

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

JOHN ABERTH, *An environmental history of the Middle Ages. The crucible of nature* (Routledge, 2012). xvi + 326 pp., 25 illus. £24.99.

This book fills a notable gap in the literature. There are books surveying environmental history that include some discussion of the Middle Ages, but this is the first to be devoted entirely to the period. Aberth has written a number of books on the more sensational aspects of the Middle Ages, such as the Black Death and the apocalyptic disasters of the fourteenth century; he is also the author of *A knight at the movies*, which deals with the cinematic treatment of the period. The work reviewed here is a scholarly book, aimed mainly at students and general readers. The book is divided into three sections, one called 'Air, water, earth', surveying developments in medieval science, folklore, and climate over a thousand years, followed by an exploration of the 'Forest', and ending with a wide ranging consideration of the 'Beast'. He suggests that relationships between humans and the natural world in the medieval period changed significantly. In the early Middle Ages people feared the natural world and regarded it as an adversary. A greater confidence in the years 1000–1300 led to a more collaborative interaction between humans and their environment, but that broke down in the fourteenth century when nature seemed to punish man.

Aberth interweaves effectively a number of themes. He gives a helpful account of the intellectual background, and guides the reader through a brief history of medieval science, which spills over into theology and magic. He traces the development of agricultural technology, and reflects recent thinking about the rise of horses as draught animals and the severity of the cattle plague of 1319–22. Aberth is similarly up to date on woodland management, forest law and the organization of hunting. The control of water as a source of power, and for drainage and irrigation is discussed, alongside the measures to supply drinking water to towns. He gives a brief outline of climatic history from the medieval warm period to the Little Ice Ages. He refers to the Lincolnshire clergyman, William

Merle, who kept a weather journal – the earliest known – in the early fourteenth century. Pollution and the measures to control it also feature. He is anxious to explore the cultural dimensions of the environment, from the escapist fantasy of the greenwood in the Robin Hood ballads to St Francis and his advocacy of harmony with the natural world.

The book provides a brisk survey of a very large subject and helps the reader who wishes to know more with voluminous footnotes and a long bibliography. Aberth develops some subjects in some detail, and guides the reader through the various contending interpretations. He pursues at length the environmental history of plague and particularly the Black Death, comparing modern theories with contemporary beliefs in the role of 'bad air', infectious animals, and poisoned water supplies. He has a very useful discussion of the arguments for and against the view that in the era of the *grands défrichements* (1100–1300) forest clearance made dramatic strides, concluding that the importance and scale of the movement has been overrated. In the later Middle Ages he is concerned to investigate the idea that woodland regenerated after the Black Death, and decides that this was probably not a major feature of the period. He is fascinated by the academic debates about the differences between humans and animals: was the possession of reason confined to humans? This had implications for popular culture, for at the end of the Middle Ages animals that had wounded, killed or eaten humans were tried and executed. Aberth doubts that this showed a belief in animals' reasoning powers, and aligns himself with those who see a link with the witch craze, in which social outcasts were charged with damaging their neighbours' crops and livestock. He shows the range of attitudes to animals, from the belief that their function was to be exploited by man, to the sentimental attachment to horses and dogs that were treated as pets. Occasionally he devotes a little too much space to more lurid aspects of the subject such as bestiality and poaching.

This book is based on an impressively thorough reading on a complex range of themes. Aberth has done a useful job in opening a new subject and showing its

interest and potential. In particular, by exploring the academic and scientific works alongside agrarian and landscape history, he indicates a potential for these hitherto separate areas of research to be more closely aligned.

CHRISTOPHER DYER
University of Leicester

GRAEME J. WHITE, *The medieval English landscape, 1000–1540* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2012). xvi + 277pp., 40 figs. £19.99.

Landscape is proving to be a particularly popular topic for academic research, and as such this new book by Graeme White joins a crowded field. Its structure is traditional – with chapters on farming and hunting, rural settlement, towns and trade, religion, and fortifications – and although some use is made of archaeological evidence, the book is written from an essentially historical perspective (the author is Emeritus Professor of Local History at the University of Chester). We are told, for example, that ‘The approach taken here is to emphasize the surviving landscape as an historical source wherever possible’, yet there is little real discussion of the concept of the ‘historic landscape’ or the sources and methods of historic landscape analysis which are now used so widely within both academic research and heritage management. There is not a single extract from an early Ordnance Survey map to show the reader what a remarkable record of the medieval landscape these are, and, while standing buildings are discussed, field- and place-names receive little attention. This is essentially a textbook – there are no new hypotheses to further our understanding of the past – which in itself is not a bad thing: there are numerous detailed, academic studies that have explored different aspects of the medieval landscape of England in recent years, and this more general overview will be a valuable guide for students and the general reader alike.

As a textbook, however, and in particular as a textbook on landscape, the quality and quantity of its illustrations is poor: some of the photographs are so dark that they are unintelligible, and there is not a single map or plan. The chapters on ‘The landscape of farming and hunting’ and ‘The landscape of rural settlement’ will be the main focus of the *Review*’s readership, and they provide good overviews of some recent scholarly debates with regard to the origins and early development of villages and open fields, although the late medieval period is not discussed as fully as it should be (not least because this period was so crucial in forming the landscape of today): ‘enclosure by agreement’, for example, is briefly considered but

the Black Death is only referred to three times in the entire book. It is refreshing to see brief discussions of topics such as industrial settlements and peasant houses, although, in a book with a stated aim of emphasizing ‘the surviving landscape as an historical source wherever possible’, it is curious that there is a not a single plan to show what any of these looked like. Overall, this is a useful textbook but which has not given enough thought to the needs of its likely readership in terms of comprehensive coverage or supporting illustrations.

STEPHEN RIPPON
University of Exeter

DAVID NOY (ed.), *Winslow Manor Court Books*, I, 1327–1377; II, 1432–1460 (Buckinghamshire Record Soc., 35 and 36, 2011). xxix + 787pp, 2 illus. £50.

These two volumes from the Buckinghamshire Record Society are a valuable addition to the canon of published manorial court records. As court books, rather than the more common court rolls, they represent a different stage in the manorial administrative process and provide somewhat different, though no less valuable, information.

These volumes are part of the abbey of St Alban’s court books, which are known but have been used relatively little by historians. This volume makes the source much more accessible to all types of historians. In addition to the excellent transcription and translation of the source, Dr Noy has provided a short glossary of Latin terms, which anyone consulting such records will find useful. He has also compiled four comprehensive indexes. The index of persons highlights one of the minor features of the volumes, the wide range and rather exotic nature of the female names in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Winslow and its sub-manors, Granborough and Little Horwood. While the male names are standard for the time, the female names include more exotic ones such as Anabilias (or Amabilias), Athelina, Felice, Florence, Lovata and Scholastica. The index of places within the manor has been carefully cross-referenced and will be a great help to anyone using the volume. It is a pity that a map showing at least the principal places was not included in the volume, but perhaps the editor assumed that most people using this work would be familiar with the locality.

These court books are less detailed than the court rolls from which they were drawn and it is clear that there was careful editing of the original. However, since there are only a few extent rolls for this manor, historians should be very grateful that the books were compiled. Unsurprisingly, the books have retained details of land transactions as these would be of

most interest to the ecclesiastical landlords; there are frequent references though the volumes to the need to search past rolls for evidence to prove a tenant's (or the lord's) case. Such items are the majority of business for the whole of the nearly 80 years that are recorded in the books.

The inclusion of certain types of court business changes over time. In the first few years the names of bakers and brewers who broke the assize of bread and ale are given sometimes separately. In later years only the amounts of fines are recorded with no names given. The fourteenth-century volume also contains a number of fines paid for boys being 'put to study'; in one case, Geoffrey the son of Geoffrey Milcent was given a licence to go to clerical school, but on the condition that he did not take holy orders. Licences to marry were also commonly recorded for both men and women. What is missing from the first period of the books are disputes between neighbours, petty crime and debt cases. These are included, however, in the later volume; at the court on 2 June 1348 for Granborough nearly all the recorded items are either pleas of debt or trespass or withholding rent. The latter period also sees the regular inclusion of transcripts of wills in the books. Petty crime is seldom recorded for either period.

Reading through these volumes, one is struck afresh by the changes wrought by the visitation of plague in the mid-fourteenth century and not just the numbers of dead, although these are startling enough. On one manor where usually only one or two deaths were recorded per session of the court, the year from October 1348 to October 1349 saw the recording of over 150 deaths with a further 30 recorded in 1361. New types of entry appear regularly in the books after the plague's arrival. Fugitives from the manor are named, often the same names for many years; and often with their current whereabouts recorded. Tenants are ordered to repair waste on their holdings, and there are accusations of hunting without warrant or refusing to use the lord's mill, as well as cases concerning people taking on new holdings without permission. These are all issues that did not appear in earlier part of the book, and reflect the social and economic disorder that followed the devastation of the plague. The naming of fugitives from the manor continues until the end of the early book in 1377.

The introduction to the volumes contains information about the origins of the manor (including a full transcript of the 1279 Hundred Roll entry), a short essay on the organization of the manor and its free and villein tenants and a longer piece on the business of the court. These volumes will be seized upon by

local historians, but will also be of considerable use to historians more widely.

MARILYN LIVINGSTONE
Carucate Research Partnership

SANDRA RABAN (trans. and ed.), *The accounts of Godfrey of Crowland, Abbot of Peterborough, 1299–1321* (Northamptonshire Record Soc., 45, 2011). xlix + 742 pp. 7 figs., 3 tabs., 1 map. £20. Available from the Chapter Clerk, 12 Minster Precincts, Peterborough, PE1 1XS.

The Northamptonshire Record Society enjoys the good fortune of support from the Anthony Mellows Memorial Trust for the publication of volumes of records from Peterborough Abbey. This has given us a series of high quality editions of documents from the monastery's archives, of which this bulky collection of manorial accounts is the second to be edited by Sandra Raban.

The abbot of Peterborough's estate in the early years of the fourteenth century consisted of 26 manors, which were mainly in the Soke of Peterborough or in Northamptonshire, with a few outliers stretched across Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland. In common with other large estates, both ecclesiastical and lay, the abbot's administrators produced enrolled versions of the annual accounts for all of the manors. These fair copies are very legible, and were clearly objects of pride for their compilers, but unlike the original accounts for individual manors, they lack the informative notes by the auditors and subsequent alterations. This volume contains all of the enrolled documents for three accounting years, 1300–01, 1307–08 and 1309–10. In addition there are accounts for two manors that take us into the years of the Great Famine.

These important sources have been used by historians, notably by Edmund King to delineate the administrative structure of the Peterborough estate, with its cash income, sown acreage, crops and labour supply. His calculations of numbers of animals were much expanded in a book on pastoral husbandry by Kathy Biddick. Others have dipped into this rich resource for information about particular themes, for example in this reviewer's pursuit of references to gardening. Now that the records are readily available in English translation, we can expect that much more use will be made of them. Those interested in building history will find a mass of detailed descriptions of work on the fabric of the manors. Historians of technology can read much about the construction of mills and carts. There has been extensive investigation of landscape and settlements in Northamptonshire, and the accounts

contain relevant data about the use of land and the topography of villages. Useful references to rents and tolls reveal something about the market towns of Peterborough, Kettering and Oundle. The court revenues of manors are presented in sufficient detail to depict the main features of cases coming before the manorial courts, including marriage fines and entry fines. There are also brief accounts for the revenues from the private hundreds controlled by the abbey. The neglected subject of the seigneurial baking monopoly could be explored through the references to ovens, such as that of Great Easton which produced an annual 20s. The delight of these documents is their capacity to bring to light unexpected information, which would not be easily found elsewhere – who would suppose, for example, that a brief reference to plots of land at Tinwell would show that in 1307–8 the vill of both Tinwell and Ingthorpe had religious fraternities? The surprising inclusion of the lord's personal expenditure in the accounts of the private hundreds means that we know the cost of the abbot's boots.

We must be grateful for the skill and stamina of the editor in completing a volume of 700 pages, which is provided with an introduction, map, glossary and index. Translation of the many technical terms always poses problems, and Dr Raban has overcome them by consulting with specialists. This reviewer's only complaint is that the Latin word *bercaria*, shown in a lengthy publication in a well-known journal in 1995 to mean a sheepcote or sheephouse, is translated here as sheepfold and equated with *ovile*, that is an open pen made of hurdles. The account for Scotter for 1307–8 makes it plain that the *bercaria* was a substantial building with stone walls and a tiled roof, which cost almost £16.

CHRISTOPHER DYER
University of Leicester

MARK BAILEY and STEPHEN RIGBY (eds), *Town and countryside in the age of the Black Death: essays in honour of John Hatcher* (Brepols Publishers, 2012). xiv + 472 pp., 58 figs., 34 tabs., 3 maps. £110.

Recent years have been marked by the retirement of a number of senior scholars of medieval economic and social history, which, in turn, has resulted in the publication of some remarkable *Festschriften* celebrating their careers and scholarly contributions. These have included volumes for Munro (2007), Dyer (2010), Britnell (2011) and Hatcher (2012), the last of which is the subject of this review. As with the other volumes, Hatcher's *Festschrift*, edited by Mark Bailey and Stephen Rigby, is an admirable collection of scholarly contributions offered by colleagues and former PhD students

of John Hatcher to various *status quaestionis* related to medieval economic and social history. The volume consists of 12 contributions occupying, collectively, 472 pages and divided into three sections.

Section I of the collection, entitled 'The medieval demographic system', offers three contributions, all related to the question of post-Black Death demography, a subject so dear to Hatcher. Ole Benedictow, following Hatcher's views on the post-Black death era, stresses the unhealthy environment of the late-medieval era, which was responsible for high mortality and depressed fertility levels. In addition, he reminds us of the importance of palaeo-pathological data, yet to be utilized by demographic historians. Richard Smith's article provides an excellent historiographic and theoretical framework for late medieval and early modern demographic trends, deriving from contemporary statistical sources (including Inquisitions Post Mortem, wills, manorial court rolls and monastic accounts). Smith pays a special attention to the troublesome fifteenth century, marked by several major episodes of mortality, and encourages others to pursue this fascinating topic much further. Maryanne Kowaleski's paper focuses on demographic and marital trends of late medieval maritime communities (mainly in the South West and East Anglia). This is an important contribution, highlighting distinctive patterns, marked by comparatively low age of first marriage (in contrast to rural and urban communities), yet with 'normally' small size of families (few children) due to socio-economic circumstances of the post-Black Death era.

Section II, entitled 'Landlords and peasants' (another scholarly topic much cherished by Hatcher) opens with Bruce Campbell's article on post-Black Death crop yields. Campbell takes a strictly exogenous (environmentalist) approach to the topic, showing the profound differences between the miserable climatic conditions of c.1348–75, the improved weather conditions of c.1376–95 (the 'Chaucerian anomaly', as he calls it), and the (mostly) depressed fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In his usual meticulous manner, Campbell backs up his vast database of crop yields by a series of proxy data (such as ice-cores and tree-rings). Campbell's article is followed by Martin Stephenson's study of seigneurial investment strategies in late medieval England. He finds the roots of capitalist investment and carefully planned strategies by landlords in the pre-Black Death era, a period of various ecological and economic calamities. Despite obvious hazards, the lords were ready to take a chance. This view contradicts the widespread notion of 'risk-averse feudal lords'. David Stone takes a macro-history approach, focusing on three Fenland manors

belonging to the bishop of Ely, during the days of the Black Death pandemic. He utilizes local manorial accounts to map the precise path of the pestilence across these manors and shows how its spread affected economic activities on a local level. Also, Stone reminds us about the caveats related to manorial accounts and encourages us to juxtapose statistical sources against narrative accounts. Along the same lines, Erin McGibbon-Smith offers a highly detailed analysis of social life in a single Cambridgeshire village (Sutton-in-the-Isle) throughout the fourteenth century. Utilizing local court rolls, whose chronological survival is quite remarkable, McGibbon-Smith focuses particularly on crime patterns in that parish. The author concludes her article with an optimistic statement that 'the prognosis for the future of court roll studies is good'. McGibbon-Smith's study is followed by Phillipp Schofield's article on the regional economy of Cornish estates of the Arundels in the fifteenth century (echoing the subject of Hatcher's PhD thesis and, consequently, of his first monograph [1970]). As Schofield shows, the degree of success or failure varied from manor to manor, depending on the presence/absence of diversified industries (such as cloth production and maritime fishing) and the willingness of local lords and officials to invest in local infrastructure. Finally, John Munro's article offers an altogether new perspective on the late medieval decline and disappearance of manorialism in England. According to Munro (and all evidence he presents throughout the article points to that direction), it was chiefly monetary and political factors (rising real wages and increasing royal interference in wool industry in the second half of the fourteenth century), rather than demographic ones that were responsible for disintegrating English demesne agriculture in the post-Black Death era. As such, it is a major contribution to the *status quaestionis* of late medieval manorialism and agriculture.

Part III, entitled 'Trade and industry' opens with James Davis's engaging essay on marketing food and drink after the Black Death. Using an unusually long series of manorial court rolls from Clare (Suffolk), Davis shows that the rising living standards in the post-Black Death period are reflected in increasing per capita food and drink consumption, widespread professionalization within the food producing industry, as well as a proliferation of food retail shops, pubs and inns. Davis's article is followed by John Lee's contribution on the role of fairs in late medieval England. Here, Lee surveys the fortunes of fairs for various commodities (wool, cloth, livestock, fish, housewares, spices) after the Black Death. Fairs, both large and small, had a

remarkable capacity to respond swiftly to the shifting patterns of late medieval trade. In addition, fairs provided social and religious space for late medieval consumers. The final essay, written by Richard Britnell, deals with the late medieval coal industry, a vitally important, yet still understudied topic (and another field in which Hatcher has made a major contribution, in 1993). As Britnell shows, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the bishops of Durham refrained from investing much capital in the development of their coastal coalmines, focusing instead on inland coal resources, leased to local tenants and entrepreneurs. Although an important form of enterprise, it was not until the 1540s that there was a real boom in the coal industry, deriving from a renewed economic prosperity and demographic growth.

Overall, this volume represents an important collection of substantive contributions to themes and debates in late medieval economic and social history. Each article is strongly innovative in its character, opening new and exciting avenues for research for years to come.

PHILIP SLAVIN
McGill University

CRAIG MULDREW, *Food, energy and the creation of industriousness. Work and material culture in agrarian England, 1550–1780* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). xvii + 355 pp., 68 tabs., 3 figs. £65.

Craig Muldrew's work is really two distinct books about the living standards of English agricultural labourers rolled into one. The first is a study of the standard of living of agricultural labourers in England between the sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries, based on the simple, but original, premise that if agricultural productivity increased as much as historians have suggested (not least in the *Review*), then agricultural labourers must have worked harder, necessitating a higher calorific intake than they are accorded in most of the recent literature. The second pursues labourers' living standards by an in-depth reconstruction of their diet and material comfort across the period, through similarly original research into household accounts and probate inventories. The first book sacrifices a sufficiently large number of sacred cows in the standard-of-living debate, notably the axiomatic link between nutrition and height that it is likely to be the target of numerous econometric papers and PhD theses for years to come. The second book tilts at smaller windmills, and provides a valuable, subtle and far-reaching reassessment of the working lives, household economies and fortunes of agrarian labourers, and begins to redress the historiographical neglect of this group and of the materiality of

labour *per se* since the seminal studies of Everett and Snell. These comments are not meant to detract from Muldrew's significant conclusions about the calorific intake of labourers, nor from his assertions that this was the basis for significant productivity increases from the mid-seventeenth century. Instead, they are made in the hope that the value of the second study is not obscured by the likely historiographical fuss about the first.

As suggested, the originality of Muldrew's approach to the standard of living debate is that he rejects interpretations based on anthropomorphic data and those that use a 'basket of consumables' to estimate the value of real wages. In particular, his cautions about generalizations based on Davies and Morton Eden's household budgets from the crisis years of the 1790s are particularly well made. Instead, he focuses on the calorific intake of agrarian workers, by an extensive, imaginative and fascinating reconstruction of typical diets, based on primary source evidence (such as household accounts), and heroic assessments of changes in total food production through the period, to get some sense of the available supply. While he acknowledges that these favour live-in servants on larger estates, and adult labourers rather than their families, he asserts that the average calorific intake was much higher than estimates by Fogel and others. Indeed, he argues that by the mid-eighteenth century adult male labourers were receiving an average of more than 4000 calories per diem, which was generally enough to fuel them through 8 or 10 hours' labour, although as many as 7500 calories might be needed for 10 hours' mowing in harvest. It will doubtless come as a great relief to many members of the BAHS to learn that much of this calorific intake (36 per cent among Robert Loder's servants) came from beer, and that this liquid source of energy has been significantly under-represented in existing specimen diets, perhaps because of labourers' reluctance to admit it to clerical enquirers into the state of the poor.

In this respect, Muldrew's study tends to align with Robert Allen's recent analysis of British industrialization, and its conclusion that the spurs to mechanization in Britain included the comparatively high price of labour, and the low price of coal. However, Muldrew is also careful to note that this optimism is bounded temporally between c.1650 and c.1780. He notes that in years of dearth in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, adult male labourers might have been in deficit in terms of their calorific intake balanced against work requirements. They may have come close to this fate again after 1790, too. Similarly, he finds that the material possessions of labourers

stagnated in this period, suggesting that most income was devoted to immediate consumption needs. Muldrew is also wary of assuming that just because adult labourers fared better than expected, that this good fortune applied equally to their families. He points out that children in southern England may have been receiving insufficient amounts of milk through most of the period. Similarly, although adults' food was high in calories, the staples of bread and butter, bacon, cheese, sugar and beer, were not particularly nutritious, nor were they affordable in sufficient quantities when accident or illness interrupted wage-earning capacity.

Such estimates are based on a forensic reconstruction of what labourers ate, how they worked, how long they laboured each day, how household economies were formed around adult labour, and how the material furnishings of labouring households slowly became more durable and extensive. This analysis does much to answer questions that have been begged repeatedly since Everett's pioneering research in the 1960s, and in most other studies that purport to be about work – namely, how did labourers work, and how did they live? Since Muldrew is unconstrained by the desire to establish whether or not these labourers became more or less of a 'working class' by the end of his period, he is free to explore their lives, livelihoods and living conditions in unparalleled depth.

As a consequence, the qualitative sections of Chapters 2 to 5 are truly ground-breaking, because they provide a thoroughly researched, carefully assembled and tremendously perceptive account of labouring lives. Here, Muldrew sketches out the seasonal rhythms of rural work, the ways in which diets were patched together, subtle but measurable increases in material prosperity, and consideration of the contributions of by-employments, particularly female earnings and access to agrarian resources. This is a worthy extension of research initiated by Joan Thirsk, and truly national in scope.

This work is likely to receive as much attention as Muldrew's first book, *The economy of obligation*. As indicated, it will probably stir up rather more controversy than his earlier work, and come under fire from the cliometric machine-gunners. *The economy of obligation* forced us to re-think the meaning of credit, by demonstrating that it was an all-pervasive concept in seventeenth-century England, linking social validation to personal credit rating. This book is likely to have a similarly profound effect on how we think about work in early modern England, by requiring us to consider how work was done, about the effects on those who did it, and about the scale of their contribution to processes

we tend to summarize all too easily as the agrarian or industrial revolutions.

H. R. FRENCH
University of Exeter

CARL J. GRIFFIN, *The rural war. Captain Swing and the politics of protest* (Manchester University Press, 2012). xv + 360 pp., 9 illus. £70.

Our understandings of the Swing protests of 1830–31 have been significantly augmented and enriched in recent years and the interpretative framework established by Hobsbawm and Rudé's seminal *Captain Swing* in 1969 has been considerably challenged and revised, although perhaps still not completely eclipsed. Carl Griffin's *The rural war* is the latest and most voluminous contribution to an exhilarating wave of scholarship associated with the likes of Peter Jones, Katrina Navickas and Steve Poole and possibly also the most ambitious. Like others before him, while eager to challenge and escape the paradigm established by Hobsbawm and Rudé, Griffin explicitly and implicitly acknowledges *Captain Swing* as a benchmark. Indeed the declared ambition of *The rural war* is to supersede *Captain Swing* as the standard work on the disturbances.

As the author himself acknowledges however, in one respect at least, this ambition is unfulfilled. *The rural war* is a study of Swing in what Griffin describes as its 'heartlands', focusing on the southern counties of Kent, Sussex and Hampshire, with some references to Berkshire and Dorset. Events in those counties of the South West, East Anglia, the Midlands and the North that were also witness to the disturbances are left aside. Indeed Griffin argues that any attempt at a fresh national study of Swing would inevitably founder on the movement's varied local contexts. This seems a curious contention in an account which examines Swing across an extensive geographic area itself, but leaving this aside *The rural war* is a very impressive study on its own terms and provides yet more fresh perspectives on the last great uncoordinated rising of the rural poor.

Griffin's interpretation is expounded in eleven chapters, themselves organized within the four constituent parts of *The rural war*. Focusing in turn on Swing's context, diffusion, politics and the responses to it, the author develops an interpretation which ultimately presents the protests, in terms of mobilization, as the result of the effective fusion of parish-level grievances and radical politics. This interpretation is not entirely new, but these themes are key to one of Griffin's most impressive achievements which is to reconstruct a mass of individual protest events in detail, particularly those in Swing's area of genesis, and to

demonstrate how and by what mechanisms the disturbances ultimately spread beyond East Kent. Earlier significant outbreaks of machine-breaking, notably in parts of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1822 and specifically in mid-Suffolk in late 1829, where mobilizations far larger in scale than those in and around Elham in August 1830 were recorded, notably failed to acquire momentum beyond a relatively confined area. The role that pre-existing combinations and associations within rural communities, as well as newly emergent and sometimes fluid solidarities, played in propelling the protests is well documented by Griffin. Indeed, one of the most striking conclusions of *The rural war* is that without such groups and specifically key actors within them such as the Maidstone radicals Robert Price and John Adams, there would have been no Swing outside the Kentish Weald, in fact no Swing as we understand it.

Of course Swing was not just characterized by machine-breaking, albeit that Griffin demonstrates that instances of such were even more numerous than earlier accounts have allowed. Supported by an impressive command of the extant south-eastern newspaper archive the author is able to highlight the direct link that existed in some locales between covert incendiarism and overt collective protest. The potential complexity of the connections between arson and machine-breaking is not understated, nor local or temporal variations in the tactics of protesters, but Griffin succeeds in reaffirming that, in parts of East Kent and Hampshire in particular, arson was often integral rather than marginal to the movement.

Griffin's treatment of incendiarism builds on his earlier published article on this topic. Previously published material on the aftermath of the protests is also incorporated into *The Rural War*, but much else is new and, in the context of Swing, innovative. Perhaps one of the book's most important contributions is to re-examine the involvement of women in Swing and to highlight the gender politics of the movement. Certainly Griffin demonstrates that women sometimes had a greater involvement or influence than is traditionally understood. More significantly, ideas akin to those pioneered by Anna Clark are very effectively applied within the context of Swing to argue that the movement was strongly informed by the imperiled masculinity of male farm labourers increasingly beholden to the parish vestry and struggling to maintain position and status as family breadwinners. Nonetheless, other arguments within *The rural war's* treatment of gender politics appear more speculative and less substantiated. The contention that protesters viewed threshing machines as 'proxies

for female bodies' and that machine-breaking could represent a transference of sexual violence seems based largely on a single example of gendered language used toward a machine and a number of broadly concurrent, but unrelated cases of sexual violence against women in the locale in question. Interesting and provocative ideas perhaps, but ones which require slightly more reflection, not least in terms of whether the evidence deployed is sufficient to corroborate the claims made.

Criticisms aside, and although genuinely few they might also encompass proof-reading, *The rural war* is an important and at times original contribution to the resurgent historiography of Swing and deserves to be widely read. Griffin's meticulous research brings us closer than ever to the conditions, relationships and events that underpinned the movement in those parishes of south-eastern England in which it began.

HARVEY OSBORNE
University Campus Suffolk

DOROTHY HARTLEY, *Lost World. England, 1933–1936* (Prospect Books, 2012). 272 pp., 40 illus. £15.

Between 1933 and 1936 the now-defunct national broadsheet *The Daily Sketch* published 150 short articles by Dorothy Hartley under the heading 'In England now'. Over 60 of these have now been reproduced in this volume, together with a number of Hartley's own photographs. They have been selected and introduced by the journalist and photographer Adrian Bailey, who knew Dorothy from the late 1960s until her death in 1985. The book was accompanied by a TV documentary 'The lost world of Dorothy Hartley', which was made by the independent media company Available Light for BBC4 and first screened in November 2012. It was presented by the indomitable Lucy Worsley, who also provides a short foreword to the book.

Dorothy Hartley was born in 1893 and at the age of 10 moved to Nottinghamshire, where her father became rector of the village of Remstone. Later in life she moved back to her mother's ancestral home in Fron, north Wales. Trained at Nottingham Art School, she earned her living as a teacher of art and it was in her spare time that she developed the writing skills for which she is best remembered. A singular figure, she never married, revelled in frugal and sometimes chaotic living, and cultivated a lifelong interest in food, travel, rural living and customs. She toured Britain between 1932 and 1936 by bicycle and car, writing her observations for the *Daily Sketch*, and gathering material that made up several book length publications including *Here's England* (1934), *The countryman's England* (1935) and *Made in England* (1939). She is perhaps best known today for the 1954 book, *Food in*

England, which has remained in print ever since and has been cited as an influence by many modern-day celebrity cooks and food writers.

The content of the *Daily Sketch* articles reproduced here very much reflects her passion for regional foods, country recipes, disappearing crafts and rural lifestyles. There are eulogies to mutton, cheeses, bread, watercress, mushrooms, butter, berries, laver (sea weed), haver (oat cake), apples, cherries, clotted cream, shrimps, eels, winkles, wedding cakes, cider and tea, amongst others things. They are often described in a poetic and whimsical manner. Cheshire cheese is 'large and red, like a harvest moon or carrots' (p. 41); Stilton is 'ancestral' and 'belongs to family portraits and gout' (p. 44); mushrooms are 'Nice, white, exciting things' (p. 107); bilberry patches consist of 'foamy long serpents riding against the land!' (p. 120); a toffee apple 'will wink its shining, varnished eye at me and waggle its little stick to diddle me – till I'll be bound to eat it in self-defence!' (p. 166). Her encounters with the landscape and with the workers and inhabitants of the countryside are similarly prosaic. She describes the tent-peg makers of Buckinghamshire beech woods as 'some of the jolliest workers in England' (p. 51) and encourages readers to seek out the coastal marram-grass workers to 'see if you can persuade some friendly old eyes to twinkle and laugh, and some skilful old hands to twist you a hollow-bodied bird, with a waving grass tail' (p. 97).

But, as this last quote shows, whilst the tone is often overtly nostalgic and wistful, Hartley's writing does also recognize the skill and complexity that underpinned rural labour, the regional differences, the hard work and the pride attached to work. There are detailed descriptions of how a field is 'spaced out' for ploughing (p. 263), of the science of sheep grazing, of the detailed and careful work that made up the turnip and potato clamp, of the technical processes involved in the successful cultivation of a hay field. Moreover although Hartley's writings are steeped in old traditions, she is also very aware of the changes taking place in rural life in the 1930s. She notes the disconnection that farm women now had from the work of the land, and although she recognizes that life for 'womankind' was easier and more pleasurable in many ways, she underlines the value of farmers' wives having an interest and understanding in the family business. She outlines a new intolerance towards minority groups such as gypsies, and the inroads that farm machinery was making in the 1930s. The juxtaposition of the old and new is most clearly made in a sketch of a Kentish charcoal burner who lived in a traditional hut dwelling but drives a car, and sits in his hut of a night listening

to the wireless. 'There now, do you see why I keep puzzling', she asks 'whether this is the 12th century or the 20th century in England now' (p. 281).

Hartley's sketches of rural Britain were written in an era when interest in documenting the nation and its people was burgeoning. It took various forms: travel writing, documentary film, social and political commentary. Whilst Hartley avoids any engagement with the social and economic problems facing the countryside in the 1930s, and is certainly not attempting to replicate the work of contemporaries such as A. G. Street, J. B. Priestley and George Orwell, her writing is part of a tradition that attempted to record a world that was irrevocably changing. Some of her themes come across as a bit esoteric today, but many sections – the variety of English cheeses, regional foodstuffs, the value of country markets, and traditional recipes – resonate still and will find favour with a new audience with the publication of this attractive volume.

NICOLA VERDON
Sheffield Hallam University

ALEC DOUET, *Breaking New Ground. Agriculture in Norfolk, 1914–72* (Coldbath Books, 2012). viii + 280pp., 25 illus. £25 + £2 p & p. from Coldbath Books, 1 White Hart Street, Aylsham, NR11 6HG.

Alec Douet's account explores the transformation of Norfolk farming from the onset of the 'Great War' up to the eve of Britain's entry into the EEC in 1973. Norfolk was widely regarded as one of the foremost farming counties in England, not only during the agricultural transformation of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but was also influential in the agricultural revolution which took place in the second half of the twentieth century. The text is based on a variety of secondary and primary sources complemented by more than fifty interviews with the county's leading agriculturalists.

Divided into three distinct sections dealing with the First World War and the inter-war depression, the impact of the Second World War up to 1947, and the post-war period up to 1972, it provides an informative critique of the changes which have taken place during this crucially important period.

The first section provides an informative insight into how the innate conservatism of farmers was one of the main reasons for the slow pace of change prior to the onset of the Second World War. Of particular merit is its perceptive evaluation of the vitally important role which sugar beet played in transforming Norfolk farming, the continued reliance on horses, as well as exploring why cow keeping as opposed to arable farming was so despised.

In contrast, the impact of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath receives less attention. A more detailed comparative analysis at this point would have revealed that Norfolk was not, as implied, at the forefront of the wartime ploughing-up campaign. The most evaluative section deals with the post-war period, when good use is made of the interviews with the county's leading agriculturalists, although the section relating to Bernard Matthews comes across as something of a eulogy.

In general, it provides a valuable and pertinent study into the stages and mechanisms that were responsible for the transformation from horse power and labour-intensive farming to capital-intensive scientific farming. It is at its best when analysing the local variations which exist within the county, and its evaluation of the mechanisms which ensured that, what was once a undercapitalized debt-ridden agricultural industry, became a business activity, focusing for the most part on a low-cost, medium-output system of production.

The account is not fully in accordance with the title of the book, which suggests that it is providing a new perspective on the agricultural transformation of Norfolk. Another reservation is its rather limited contextual analysis, in particular the way this local study fits with the transformation of agriculture that was taking place both nationally and in other regions of Britain. It also has the tendency to skirt around many of the key debates, with frequent references to quotations from various mixed sources. From an academic point of view, the main weakness is the lack of endnotes or footnotes to reference the sources cited in the text. This can be rather infuriating as some authors have multiple books and articles against their names in the bibliography, and it is not always clear to which particular source Douet is referring.

Some of the comments on the work output of particular machines are not only very optimistic but, in some instances, far-fetched, for example, his claim on p. 133 that the Massey Harris drill was capable of planting eight acres an hour. His claim on p. 224 that the four-wheel-drive Roadless 115 tractor could plough 22 acres per hour is a gross exaggeration. The contents page merits revision, not only in terms of the spelling mistake in the title of one of the chapters, but also because the titles of chapters 11 and 12 are not in accordance with those denoted here. The criticisms are relatively minor, and do not tarnish significantly the value of the text.

Taking into account that it was not written primarily written for an academic audience, it will be of considerable interest, relevance and value to those who have an interest in this region. The book contains a pertinent,

well-selected collection of photographs to illustrate the main developments. It contributes to enhancing our understanding of the more recent development of a county, which historically had played a key role in pioneering the agricultural revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

JOHN MARTIN
De Montfort University

MARGARET DERRY, *Art and science in breeding. Creating better chickens* (University of Toronto Press, 2012). viii + 281pp., 16 illus., 1 tab. \$65

The focus of *Art and science in breeding* is North American chicken production over the period c.1850–1960. The chicken in this case provides a case study for the application of science within agriculture, and the book might be situated as easily within the history of science and technology as within the history of agriculture. In this way it is aligned with emerging histories of twentieth-century agriculture, such as Abigail Woods's *Rethinking the history of modern agriculture: pig production in mid-20th century Britain* (2012) on the application of innovation within pig farming in the UK. Such an approach is innovative, but it is clear, as more histories of twentieth-century agricultural practice begin to emerge, that it will become more and more essential in order to fully understand topics peculiar to the period, like intensification. Within British agricultural history, there has been little written on the specific subject of modern poultry production, but Brian Short's essay 'The art and craft of chicken cramming' (1982), which outlined the rise and fall of the 'cramming' business on the Sussex Weald, 1850–1950, and Joanna Bourke's essay 'Women and poultry in Ireland, 1891–1914' (1987). In part, this may be due to the decline in poultry production, identified by Joan Thirsk in her *Alternative agriculture*, but specialization in the industry certainly began to take off from the inter-war period, as Andrew Godley and Bridget Williams have shown with reference to poultry meat production in their 'Democratizing luxury and the contentious "invention of the technological chicken" in Britain' (2009). And, though there were initially marked regional differences and, as Michael Winstanley has suggested, much less vertical integration in the UK compared to North America, this was nonetheless an industry which shared much in terms of innovation across international borders, and as such Derry's book makes a significant contribution to the field.

In the Introduction Derry establishes that her approach draws on the scientific literature around selection and breeding, and that the book focuses on the

development of agricultural genetics. To gain a better understanding of the application of the science, or indeed breeders' own developments, Derry also sought out practitioners and found that in many instances the only way to confirm her findings, especially for the period after 1940, was through interviews because there was little documentation available. This in and of itself is worthy of note for historians seeking to undertake work in the post-war period.

The book is then structured thematically. The first chapter establishes the historical background to chicken breeding in North America, from domestication to the mid-nineteenth century. Much of the account here focuses on Britain, in the European context, to set the scene. Here Derry also establishes the field of chicken breeding within the wider context of livestock production, something which she has published on before and knows well, and tackles the establishment of societies and the organization of breeding between 1700 and 1900. The chapter is well illustrated, as are they all, and the captions help illuminate the topic. After this, the remaining chapters focus largely on North America, and address the development of fancy breeds, the growth of agricultural genetics, breeding for eggs, the perception of breeding, the rise of the broiler industry, and finishes with an epilogue on post-1950 trends. Throughout she is interested in the tension that emerged between breeding as 'science' and breeding as 'craft'.

Throughout the modern period there appears to have been a tension, Derry argues, between the supposed aim of improvers to engage in scientific practice, and the tendency of producers to resist scientific innovation, or at least to continue to act on the basis of their own experience without reference to the scientific literature. Derry observes that the literature of the period 1900–50 is frequently opaque as to the precise relationship between science and agriculture at the time. It has therefore frequently been thought that practical breeders worldwide found the studies of academic geneticists of little or no use. By focusing on chicken breeding Derry, however, has been able to throw much greater light on the complexities of the interrelationship between the scientific literature and the livestock industry. She argues that the work of breeders in Europe during the nineteenth century, for example the establishment of breeding standards amongst fancy exhibitors in Britain, established the pattern for the structural relationship between scientific and 'craft' breeding in the later period. Despite the rhetoric and shift in interest to utility over appearance, breeding strategies also stayed the same, and chicken breeders today still use nineteenth-century craft

breeding methods. Much of their activity has simply been rebadged as scientific or as genetics. Yet, there were also changes among these continuities, and also marked differences in outlook driven by emerging and changing commercial interests, and the redefinition of traditional practices hides the actual contributions made by genetics, for example through modern data handling and analysis. Derry charts these extraordinarily obscure and muddy waters with great clarity and thereby makes an important contribution to both the field of agricultural history and to the history of science.

KAREN SAYER

Leeds Trinity University College

Europe and elsewhere

FULGENCE DELLEAUX, *Les censiers et les mutations des campagnes du Hainaut français: la formation originale d'une structure socio-économique (fin XVIIe-début XIXe siècle)* (Presses Universitaires de Namur, Namur, 2012). 230pp., 9 illus., 25 tabs. €21.

In his masterly thesis, *Les Paysans du Nord pendant la Révolution française* (1924), Georges Lefebvre depicted agrarian conditions throughout the Nord *département*, whilst also drawing a distinction between intensive cultivation around Lille, very productive rotations in other parts of Flanders, cereal production across the southern plateaux where triennial rotations were supreme, and the hilly territory of the Avesnois whose livestock rearing complemented cereals. Since then, various studies of these component areas have appeared, the latest of which is a revised version of the doctoral thesis by Fulgence Delleaux, who teaches modern history at the University of Namur. The spatial framework for this work is 'French Hainaut' that covers the eastern section of the Nord and extends from the valleys of the Scarpe and the Scheldt, through wooded areas to the valley of the Sambre, and eastwards into the hills of Avesnois. In functional terms, French Hainaut largely corresponds with the hinterland of the city of Valenciennes. The 'long eighteenth century' saw the area being wrecked by invasion and warfare, associated with the War of the League of Augsburg (1688–97) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–13). In the wake of this repeated devastation, the population of the Hainaut recovered rapidly and more than doubled from the beginning to the end of the eighteenth century. Metal working, textile production and other industries flourished, and coal mining added a new element to the local economy. Many smallholdings were created by this growing industrial workforce. The agricultural economy was also transformed, with many large properties (*censes*) being assembled from the ruins

of earlier agrarian structures. These large units were managed by tenants (*censiers*), were equipped with impressive farmhouses and associated buildings, and produced large quantities of cereals for local towns and for more distant markets that were accessible by water transport along the three north-flowing rivers. In addition, livestock was of importance on *censes* in the hills of Avesnois.

Rather than relying on official reports, Delleaux draws on detailed account books, farm records and legal documents to trace the transition of French Hainaut from wartime disruption to economic success during the greater part of the eighteenth century. Early chapters focus on material and fiscal ruin in the wake of retreating armies, and on the subsequent restructuring of land holding. Many *censiers* expressed great interest in advances in agronomy to enhance their cereal yields, introducing fodder crops into traditional triennial rotations, adopting intensive 'Flemish' methods in immediate proximity to centres of consumption, and improving livestock rearing in Avesnois. Paradoxically, local learned societies expressed little interest in promoting agricultural improvement, unlike the *censiers* who took every opportunity to raise yields, increase production, and enhance profits. Later sections reveal that toward the end of the eighteenth century, their lifestyle improved greatly, their children were well educated, and daughters of *censier* families were considered appropriate marriage partners for the sons of bourgeois households in Valenciennes and other towns of the French Hainaut. By the eve of the Revolution, the *censiers* were recognized as members of an agricultural elite whose economic success ran in parallel with social advancement. Fulgence Delleaux concludes this valuable case study with a selection of transcripts from farm accounts, statistical digests showing increased cereal yields, and a summary of archival sources consulted in Lille, Valenciennes, Paris and elsewhere. An array of black and white photographs of large farm buildings complements the beautiful picture of the Cense d'Hurtebize at Trith, taken from the Album de Croÿ, that is shown on the front cover.

HUGH CLOUT

University College London

JULIE MARFANY, *Land, proto-industry and population in Catalonia, c.1680–1829. An alternative transition to capitalism?* (Ashgate Publishing, 2012).

xv + 208 pp., 13 figs., 26 tabs. £65.

Catalonia was one of the few regions of Europe's periphery which experienced industrialization and transformation on a scale similar to the 'core' regions

during the years covered by this excellent book. Marfany uses a wide variety of archival material (especially inventories post-mortem and church registers) to examine the household economies of the inhabitants of Igualada, a town which was not only at the centre of an important wine producing region, but Catalonia's largest woollen cloth manufacturing centre by the 1760s, and the second for spinning and fourth for weaving cotton in 1820. Population increased from 1630 inhabitants in 1717, to 4925 in 1787, and 7731 by 1830. Only one chapter is concerned specifically with agriculture and, following Pierre Vilar, the author argues that important changes occurred through the extension, intensification and specialization of cultivation. The majority of farms were too small to provide families with a living, and a rural proletariat of 'considerable size' had appeared by the late eighteenth century. There was therefore a ready source of labour for proto-industry, first in the woollen and later in the cotton industries. Most households participated in two or three different activities, and very few tenants had more than one plot of vines, suggesting that it was not so much insufficient land that encouraged households to turn to part-time work in proto-industry, but rather the nature of viticulture, an occupation which carried significant risks given the highly volatile nature of harvests.

The author argues that the family unit was central to these 'great transformations'. In Catalonia the use of impartible inheritance and extended families has traditionally been considered as one of the region's strengths relative to other areas of Spain. Inheritance allowed property to be passed down undivided through generations, encouraging younger sons to take their portions and seek their fortunes elsewhere. In Igualada, by contrast, growing local employment opportunities appear to have limited migration, and allowed virtually all to marry, and at a very young age, although households worked increasingly long hours. However, unlike the model of industrious behaviour described by de Vries for north-western Europe, production failed to become more specialized and, with the exception of the elite, the local population did not increase or change substantially their consumption habits. As Allen and Weisdorf have argued for British farm workers at this time, longer work hours in Igualada appear to have been necessary for survival, rather than to increase consumer opportunities.

As with most centres of proto-industry, an important quantity of production was destined to be sold outside of the region, rather than locally. However the results here raise an important question because, if consumption habits were slow to change in a dynamic centre such as Igualada, were Spain's colonial and urban elites

sufficiently large to have absorbed the rapidly growing textile production?

Looking outside the immediate region of Igualada might have helped to reinforce or challenge some of the conclusions presented here. In the first instance Barcelona, which was just 60 kilometres from the town, is hardly mentioned although it must have had an important influence both directly and indirectly on living standards. The use of long-run price changes for crops such as wine or wheat, as well as real wages, would also have helped to understand better some of the shifts in living standards and income distribution. That said this is a thought-provoking book that expertly merges archival skills with knowledge of the debates on the early stages of industrialization. The book is also beautifully produced, and short enough not to deter the non-specialist reader. Author and publisher are to be congratulated.

JAMES SIMPSON

Universidad Carlos III de Madrid

MARKUS CERMAN, *Villagers and lords in Eastern Europe, 1300–1800* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2012). xvii + 155. 18 tabs, 1 map. £16.50.

The historiography of lord-peasant relations in east-central Europe has been transformed over the past 30 years to reveal societies much more dynamic, complex, and contested than hitherto expected. This has partly been because of the emergence of new approaches, notably that of the Potsdam group in Germany, and many more micro-historical studies of communities and regions, a development that also embraces Denmark and especially southern Sweden. It also reflects the wider availability and better sharing of information and ideas since the region's post-1989 political transformation. Historians of western Europe have not always kept up with these developments, frequently relying, insofar as they seriously consider eastern Europe at all, on a very small amount of Anglo- or Francophone (although not necessarily written by British or French historians) literature that was integrated into wider models of European development in the 1970s as part of a model of the 'second serfdom'. The idea of the 'second serfdom' itself dates back to late nineteenth-century German historiography and the institutional preoccupations of the time, but has been falling out of favour among German historians for some time.

Markus Cerman's slim book squarely takes on the idea of a second serfdom. Indeed, he also takes on the notion of 'serf' as a broadly useful category of analysis, pointing out that the real burdens and limitations associated with that status, if it was applied at all, often retained more freedom for manoeuvre

than traditionally acknowledged. Cerman argues that different versions of 'subjecthood' were far more common, and serfdom should be held distinct from this, narrowing the definition of the latter down to a degree that would, indeed, exclude a large number of any of the people, in east to west, to whom it has ever been applied. Indeed, what Cerman also demonstrates clearly that that contemporary definitions of status, in a variety of languages, were rather fluid and of uncertain legal standing themselves. Thus he writes, 'Under no circumstances and for no territory, therefore, can we speak of the whole of the early modern period as an age of a second serfdom'.

As a more realistic alternative to serfdom, Cerman offers a model of 'demesne lordship' a translation of the more usual German term for East Elbian society, *Gutsherrschaft*. This denoted a variably restricted status, linked to the tenure of often substantial farms clustered around the demesne that provided either labour or cash rents to the lordly estate. Cerman also points out the widespread existence of rather secure property rights. This link to tenure, whilst certainly significant in many cases, can also be confusing, because many peasants were in fact subject to the lord's court by dint of residency, not tenure. A crucial aspect of the rise of central states, and associated room for peasants' action, was the emergence of more centralized legal systems that were to some degree autonomous of the power of local lords. The fact that in many parts of eastern (and not just eastern) Europe nearly all jurisdictional power, as well as landlordship, might remain almost entirely vested in one person and sometimes a single curia seems rather significant to this reviewer (unlike the situation in England for example where one might be subject as a tenant to the manorial court of a Crown manor but could use the royal courts for other cases). Thus it is a shame that only one page is devoted to 'courts and the legal system'; and one sentence to the fact that in post-1518 Poland, for example, villagers on noble estates could not appeal to royal courts. Demesne lordship was frequently not limited to tenurial concerns, although with regional variation, and this aspect of what it was like to live under it perhaps deserves more space.

Cerman's primary interest is in the direct economic consequences of lord-peasant relations, and thus the second part of the book is devoted to the rise and characteristics of the demesne economy and demesne lordship. The stress here is on regional variety and the lack of a characteristic 'east Elbian' trajectory. Cerman examines, and succinctly skewers, a range of explanations that have been provided for the expansion of demesne farming and labour rents in parts of the east: whether allegedly as a result of export-driven

commercialization, the aftermath of the Thirty Years War, or the alleged weakness of the central state. If anything, his arguments point to continuities from late medieval developments. The book then offers a short but wide-ranging survey of data on farming, yields, incomes, and social structure. While brief this demonstrates clearly the complex mosaic of experience in east Elbia, and provides a rich source for further investigation – albeit at risk of being one thing after another.

Cerman's final hypothesis is that historians' default position in assessing the rural economy of Europe should be to assume similarity, then teasing out local or regional variation from micro-studies, rather than launching into research using *a priori* categories. He is rather more a Bacon than an Aristotle. A problem is that this eminently reasonable argument is hemmed in by the structure of the book. It is entirely about East Elbian Europe, and offers very little comparison with anywhere else (even West Elbian Germany). Given that, it cannot develop very far new analytical categories by which to transcend the old; and when all is said and done, the book can explain little about the fact, clearly set out in its own data, that large parts of eastern Europe developed demesne economies, using labour rents and degrees of un-freedom, quite unlike anything found in most of the post-medieval west. Equally, because the book is devoted to undoing the hypothesis of the second serfdom, its effectiveness as a guide to Eastern Europe peasant society is somewhat diluted. It sets out to be a refutation, not an introduction, and 'demesne' farming and lordship for example are used without explanation for many pages. Nevertheless the breadth of scholarship in a wide range of languages is hugely impressive, and the quality of argument to be commended. Cerman teases out convincingly the complexity of the relationships examined (such that, for example, in some circumstances it was the peasants who preferred and demanded labour rather than cash rents). This book remains a must-have for anyone interested in the rural economy of medieval and early modern Europe.

PAUL WARDE
University of East Anglia

SOKRATIS D. PETMEZAS, *Economic history of Greek agriculture in the 'long interwar period'* (Alexandria Publications, 2012). 390 pp., 86 tabs., 29 figs., 5 maps. €26 (available from Alexandria Publications, www.alexandria-publ.gr).

Since the early twentieth century, perhaps even earlier, a category of specialist intellectuals (agriculturists, economists, sociologists *et al.*) formed in Greece, who

systematically fostered and promoted the history of Greek economic thought, particularly during the inter-war period, laying special emphasis on the history and evolution of the agricultural sector and rural world. After all, the agricultural sector occupied the greatest part of productive activities and employed more than 60 per cent of the economically active population of the country almost until the beginning of the 1960s.

Socratis Petmezas' work can be placed among this remarkable tradition, which he continues and broadens with his books and various publications. His new book comprises a concise panorama, one could say, of the Greek rural economy from the early twentieth century to the 1970s and is, as always, scientifically interesting and bibliographically exhaustive. Petmezas admits from the very beginning that one of his intentions was to expand both thematically and chronologically the 20-year interwar period, which forms the main thematic axis of the book, in order to include changes and processes which preceded and followed it. His ulterior purpose was to offer a holistic view, a total narration and interpretation of the evolution of the Greek rural economy and society at least from the beginnings of the twentieth century to the first post-war decades.

Consequently, his treatise expands to various fields and levels (economic, demographic, social, and institutional). The guiding force in this extended periodization has been the use of available statistical data and the thorough processing of various quantitative data. The book consists of six parts, while the data included in the almost exhaustive charts and tens of figures are extremely informative and rich. Hence, one of the greatest virtues of the book is the quantification and visualization of narrative based on dozens of charts, maps and diagrams which demonstrate systematic research and the indexing of many sources. A significant part of these sources derives from the official data of the Greek statistical service, as well as from articles and studies published in several Greek agricultural or agronomical journals from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s. Much of this primary evidence, which has remained (and to a great extent still remains) unexploited, requires further elaboration and refining in order to become usable and to contribute to the extraction of safer conclusions.

Therefore, the factual evidence it offers is extremely rich and original and it is accompanied by equally apposite comments and interpretive implications. However, some of them are somewhat precocious and/or untenable, which is logical as well as predictable in such an extensive treatise both in terms of space and time. Moreover, such slips are due to the lack

of organized records and, consequently, of relevant monographs. This is because the field of rural history has not yet formed into an autonomous scientific discipline in Greece, despite the predominantly agricultural character of the country, and the growth of agrarian studies since the 1960s.

In brief, one could say that the book is an interesting review of the history of rural economy from the era of economic liberalism and extroversion of the early twentieth century to the inter-war period, which is characterized by intense state interventionism and the preference for self-sufficiency, as in most European countries. From there the book turns to the structural changes of the first post-war decades which led to the change of the production model and the elimination of the agricultural character of rural areas. The basic viewpoint of the writer and the conclusion of the essay is that the Greek inter-war period, as regards the rural society and economy, is institutionally and historically integrated in the post-war years, while the interwar agrarian reform was a missed opportunity, despite individual changes and progress. As he mentions, only during the post-war period, specifically within the brief period of one generation (c.1955–85), did the Greek rural areas assimilate the experience of two agrarian revolutions and the passage to the modern, completely capitalist agriculture.

In short, the book undoubtedly possesses significant qualities. Having dealt with an extremely extended and critical period of Greek rural (and not only rural) history, in a unique way it highlights the attempt to modernize this sector during the inter-war period, as well as the attempts to remove impasses bequeathed to the post-war period by the inter-war period. Furthermore, an equally important contribution of the book is the fact that from its pages a Greece of toil and labour, capable of surviving wars, crises and catastrophes, arises.

DIMITRIS PANAGIOTOPOULOS
Agricultural University of Athens

MARCUS POPFLOW (ed.), *Landschaften agrarisch-ökonomischen Wissens. Strategien innovativer Ressourcenutzung in Zeitschriften und Sozietäten des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Waxmann, Münster, 2010), 392 pp. €34.90.

This edited volume, 'Landscapes of agricultural knowledge: strategies of innovative resource use in journals and societies of the eighteenth century' takes up a theme fairly prominent of late in Germanophone scholarship, and the history of science: how does knowledge spread? Despite the importance of innovation and the 'knowledge economy' in current

studies of economic growth, for a number of years many historians of pre-twentieth-century economies and agriculture have focused on the collection of quantitative data regarding output, prices, tenure, and so forth. Change is identified by shifts in the data and then explained by arguing, sometimes in a rather circular fashion, that the constellation of prices and tenurial structures must have provided the right conditions for innovation to take place. This is important work, and often the best we can do: but frequently the means of achieving change are not considered.

Of course, it is hard to get at where ideas come from, and there is an equivalent danger in putting too much weight on texts read by a small minority of farmers whose real impact is hard to gauge. This collection attempts to approach the problem through the study of institutions set up to promote communication about agricultural innovation, the tools they used, who joined them, and what they promoted. In practice, one still remains distant from evidence of actual application even on the great estates of Europe, never mind more modest holdings. Of course, members of enlightened agricultural societies were only too aware of the limitations of their reach: 'to really put our suggestions into practice, does not stand within our power', as the 'Bernier Society' commented in a preface to one of its publications in 1764. Editor Marcus Popplow sidesteps this conundrum by arguing the histories gathered here show an important set of contributions to the development and popularization of a long-term movement towards improvement and the 'scientification' of agriculture. As a causal argument this remains as vague as an inference from price series, but nevertheless it is an important area for study, and a very welcome contribution.

The book consists of 14 chapters, the weight of which are case studies in Germany and Switzerland, but supplemented by chapters on Scotland, Bohemia, Russia, and Sweden. These cases, and their commonalities, help us see developments in each region as part of a much broader European movement during the Enlightenment, especially from the 1750s, with extensive exchange of texts and journals across political and linguistic borders. Indeed, it is a shame there are no contributions on England and France, as historians of those countries erroneously have a tendency to view their own histories in isolation (even from Scotland).

The journals and societies of the 'economic enlightenment', it is argued here, represent a 'specific culture of innovation' that saw knowledge flowing from organized exchanges of best practice among the educated, who in turn would draw farmers into their aspirations for self-improvement (ideally with subsidy from government to facilitate publication, meetings, and experiment). It was a national duty to exploit resources to the maximum. This was not only a matter of best practice with plough, beast (combating animal disease was a particular concern), sylviculture or seed, but also a matter of information: facilitating early efforts at data collection. One such example is in meteorology as described by Cornelia Lüdecke, aiming to put weather science on a firmer empirical basis with the explicit aim of providing forecasts to farmers. Martin Stuber deals more directly with the varied literature and devices used to 'popularize' agronomic recommendations and encourage a culture of debate and experiment, without being able to directly measure reception. For the most part, the studies focus on the membership and interests of society members and contributors to journals: a relatively small circle of pastors, gentleman enthusiasts, and academics. They were, however, by no means marginal to political currents of the time, and in Germany included many of the leading figures in political and economic thought such as Wolff, Zincke, and Dithmar; translation and dissemination of foreign works was also widespread. Much of success in gaining an audience for later champions of innovation such as Albrecht Thaer, seen retrospectively and partly through his own efforts as father of a revolution in German agronomy, can only be seen in the light of the very thorough preparation of the soil in the eighteenth century. England's famous *Annals of Agriculture* appear too as a latecomer to this scene.

That said, rather like the institutions, this volume lacks a strong editorial hand throughout, and largely remains a series of isolated, if complementary case studies. The chapters are rather uneven in length and conception, some clearly produced early in a research career, while others are barely digested books. Yet there are rich pickings and this is a valuable contribution to pulling together the intellectual and agricultural history of eighteenth-century Europe.

PAUL WARDE
University of East Anglia