with the Cromwellian army, did well out of the turmoil of the 1650s and emerged as both participant in and commentator upon Irish affairs. A third chapter looks

at the development of the landscape of Lohort Castle in County Cork, improved and manipulated to prove the antiquity of both the castle itself and the lineage of the its owners, the Percevals, later Earls of Egmont. Finally we come to Robert French of Monivea in County Galway, improving landlord and farmer. The conclusion introduces further improving figures. A central chapter introduces the world of Irish history writing and publishing and shows how this too was tied to ideas of improvement. Here again, Barnard writes of aspirations unfulfilled, projects commenced but left unfinished.

In the sense of improving an estate, improvement was not rocket science. Contemporaries had a pretty clear view of what it involved: the foundation of markets and small towns, the development of industry, glass and iron in the seventeenth century, linen in the eighteenth, the draining of bogs and the improvement of land. Improvement normally implied the drafting in of Protestant tenants with superior farming skills. It was also the commercial exploitation of whatever was available although Sir James Caldwell's venture of selling barrelled eels in Dublin failed. By the mid-eighteenth century it included the provision of adequate roads: but whilst Barnard tells us of the discussion about the need for better communications, he says nothing of any action which followed. (An observer of 1729 thought it easier to import grain to Dublin from Egypt than from Roscommon or Longford.) The discovery was made in every generation that to secure even a modicum of success required resident landlords to drive matters forwards. In the seventeenth century there were those who were pessimistic about the prospects. By the mid-eighteenth century everything seemed possible. And yet improvers wrestled with intractable problems. There was the character of the Irish. Petty recommended sending the Irish to England and recruiting a new population from amongst the English. Robert French let rip in 1741 about his less satisfactory tenants:

You know I never like such idle, vain persons ... In short, we have the fate of meeting treacherous and ungrateful people. The girls are idle, slutty, gadding abroads [sic] and never spin a thread of yarn. [p. 146]

Hence his weaving project depended on recruiting weavers from elsewhere in Ireland. The second was the disabilities under which Catholics lived which some, but not all, recognized was retarding economic development. The preference for English, and if not English, at least Protestant, tenants was always strong. Even in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, there was a conviction that 'Ireland would prosper only when it had become a predominantly Protestant country'. The third was the

way in which the English government never bought into the idea of Irish improvement but actively worked against the economic development of Ireland when it came into conflict with English interests. Of course, the hostility of the English allowed responsibility for slow and patchy progress to be blamed on others. Nonetheless, whilst much was achieved, contemporaries also worried about the shallowness of improvement's roots and the patchiness of its benefits. Robert French grew disillusioned with his commitment to linen when boom turned to slump in 1770. Another proprietor, Charles O'Connor, noted in 1786 a modest increase in his rent roll as a result of his exertions, but wondered whether his tenants had received any benefit. Others wondered aloud whether the increased prosperity had brought the landlords any moral benefit as a class: Barnard, always acute on consumption and sensitive to material culture, shows how siren voices feared too much luxury would lead to decay.

Barnard describes a handful of committed landlords who thought hard and struggled long to make a success of their estates. They are the antidote to any view which regards the Irish landlords as merely parasitic absentees. It is, though, a strangely inward looking book which makes no attempt to establish a British and Irish culture of improvement. Perhaps in England there was so much less to do, but examples of what Barnard describes can be found there, even if often earlier in time. Scotland surely offers a multitude of examples to parallel the Irish experience, although here, as in England, historians have perhaps been too ready to equate enclosure and the consolidation of holdings with improvement. But Barnard's book will be a central plank in any study of improvement as a common element within eighteenth-century British and Irish society, and for that reason alone deserves a wide readership.

R. W. HOYLE
University of Reading

T. DOOLEY, *The murders at Wildgoose Lodge. Agrarian crime and punishment in pre-famine Ireland* (Four Courts, 2007). 286 pp., 24 illus. £14.95.

One of the many joys of living in Ireland is that bookshops in small provincial towns still tend to have 'History' sections populated with the works of academic historians. One of the ways in which both Irelands have managed to avoid the dismal UK situation wherein a solitary copy of Eric Hobsbawm's *Age of Empire* is often the token gesture beyond the 'coffee table' is through supporting innovative independent publishers. Arguably the very best of these independents is Four Courts Press, a Dublin-based publisher who has consistently managed to publish the work of historians of Ireland

attractively and at a reasonable price. In their ability – and willingness – to so do lies a lesson for many UK publishers. This reviewer then is happy to report that Dooley's book, the latest addition to the already rich historiography on Irish popular protest, continues Four Court's good work.

The murder of eight individuals by setting fire to Wildgoose Lodge, near Ardee, County Louth, on the night of 29 October 1816 has long assumed a symbolic centrality in the history of early nineteenth-century Ireland. Dooley's book though is rather more than the latest telling of a familiar story. As he recounts in the opening chapter, essentially an extended essay on the historiography and 'social memory' of the fire, all past accounts have singularly failed to locate the fire in the broader economic, political and social context. Moreover, so Dooley claims, past accounts have been decidedly partisan, mobilising the story for obvious political ends. These are bold statements that most historians would tend to avoid for fear of setting up straw men. Does Dooley avoid such pitfalls? The answer is – a partial – yes. Such is the thoroughness of his research that one is almost tempted to say that his book represents a definitive archival statement on the subject. But, no doubt, documents will be uncovered which add further layers to this most recent telling. Nevertheless, Dooley situates each twist in the unfurling tale and each individual actor's involvement in social, religious and political context. This is a work of considerable historical sensitivity. The downside of Dooley's approach is that at times the flow of the narrative is disrupted by contextual, but nonetheless somewhat tangential, asides. Do we need to know that two members of the all-Catholic jury at Thomas McCullough's trial in April 1818 would subsequently sit together as commissioners for the improvement of Dundalk Harbour? A more judicious use of footnotes would have eliminated this problem. Conversely, whilst the events of 29 October 1816 are effectively located in the local social and political milieu – a reflection of the continuing strength of locality studies in Ireland – Dooley is weaker on the wider context of Irish agrarian discontent. In part, this is a reflection of the fact that Ribbonism and the Captain Rock disturbances of the early 1820s still await systematic national analysis. It is also a reflection of the author's (untested) assertion that much agrarian discontent in the period reflected essentially local non-sectarian socio-economic tensions. This assertion is singularly at odds with what otherwise is a book remarkable for the fact that every contention and possibility surrounding both the fire and the subsequent arrests and trials is explored.

The conclusion offers a useful but somewhat impressionistic account of the subsequent resort to the tools of

rural terror in Louth and the surrounding counties. It would however have added much to our understanding of the ways in which the fire and repression were mobilised by the poor and dispossessed if a more systematic survey was offered. Other than for the skilful, nuanced account of the fire itself and the subsequent trials, Dooley's greatest contribution to the historiography of Irish popular protest derives from his careful reworking of the evolving relationship between the local landowners and magistracy, the Dublin Castle authorities, and the London-based legislature. Any historian of Peel's later move to the Home Office would get considerable profit from reading *Wildgoose Lodge*. Indeed, Dooley's grounded narrative of a single episode of agrarian discontent sheds considerably more light, in the mind of this reviewer, on Peel's formative experiences than Palmer's voluminous *Protest and police in England and Ireland*. Historians of English popular protest would do well to remember though that, whilst the Swing quasi-insurrection resulted in the death of one protestor and nineteen executions, the burning of Wildgoose Lodge alone ended with eight individuals burnt to death and eighteen men hanged. Irish agrarian protest could be far more brutal than English protest and the authorities' response far less concerned with judicial procedure and precedence.

In conclusion, this is a superbly researched and well-written study of a much mythologized episode in Irish history. Some sensible editing and greater attention to the historiographical context of Irish popular protest would have most welcome but this does little to detract from a book for which both author and publisher deserve credit. I hope *Wildgoose Lodge* inspires other historians to return to Dooley's rural Ireland of the 1810s and 1820s for there is much work to be done.

CARL J. GRIFFIN
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Europe and Elsewhere

SCOTT M. EDDIE, *Landownership in eastern Germany before the Great War. A quantitative analysis* (Oxford University Press, 2008). xxiii + 278 pp., 28 figs, 138 tabs, 1 map. £65.

This is a book that very much does what it says on the cover. It seeks, successfully, to provide a quantitative account of the structure of large-scale landownership in the eastern provinces of Prussia between 1875 and 1914. This is a task rendered useful by the fact that Prussian statisticians collected census data on the units by which the land was actually worked (often so hard for agricultural historians to obtain!), but not on ownership, that is, how many of these units were held,

separately or in combination, by individuals. Eddie's remedy is to use 'address books', basically compilations produced from 1875 onwards on the holdings of the families and institutions in these *Junker* heartlands. We should note however that this picture remains partial: only landowners holding 100 hectares or more are investigated. Although the smaller properties were a vanishingly small proportion of those recorded in the address books, the address books themselves covered less than half of East Elbian land in 1882. This is a study of large-scale landownership.

The author provides an exhaustive demonstration that census data on farms cannot be used a proxy for ownership units, and notes variation in accounting of farms between censuses – a salutary lesson in the use of agricultural statistics. He provides an equally exhaustive account of method. One wonders if we really need to know that, 'the records were examined page by page', but the manner in which the results were achieved is certainly transparent.

The *Junkers*, unsurprisingly, are found to have owned a majority of the land of large states, but not greatest number, and they certainly held much less than half of the total land area. This is in line with findings more broadly across Europe, that the position of the nobility can be exaggerated, perhaps because of the relative ease of finding records related to them. Eddie finds relative stability in landownership among the greatest owners, and that the process of 'embourgeoisement' subsequent to Prussia's liberal reforms in 1807 had basically ended by the mid-1850s. Indeed the trend was reversed as non-nobles tended to withdraw from estate holding after 1890. A more novel finding is the extent of industrial activity on great estates, especially in food processing, and brickworks. Eddie concludes the book with a cluster analysis of land use in estates, where he expresses surprise at the relative unimportance of animal husbandry (i.e. pastures and meadows). But given this is a period of rapid expansion in the use of fodder crops, data based solely on land use criteria is perhaps not terribly useful for determining the economic orientation of landowners.

This is very much a book for the specialist. As the author himself states, much of the analysis is presented in 'excruciating detail'. Contextualization is brief, and there is very little consideration of agriculture itself, the role of tariffs, relating landownership to other sources of income, or wider Prussian economic development. Nevertheless it will be an essential port of call for those who want to know who exercised control over the land in East Elbia in the decades after unification.

PAUL WARDE
University of East Anglia

ELIZABETH B. JONES, *Gender and rural modernity. Farm women and the politics of labor in Germany, 1871–1933* (Ashgate, 2009). xvi + 238 pp., 15 figs, 4 illus. £55.

In the last two decades or so historians have produced a growing body of diverse and inventive literature on farm women, be they hired labourers, farmers' female relatives, or farmers in their own right. This book on Germany, by a scholar based in the USA, is a welcome addition to the literature on farm women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is a case study of the state of Saxony in south-east Germany, an area dominated by small- and medium-sized family farms, and is set against a background of rapid industrial and social change, rural depopulation, war and its aftermath. The vast majority of rural women in the area continued to work in agriculture across the whole period of the study and they constituted a group who attracted much contemporary comment, criticism and commendation. This book sets out to analyse the roles and representations of women on family farms, why they assumed such significance in debates over national identity and security, and how women themselves reacted to, and often resisted, their situation.

The book is divided into five main chapters. The first explores farm women's work and agricultural politics in the years between German unification and the First World War, a period of great agricultural intensification and diversification. The urban demand for products such as meat, milk, eggs and butter meant the need for female labour increased as the numbers of men working in agriculture fell. The extra burden put on farm wives and daughters and also on yearly hired female farm servants (*Mädge*) was recognized by officials in the pre-war period but, as much of the work was traditionally categorized as 'women's work' on the farm, it was seen as part of their natural province. Chapter Two however moves on to show how some farm women, notably the *Mädge*, railed against their position, complaining of overwork and abuse, running away from their situations and taking their masters to court. A detailed analysis of these disputes is interwoven with an overview of contemporary pre-war debates about the increasing disinclination of rural female youth to work on the land and the potential disaster this drift from the land signalled for the German nation as a whole.

These debates escalated during the First World War and its immediate aftermath, with the panic over female labour resulting in a 'full-blown gender crisis' (p. 95). This is the focus of Chapter Three. The shortage of labour on the land, and the increasing movement of women into industry, led to criticism of farm women not fulfilling their national duty and resulted in two

state attempts to restrict the freedom of movement of agricultural workers, in March 1917 and March 1919. The failure of these sanctions led to fresh campaigns to reform farm women's work by a range of agricultural experts, rural social welfare reformers and state officials in the 1920s. This rationalization movement is analysed in Chapter Four. Recognizing the burdens placed on farm women, new standards of household and farm efficiency using new labour-saving devices and hand-tool technology were promoted through farming periodicals, home economics classes and agricultural organizations. This aimed to enhance the social and economic status of farm women by recognizing the importance of both their productive and reproductive roles, and thereby making the life of the farmer's wife more attractive to young farm girls. How far farm women themselves followed this advice is debatable and the lack of mains electricity and cash resources on small family farms meant the overburdening of women continued. This is reinforced in Chapter Five where it is shown that the continued strain on farm women, labour shortages in agriculture and the flight from the land became powerful metaphors for the disintegration of national life and the general failures of the Weimar Republic. This trope was used by a range of conservative agrarian political groups and led, in the late 1920s, to the growing political mobilization of farm women themselves, as they took part in a variety of activities such as petitioning, demonstrations and political meetings to air their labour grievances.

This is a fascinating study which utilizes a range of official, published and archival sources and is sensitive to the need to give farm women some space to speak for themselves (where possible) and not be seen merely as subjects of contemporary debates or bystanders in political action. It shows that there were numerous continuities in farm women's lives in Saxony across the whole period, with the centrality of female farm labour and the overburden on women as enduring themes. Although it is in essence a local study, its subject matter and arguments make it relevant to major themes in agrarian history and women's history, as well as German history, and I would recommend it to anyone with an interest in any of these areas.

NICOLA VERDON
University of Sussex

C. BARCIELA, *'Ni un español sin pan' La red nacional de silos y graneros* (Sociedad Española de Historia Agraria, 2007). 199 pp., 15 figs, 96 illus, 23 tabs, 4 maps. €22.

In the middle of the Spanish Civil War the nascent Franco regime first signalled its intentions to pursue

an interventionist approach to economic and social affairs with the creation of a new body, the Servicio Nacional del Trigo (National Wheat Service). The SNT was originally conceived as a response to a 'wheat crisis' of fluctuating supply and prices, which became acute after 1932 when overproduction caused a downturn in the incomes of growers, and as a means to secure the support of Spain's numerically and politically significant cereal producers. Along with its successor organizations during the ensuing dictatorship, policies were initiated to control the wheat market in order to regulate supply and to guarantee prices and incomes to consumers and producers. This short book by an eminent economic historian charts the development of one of the most prominent strands of this activity in the creation between 1945 and 1984 of a national network of silos and granaries, under the slogan 'not one Spaniard without bread'.

As the author makes clear in the introduction, though the scale and the commitment of the dictatorship to the construction of such a network were unprecedented, the plans drew upon long-standing proposals for state-led measures to conserve harvests, prevent deterioration of flour and provide a reserve to meet periods of want or price inflation and deflation. Although plans for a 70-day flour reserve were drawn up under the democratic Republic, it was from foreign, Catholic and right-wing circles – including the future Francoist agriculture minister, Rafael Cavestany – that the dictatorship drew its own inspiration. Not surprisingly, the regime's predilection for economic autarchy in the 1940s and a limited liberalization in the 1960s, allied to its general favouritism towards producers and employers, was perfectly demonstrated in its policies. In a succinct section of the book, Barciela outlines the basic lines of policy towards wheat production, and eventually to cereals as a whole; from the launch in 1937 of the first policy document (*The wheat problem and national-syndicalism*) with its plans for 'totalitarian intervention' (p. 19) to the final denouement with a law of 1984 which re-established a free market in cereals in line with a new era of economic liberalism and political democracy. In between, the state directly purchased an ever-increasing proportion of the national cereal crop at set prices, matched by a corresponding storage requirement for grains and flour.

As a result 949 silos and granaries were created; the largest number in the 1960s and 1970s. The majority were new buildings in concrete but others were adaptations of existing structures, including existing granaries but also converted castles and señorial houses. A selection of photographs makes clear that many were purposefully monumental in scale, dominating surrounding

landscapes and serving as visual symbols of the regime and its policies. While Barciela touches on this physical as well as economic statement of 'progress' under the Franco regime (p. 10), he largely steers clear of such cultural considerations in a study strongly based on telling quantitative data that is usefully presented in a range of figures and tables. Likewise, tables, maps and graphs demonstrate the regional distribution of the network which naturally saw the majority of installations built in the wheat-growing heartlands of Castile, Extremadura and Andalusia. In two further sections, the author outlines the costs of building the network, which actually consumed a relatively small part of the total budget spent on agriculture, and on its final abandonment and dismantlement.

In Barciela's view the effectiveness of the network was mixed and varied over time, but was largely paradoxical in terms of stabilizing supplies and prices. The real need was clearest in the 1930s and 1940s when, '... the socio-economic circumstances of the country, made necessary the construction of a network of storage ...' (p. 101), but also when the capacity did not yet exist. The rejection of a private solution was, the author suggests, technically and economically unjustified; yet the ideological assumption that a state solution was automatically preferable was not matched by performance, enabling an era of black-markets and scarcity of staples. By the 1960s and 1970s, when the network was largely completed, the need was less justified as problems of scarcity subsided. A more liberal market would have benefited consumers who were forced to pay higher prices for a staple than they should have done. Continuing the network became unjustifiable when protection of producers ceased to be at the heart of public policy and the needs of consumers became politically and electorally predominant. Alongside a very effective technical analysis, this book neatly demonstrates that the rise and fall of the state system of cereal storage mirrored in concrete form, in many ways, literally, the economic trajectory of Spain since the Civil War.

TIM REES
University of Exeter

P. LAINS and V. PINILLA (eds), *Agriculture and economic development in Europe since 1870* (Routledge, 2009). xix + 407 pp., 57 figs, 117 tabs. £85.

In the 1950s it was clear to development economists that economic growth was the result of industrialization; by the 1960s they were equally convinced that agriculture was central to the growth process. Nearly half a century of academic endeavour since then has produced much more evidence, and several new theoretical approaches,

but little consensus as to the direction of causation between agricultural growth and growth in the economy as a whole. The more we know about what happened, it seems the less certain we become about why it occurred.

This is the context in which Lains and Pinilla have brought together sixteen other scholars from a dozen countries to examine agricultural productivity differences and the relationship between agricultural productivity and economic growth across Europe. In their introduction, the editors outline the way in which theoretical approaches to the role of agriculture in economic growth have changed. The only non-European contributors, Professors Olmstead and Rhode, also examine the insights and limitations of a variety of growth models produced by agricultural economists, and find most of them unsatisfactory, generally for want of testing against historical experience. Much of the remainder of the book therefore carries out this testing for the period since 1870, since, it is argued (p. 11), the 'single major event in regard to agriculture' over Europe as a whole was the rapid expansion of wheat exports to the continent after that date. A further chapter on world trade documents Europe's import dominance at the beginning of the twentieth century, when it took 75 per cent of all world food imports, and its relative rise as a food exporter by the end of the century. This implies that as European agriculture's contribution to the economy as a whole has declined, its output and productivity has increased. Broadberry, after comparing productivity levels in Britain and other parts of western Europe, demonstrates that economic growth was greatest in those countries that moved most rapidly out of agriculture, so that the principal contribution of agriculture to economic growth appears to be the release of labour to other sectors of the economy. Since most western European countries had less than five per cent of their labour forces in agriculture by the 1990s, where the figures in southern and eastern Europe were generally between 15 and 25 per cent, this suggests a core/periphery split, which is how the rest of the book is organized. In the core countries of western Europe (those analysed here are the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, France and Italy) the agricultural labour force had declined, on average, to about a third of the total by 1939, and so the chapters on these countries cover the period 1900–39. In most of the peripheral countries (Poland, Hungary, Spain, Portugal and Greece) much of this structural change was still going on after the Second World War, and consequently their histories are discussed up to the 1970s. In the case of Turkey, where the process is still going on, the discussion is taken up to the year 2000.

Each of the studies of individual countries examines this relationship between overall economic growth, agricultural output, and the level of inputs to agriculture, and especially agricultural labour. Many of the chapters also include estimates of total factor productivity in agriculture. The book has the expected virtue of one written by a collection of national experts, in that it brings together an enormous amount of up-to-date, extensively referenced, and carefully considered data. At the same time, it avoids the problem that often bedevils collections of essays, because the editors have been careful to ensure that each author covers more or less the same topics in a consistent way. The publishers, on the other hand, faced with a text mostly written by non-native English speakers, might have been more careful in their copy editing of an expensive book to remove some of the more obvious spelling errors ('deprived agriculture' on p. 297) and infelicitous phrases ('the 1879 cereals bad harvest' on p. 213). A concluding chapter to consider the findings in detail would also have been useful. The editors do indeed summarize the main findings of each chapter in their introduction, and argue that the diversity of European experiences make generalizing difficult (p. 20), but, given the variety of theories and models outlined at the beginning of the book, it would have been useful to see some attempt to discuss them in the light of its empirical findings. Nonetheless, we should be grateful for what we have been given, which is a rich and fascinating collection that students will mine for ideas, data, and references, and researchers will ignore at their peril.

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SHUZO TERUOKA (ed.), *Agriculture in the modernization of Japan, 1850–2000* (Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2008). 375 pp., 32 figs., 30 tabs. Rs 895. This volume covers the role of agriculture in the political, economic and social development of Japan from the late Tokugawa period (1603–1868) to the present day. It is divided into seven chronological chapters and has been written by four very prominent Japanese agricultural historians. It is a sad reflection of the waning of agricultural history in Japanese universities that one essay is published posthumously and two of the other three contributors are now emeritus professors. The volume as a whole makes a major contribution to understanding the trajectory of the Japanese economy since 1850 and complements recent work that emphasizes the enormous importance of traditional sectors certainly until the First World War.

The volume begins with a detailed survey by the editor, which summarizes the contributions and sets

them into a wider context of patterns of development. The first two essays, by Kozaburo Kato on the distinctive features of Tokugawa agriculture and Keiji Ushiyama on agriculture in the Meiji period (1868–1912), emphasize how much of Japan's political, economic and social systems were profoundly shaped by feudal agriculture and its self-governing villages, and these first essays restate the importance of agriculture in Japanese political economy. Even in the mid-nineteenth century, 70 per cent of the occupied population was in agriculture and the peculiarities of the Japanese feudal system (with the feudal lords and their samurai warriors separated in the castle towns from the peasant farming community in the self-governing village) had encouraged the growth of a peasant commodity economy in which rice, silk and other agricultural products were exchanged for cash from the lords and samurai. The tensions between traditional and reforming lords and within an increasingly stratified peasant social structure spilled over into the growing crisis of legitimacy in the Tokugawa regime and helped shape the political settlement of 1868. The power of the feudal lords did not endure in the Meiji regime (1868–1912), not least because a land tax was the least problematic source of income for the new state and the feudal domains were abolished and private ownership of land recognized. Agriculture's role in Meiji Japan was no less important. The imperialist powers forced Japan to open its ports but the Japanese managed to produce enough rice to remain self-sufficient in food, and exported simple manufactures (silk and cotton fabrics) – produced by young female factory labour drawn from the countryside – or agricultural and marine products (tea, rice and camphor). Thus Japan earned a balance of payments surplus to finance imports of machinery from the developed countries while simultaneously increasing the commercialized sector of the economy. The need to expand the supply of rice, other agricultural products and raw materials from the 1890s, as Japan began to urbanize quite rapidly, was an important factor in the emergence of imperialist pressures in this period.

The next two chapters are the work of the late Yuichi Hayashi and cover the period from the First World War to the end of the Second. The First World War gave an important stimulus to Japanese heavy industry and helped create a growing military-industrial complex with a rapidly urbanizing population as rural-urban migration flows increased. However, agriculture remained by far the biggest employer (50 per cent of the occupied population in the 1920s) and tensions over high agricultural rents dominated political debates in the early 1920s. Like every other primary producer, Japanese agriculture suffered during the world slump of 1929–32 and the efforts of the state to cope with rural

poverty and agricultural distress formed part of the wider processes of centralized support and organization that marked an increasingly militarized society. Indeed, rural society formed the backbone of the Japanese army and its growing armaments industries from the later 1930s onwards.

The final three chapters deal with the period since 1945 and are all the work of the editor, Shuzo Teruoka. Chapter seven focuses on the land reform, giving tenants the right to buy the land which they had tilled at affordable prices. The US occupying forces insisted upon this measure to promote faster agricultural improvement and, with other measures, to create a more democratic political system. In the era of super-growth, Japanese agriculture made a powerful contribution by increasing output, especially of rice, while freeing labour for industrial and service sector employment. The accelerated rural-urban migration is but one part of this story, as Teruoka points out in chapter eight, in which he emphasizes the increasing tendency of farmers to seek part-time employment in non-agricultural occupations. The other important element in post-war agriculture has been the impact of trade liberalization from the 1960s, which has led to rising food imports and increasing problems in the countryside as the ageing agricultural workforce has been unable to prevent the abandonment of cultivated land.

In sum, this is a major contribution to the English-language literature on Japanese agricultural history. It sets agricultural developments firmly within their wider socio-political and economic contexts and provides an authoritative and convenient study of a sector that has been largely forgotten in the story of Japanese economic growth but which has played a critical role in that development.

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WILLIAM LOCKERETZ (ed.), *Organic farming: an international history* (CABI, 2007). xi + 282 pp. £75. Despite its title, *Organic farming: an international history* is not a book that conforms to the conventions of history writing. Instead, this is a book of essays penned by key figures within the organic agriculture movement. In their highly-variable essays the authors discuss, first, how organic farming developed during the twentieth century and, second, how best to describe the current state of the organic sector. Essentially, *Organic farming* is an attempt by the organic movement to explain its own history and, thereby, to 'take stock'.

Of course, official histories and histories written by 'insiders' bring with them a host of problems, and in this respect *Organic farming* is no exception.

Unsurprisingly, much of the book has a campaigning tone, with the authors assuming that readers naturally share their hope that organic food production and consumption will continue to increase, as it has done in many parts of Europe and North America over the last twenty years or so. However, the difficulties that arise from the 'insider' status of the authors are minor when compared to the richness of the fodder they provide historians seeking to improve their understanding of the nature of the organic movement and the reasons for its growing strength during the final years of the twentieth century.

The first few chapters of *Organic farming* attempt to chart the origins and values of the organic movement, as it emerged in Europe, particularly in German-speaking Europe and Britain. While some readers may disagree with a few of G. Vogt's more sweeping statements about the historical roots of organic farming, he is right to emphasize the differences between the way organic agriculture developed in Germany, Austria and Switzerland and its development in Britain. There were always links and co-operation between the two, but the German and English organic movements were nevertheless quite different beasts, and they remain so.

U. Niggli's chapter on 'The evolution of organic practice' offers valuable insight into the way organic farming techniques have changed over time, as the initial belief in 'the self-regulation of nature' gave way to a less idealistic approach and a more practical commitment to developing effective methods for the control of pests and diseases. Meanwhile, O. Schmid's chapter on the way in which organic farming standards were developed is an important introduction to an aspect of the movement that has, inevitably at times, become a battleground. Certainly, the decision to develop detailed standards for organic production in the UK was a controversial one, with pioneers such as Lady Eve Balfour initially opposed to such a move.

Throughout the book there is acknowledgement of the role played by religion and/or spirituality in the organic movement, as well as a useful overview by D. H. Stinner on the influence of dissident agricultural science on organic agriculture.

Growth in the organic food and farming sector has taken place, within the EU at least, thanks to 'official' support and financial assistance. One of *Organic farming's* greatest strengths is the comparative picture it paints of how organic policy and financial support has developed in different nations. S. Padel and N. Lampkin's chapter on governmental support for organic production and marketing within Europe not only describes the often contradictory impacts of the financial assistance offered by the EU, but it also serves to highlight how different

– not to mention much less comprehensive – the UK government's strategy to bolster the fortunes of the organic sector has been, compared to the strategies adopted by Denmark, Sweden, Germany and other European states.

In addition to brief organizational histories of key bodies, including the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements and a history of the UK's own Soil Association (written by Philip Conford and current Soil Association director Patrick Holden), there are also summaries focusing on the development and current state of organic agriculture in the USA, Argentina, Australia, Switzerland and Sweden.

It must be acknowledged that *Organic farming* is, by and large, not a beautifully written book. Nor does it offer a complete or coherent international history of organic agriculture. And it is too expensive. At £75 how many libraries, let alone individuals, will buy it? Yet these shortcomings do not nullify the book's strengths, which are its rich detail, its comparative approach, and its discussion of several long-standing, internal disputes that have beset the organic movement. All of these make *Organic farming* a highly-interesting read for historians of twentieth-century agriculture.

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