

Book Reviews

DEBBY BANHAM and ROSAMOND FAITH,
Anglo-Saxon farms and farming (OUP, 2014). xii +
336pp., 64 illus. £65.

Debby Banham and Rosamond Faith's long-awaited book on Anglo-Saxon farming fills – as the authors point out – a crucial gap in the economic and social history of the period, for which there has until now been no textbook, despite the central role of agricultural production in that period. Their volume covers the practicalities and technological development of arable cultivation and pastoral husbandry, and the practical implications for farming of landscapes with widely varying combinations of topography, drainage and soils. The authors are satisfyingly eclectic in the plurality of their sources. Documentary evidence of laws, charters and (eventually) farming handbooks and calendars tends to become available only from about the middle of their period and it is even then often sparse and ambiguous. It has properly been augmented with archaeological evidence from pollen, seeds and bones, artefacts and earthworks, as well as with the evidence of place-names and the practical experience of farmers, both modern and historical.

The book is made up of two interrelated, independently authored sections. In the four chapters of Part I Debby Banham undertakes an authoritative and wide-ranging review across the Anglo-Saxon period of evidence for older and new species of crops; the tools and techniques for their production; different species of livestock, poultry and bees; and of animal products and methods for their production. Part II, by Rosamond Faith, is largely devoted to exploring the demands made on early medieval farmers in attempting the exploitation of different environmental and ecological contexts by focusing, in individual chapters, on coasts, woodland, downland, moorland and wolds. It ends with an overview of the implications of agricultural change for writing the social and economic history of the period.

Of the two parts, the second is, perhaps, the less complete. The focus on landscape variation offers an important perspective. Yet that vision is largely one of environmental determinism, which needs a

more critical approach given current debates about the relative influences of environment, lordship and community on landscape change and the emergence of *pays*. The landscape-specific chapters in Part II might also be set within an overarching vision of chronological development in agricultural organization and its social implications across the period, despite the difficulties of regional variability in both the pace and the direction of agricultural change. That vision is hinted at in the brief concluding chapter which, for example, includes the suggestion that collective organization in the form of the *tunscape* (township or vill) emerged in the later Anglo-Saxon period because, the authors argue, collective organization and the moral economy gained social significance. This is one of the most innovative arguments in the book and needs much more than the two paragraphs allotted to it (pp. 296–7). There needs to be more detail supporting the ascription of such change to the tenth and eleventh centuries, and more explanation. Was this because resources were now under more pressure? Or was it a response to increasing social and/or economic complexity?

Banham and Faith accept the shift to a more pastoral economy in the fifth and sixth centuries – a process they call 'abatement' – and the intensification of agricultural production in the middle Anglo-Saxon period with the introduction of new cereal crops, the extension of arable cultivation and specialist centres for the production of livestock. They accept that early Anglo-Saxon changes in agricultural focus were likely to have had little impact on landscape layout since grazing by growing herds of cattle and sheep inhibited widespread woodland regeneration on fields no longer being ploughed. It is an acknowledged puzzle that the innovations in agricultural production of the middle Anglo-Saxon period do not appear to have had very much impact on landscape layout. Instead, Faith argues that the two most significant changes to layout seem to have been later Anglo-Saxon: the introduction of small-scale strip fields, communally worked by small groups of farmers; and the emergence of dispersed farmsteads in single ownership whose land was enclosed

within a substantial curvilinear boundary, and located near large areas of open grazing; for example, *wereds* on the salt marshes of the Thames estuary and *worthys* on Dartmoor, Exmoor and Bodmin uplands.

This is an exceptional volume which will retain its freshness for many years. It seems likely, too, that it will in years to come be seen as a marker stimulating entirely new directions for research on economy and society in Anglo-Saxon England.

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MARGARET MURPHY and MATTHEW STOUT (eds), *Agriculture and settlement in Ireland* (Four Courts Press, 2015). 256 pp., 69 illus. £45.

Agriculture and rural settlement has been a particularly active area of research in Ireland in the last decade or so. Before this our interpretation had not advanced far beyond the picture established by Otway-Ruthven in the 1950s and 1960s. The current wave of studies has been driven by four factors. The first has been the archaeological excavations associated with development in Ireland during the years of the 'Celtic Tiger'. These were not confined to the towns, but covered almost all parts of the island. The second important step was the government-funded Discovery Programme, which included a study of rural settlement in the later Middle Ages. Though not all the results of this are yet available, the work on the Dublin area co-authored by one of the editors of the present volume, Margaret Murphy, has been particularly significant in casting light on that most commercialized region with its strong emphasis on arable cultivation. Third, has been the emergence of a particularly active cohort of postgraduate research students, mostly historians, but also archaeologists. They have undertaken much of the fundamental work which was necessary to clarify the character of the Irish countryside. The final factor has been the re-vitalization of the work of the Group for the Study of Irish Historical Settlement, which has enabled an exchange of ideas through conferences and a series of volumes, of which this is the latest.

The most coherent papers in this volume are those covering the rural economy of the late medieval period. In the first of these Geraldine Stout examines the Cistercian grange in Ireland. The documentary record for grange farms, particularly those outside the area of Anglo-Irish control, is much more limited than that for England, but she is able to draw upon post-Dissolution records, topographical evidence and some archaeological fieldwork to identify the area of lands held by Cistercians and establish the character of grange farmsteads. These seem to have been comparable to

those in contemporary England and Wales, though they were often secured by substantial gatehouses or even towerhouses to provide the security necessary in a comparatively lawless country. The theme of demesne farmsteads is developed in the study of manorial centres by Margaret Murphy. In a systematic survey of the late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century evidence, she draws together the evidence from accounts and extents. Inevitably, this study is limited to the area under Anglo-Irish control. Comparison of those areas with other maps in this volume shows that her manors were located in the agriculturally richest and most commercialized parts of Ireland. Building on her earlier work on the Dublin area, Murphy has now provided a comprehensive account of the agriculture in the colony at its peak, yet even in this period there were problems with the burning of granges and theft of grain by 'Irish felons'. Banks and ditches around the farmsteads and even moats were for rather more than symbolic purposes.

The third of the late medieval studies by Katherine Simms picks up a subject which she first tackled in 1986, the 'creaght'. In the earlier work she showed that this term referred to a herd of cattle which grazed on others' lands, either because the herders lacked land themselves or as an aggressive act of depasturing. Creaghts are referred to in the increasingly unsettled period of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and Simms links these to the growing demand for meat throughout Europe and to the continuing struggles between Irish lords which could leave a chief and his followers without lands and forced to wander the waste. Yet, in a period of rising livestock prices and shortage of labour, the rental of poor land to creaghts could prove to be an effective means of exploiting otherwise unused lands. A system of payment developed in the sixteenth century under the O'Neills in which pastoral lands in Ulster were rented to herds under a leader of the creaght.

Like many volumes that originate in conferences, this book is something of a mixed bag, both in the quality of contributions and the subject matter. The seven papers are book-ended by an introduction and concluding chapter which seem to have been aimed at readers with a limited understanding of Irish rural history. Other papers, particularly the well-considered and very informative study by Katherine Simms, assume some knowledge of the earlier literature. The scope of the papers range from the very useful summary of Irish agriculture in the seventeenth-century by Raymond Gillespie to a study of the single estate at Collon, County Louth, in the later eighteenth century by Matthew Stout and his six co-authors. It is not clear with this range of

contributions whether there was a particular audience for whom this book was intended – the general reader, the committed medievalist or even the local historian. However, many readers will find something of interest and value amongst the papers here.

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JONATHAN HEALEY, *The first century of welfare. Poverty and poor relief in Lancashire, 1620–1730* (Boydell and Brewer, 2014). xvi + 319 pp., 31 figs, 10 tabs. £17.99 p/b

The Old Poor Law was relatively slow to be adopted in the North West of England, and, despite snippets of disparate evidence, the evolution of welfare is poorly documented in this region. As a consequence, our understanding of the extent of poverty and the nature of the welfare regime in this stereotypically poor region has hitherto been grossly inadequate. Healey's own previous work forms the bedrock of existing knowledge along with notable contributions from others, but this pioneering book sets a new standard against which future regional studies will undoubtedly be measured.

Healey's evidential base circumvents the near total absence of parochial Poor Law records for this period by making full use of a rich vein of evidence, the analysis of which is long overdue. Between 1626 and 1710 Lancashire Quarter Sessions received around 3000 first petitions for poor relief. Although these petitions only represent a very small proportion of all those who received relief – and an even smaller proportion of those who applied for relief – they are undoubtedly representative of the experience of the poor. As Healey is at pains to point out, the biographical information that these petitions contain provides unique evidence about the causes of poverty and, even allowing for exaggeration, omission and distortion in the claims of the petitioners, provide insights into the 'cultural conception of deservingness which petitioners believed was held by magistrates' (p. 107). One sub-theme of Healey's work, therefore, is power, authority and the negotiation between pauper, parochial officers and magistrate. Indeed, the analysis presented of the conflict between townships and parishes is highly instructive, and shares some characteristics with subsequent disputes that occurred in Poor Law Unions in this region after 1837.

The evidence provides remarkable insights into the lives of the marginal poor, as well as those suffering due to broader economic circumstances. Some petitioners were undoubtedly marginal families who spent extended periods at risk of destitution. Others, however, were less marginal and some had been relatively prosperous, but

a series or coincidence of events had seen them descend into poverty. Such detail is not revealed by overseers' accounts and it is clear that the true value of the pauper petitions lies in the 'startlingly evocative *qualitative* picture they present of the lives of the poor' (p. 109).

The book is divided into three sections. Section 1 sets the scene with a summary of Lancashire's economic development in the period, a highly readable retelling of the arrival and development of poor relief in the North West, and a detailed discussion of the major sources utilized. Although this section is essential to the book, it does lead to one of my major criticisms. Despite Healey's account of the diverse economy, landscape and demography of the North West, this does not explicitly underpin his analysis of the Poor Law petitions in a significant way. Of course, Healey's introduction is broad-brush background context and not intended as an analytical framework at the sub-regional level, but local variations in the economic, demographic, religious, administrative and political culture might be expected to form part of the analysis in what was a turbulent period in this complex region. Healey's previous publications show that he understands well the northern part of the region, and the nature of its economy, topography and society. However, for elsewhere in the county he too frequently relies on stereotypes and generalizations. Lancashire is described as a 'harsh landscape' with 'one of the wettest climates' amongst English counties (p. 34). Such a description fails to do justice to the extremely fertile Lancashire plain with its low rainfall and deep soils, which was undergoing significant improvements during Healey's period. His four pages on Lancashire agriculture need not detain readers of the *Review*. Healey's assertion that there is evidence of backwardness here until 'long into the eighteenth century', citing Holt's 1795 observation of the relative absence of turnips as evidence to support that claim, suggests a misreading of the nature of Lancashire's dynamic, adaptable and highly productive rural economy.

Section 2 looks at the marginal poor and their survival strategies while Section 3 focuses on endemic poverty and crisis poverty. This discussion forms the bulk of the work, and it is here that the authority of Healey's work is most evident. Indeed, the biographical detail presented here, despite its slightly anecdotal nature, reveals the complex and diverse lives of the Lancashire poor, illustrating their resourcefulness and helplessness in equal measure. But the interventions of the Poor Law – very new at the start of the period and firmly established by the end – provided welfare for those experiencing the most common and persistent causes of descending into poverty: old age, sickness

and nuclear household failure. Yet the Poor Law also acted as a broader safety net enabling individuals, families and communities to cope with the impact of trade depression, harvest failures and epidemics. It is rare for a pioneering book to become the definitive account, but if the definitive book on Lancashire's *First century of welfare* remains to be written, then this is a very worthy pioneer study that deserves a wide audience.

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CHRIS BRIGGS, P. M. KITSON and S. J. THOMPSON (eds), *Population, welfare and economic change in Britain, 1290–1834* (People, Markets, Goods: Economies and Societies in History, 5, Woodbridge, 2014). xvi+346pp., £25.

This splendid collection originated in a conference to celebrate the career of Professor Richard Smith, and it highlights some fascinating and important recent research broadly within his own diverse interests. The focus is on demographic history and the history of poverty and poor relief. English history is at the fore, but the wider perspective is never far away.

Much of the collection is given to high-quality empirical studies, but there is also room for a number of wider-ranging, discursive chapters. Wrigley, for example, revisits John Hajnal's classic article on the north-west European marriage pattern and thinks about some of its demographic and economic implications. Late marriage, he suggests, must have increased the contribution of women to the market economy, given how marriage tended to bring partial withdrawal from wage earning. This not only meant women enjoyed a stronger economic position in north-west Europe, but it also created greater potential for wealth-generation overall. The strength of the preventative check, meanwhile, meant that the region managed to maintain an equilibrium of population at a higher level of real wages than other regimes, especially once the late-sixteenth-century peak had passed. Both factors helped north-west Europe develop unusual levels of wealth and consumerism: marriage patterns aided development. Nonetheless, as Wrigley emphasizes, the availability of land remained as a brake on economic growth: it was only when England in particular began to harness the banks of energy contained in coal that the economy achieved take-off. Similarly wide-ranging in scope, Dennison offers some very interesting thoughts on the similarities and differences between Medieval English serfdom and that found in nineteenth-century Russia. She suggests that one of the most important contrasts lay in the nature of

community: in Russia, the commune was a collective and formally corporate institution; in England, peasants were part of overlapping communities, including the manor and the parish, and had tenurial and customary rights that were not collectivized. This meant that the power of the village elites to regulate the behaviour of their neighbours was much greater in Russia. Another difference was the existence of manorial courts in medieval England, providing cheap and accessible dispute resolution – even to women and the relatively poor – on an individual basis. English medieval communities, meanwhile, were in close contact with the state, through their engagement with royal law, again in sharp contrast to Russia, where public law had little or no influence on serf estates. Also taking a broad view, Ogilvie tackles the balance of 'choice' and 'constraint' amongst pre-modern peasants. She points out that recent scholarship has found – from eighth-century Italy right through to nineteenth-century Russia – even the most marginalized peasants making choices. But at the same time she cautions strongly against ignoring institutions: rules, even if lightly enforced, made an important difference to the choices made by peasants.

These excellent and thought-provoking chapters all provide useful opportunities for reflection, but it is the closer, empirical case studies which really stand out. Oakes, for example, looks at the demography of scholars at Winchester College, finding that those who came from urban areas were less likely to die while at the school, presumably because they were used to the disease environment they would encounter in the confines of the town. Once scholars were followed through to New College, Oxford, however, there were no significant differences in life chances based on origin. Campbell and Barry's important chapter compiles population data for England, Wales, and Scotland for c.1290 and uses GIS to map the distribution of population at the time. As is to be expected, there was great variety, from 60+ people per square kilometre in parts of East Anglia to less than 5 in the most remote parts of the Scottish Highlands. Generally speaking the greatest densities were found in the fertile band through the middle of England roughly running from Portland Bill to the Wash. This 'rural congestion' had dramatically lifted by the time of the 1801 census, at which point the pastoral regions of the north and west and achieved considerably greater densities. Between the two dates, then, population had evolved to fit the resource geography of Britain better.

A series of articles deals with poverty and its relief. Marfany offers a useful corrective to any assumption that there was little or no formal poor relief in early

modern southern Europe. She shows the diversity and complexity of provision in Catalonia which is only just being recovered by historians. Boulton looks at the relationship between indoor and outdoor paupers in eighteenth-century St-Martin-in-the-Fields, highlighting the need to be sensitive to the existence of paupers both in and out of the workhouse. He finds that, despite the parish enthusiastically endorsing the 'Workhouse Test' in 1725, the proportion of indoor paupers fluctuated and many were still relieved regularly outdoors. Williams, meanwhile, shows that in the Bedfordshire parishes of Campton and Shefford there was a sustained commitment to the support of the elderly in the 'crisis' years of the old poor law. There were, however, an increasing number of elderly couples on relief after 1815, as employment conditions in the countryside worsened and employers appear to have prioritized young male labourers over old.

In a particularly important contribution, Thompson then looks at the relationship between population growth and the foundation of corporations for the poor in the long eighteenth century. He has identified a total of 141 general and 299 local acts of parliament relating to the poor, mostly dating to 1760 onwards. In London, these seem to have followed suburban expansion, whilst in Suffolk corporations for the poor tended to be created in areas experiencing high or growing population. This suggests, to put it bluntly, that Malthus was wrong when he argued that poor relief encouraged population growth – if anything the relationship went the other way. Finally, Goose and Yates describe the seventeenth and eighteenth-century history of the Raymond almshouses in Berkshire. This was a county that was well-endowed with institutional charities, with its connections to London suggested as a plausible reason for this. As the chapter points out, the Raymond houses demonstrate the strength of the charitable impulse and the flexibility of voluntary provision within a mixed economy of welfare.

The collection is then rounded off by an article by Hoyle, which takes 'English individualism' as its cue. Hoyle points out that early modern businesses were almost always legally vested in a single person, thus the concern was technically wound up when they died, and though they might try to ensure the survival of a dynasty, demographic circumstances usually made this difficult. As marriage ages lowered, and lives lengthened in the eighteenth century, the true family firm might have enjoyed greater chances, but until then the death of a major employer could spell disaster for local employment.

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BRIAN SHORT, *The battle of the fields: rural community and authority in Britain during the Second World War* (Boydell and Brewer, 2014). xii + 468 pp., 49 illus. £75.

The Battle of the Fields provides a wide-ranging, impressive critique of the role played by the state in transforming the agricultural sector during the crucially important and formative period of the Second World War. The central strand linking the chapters together is the actions of the County War Agricultural Executives Committees, which were responsible for implementing national directives at the local level. The book provides an informative critique of the origins and rationale for state involvement, as well as the Committee structure and how this reflected the hierarchical and class-ridden nature of rural society. It explores how these power relationships operated in practice, with regard to the system of dispossession. This is graphically illustrated in respect of the tragic case of Ray Walden, a small dairy farmer in Hampshire, who lost his life in the process. In addition it explores the social effects, differentiating between memory and fiction, including the inherent contradictions of the countryside at war. His investigation reveals how class consciousness and gender discrimination remained a recurring feature of the period.

The text provides a well-balanced evaluation of the Herculean challenges facing the state in transforming what was a tepid agricultural economy into a fully functioning productive sector. Even if these changes did not quite happen overnight, it is important to bear in mind that they took place in an incredibly short period of time when judged by previous periods of agrarian transformation. Short's grasp of the significance and complexity of the key issues is unrivalled.

The author should be congratulated for his meticulous and comprehensive investigation of such a wide range of secondary and primary sources. The illustrations are particularly impressive and the dates and lists of the membership of the committees are unparalleled. Unlike most other accounts, the author provides a thorough and painstaking investigation into regional variations of the impact of wartime control, which encompasses not only fenland and coastal marshes but also a chapter on the impact of wartime control on Scotland and Northern Ireland.

There are, as with all books, a number of points that any reviewer might take issue with. These include the rather superficial treatment of the extent to which agricultural output and productivity increased during the Second World War. A sharper, more evaluative assessment could have been undertaken in respect of the extent to which the Committees' achievements

were primarily the result of their ability to bring about a structural realignment, with the switch from pastoral to arable farming. Criticism might also include the occasional dependence on rather excessively long quotations to advance the arguments. Other very minor points include the claims about the doubling of barley yields (p. 307) during the course of the war, and the citation of my own book, *The Development of Modern Agriculture*, as being printed by Manchester University Press in 1999, whereas it was Macmillan Palgrave in 2000. Such criticisms, however, are incredibly minor and do little, if anything, to distract from the quality of the analysis. The most important relevant criticism is the cost of the book, which is only available as a hardback for £75 and this will invariably limit its market.

This well-researched book will be essential reading not only for academics from a wide range of disciplines, but also appeal to those with an interest in the countryside. Short's efforts in producing a book of this level of analysis, supported by meticulous detail, deserve unstinting commendation and praise. If this was a farm being scrutinized by a member of the War Ag, as Short himself did in BBC's *Wartime Farm* series, it would certainly merit an outstanding 'A' grade.

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TOM WILLIAMSON, *An environmental history of wildlife in England, 1650–1950* (Bloomsbury, 2013). 281 pp., 30 figs. £19.99.

In *An environmental history of wildlife in England, 1650–1950*, Tom Williamson address a subject that emerged in the 1970s and was raised in the *Agricultural History Review* at least as long ago as 1984, when Adrian H. Cowell's article, 'An Approach to the Agrarian History of Upland Country: Ecology and Habitat', posited the idea that historians of agriculture might make up for a lack of documentary evidence by using the evidence of vegetation instead to demonstrate changes in habitat and environment. As Cowell suggested 35 years ago, the plants alone, grazed by sheep, for example, and thwarted in the normal succession that would take place as each species seeks to out-compete its neighbours, provide ample testimony of the complex of interwoven cultural, biological, economic and environmental factors that go to make up what we consider to be agrarian history. Since Cowell wrote his article, which drew on the work of ecological historians and historians of ecology, environmental history has both changed and become more widespread; by 2006, for example, we see a paper by Kristin Asdal discussing its use and interpretation of 'nature' in *History and Theory*. Points in between

these two quite methodological papers include detailed analyses of specific case studies focused on individual locations or species through to the story of world-wide impacts of natural disasters. That is to say, environmental history is now an established discipline. This is worth stating, as in his book Tom Williamson seeks to make a point, which, as Asdal observed in her 2006 paper, is both new and fundamental to the field as it progresses: that is, that environmental historian need to consider very carefully what is thought or perceived to be 'natural'. By traversing 300 years, Williamson makes it very clear that environments often referred to as 'natural' – that is, innocent of human intervention – are far from it. This might seem quite evident to historians of agriculture, who are more aware than most that the land has been used to produce raw resources, food and fuel for centuries, but Williamson seeks to make this clear through sharp and systematic summaries of the position of wildlife in relation to each productive landscape through time, and therefore brings it nicely into sharp relief.

There are ten chapters, of which the first sets the scene and the last offers some concluding remarks. The book proceeds broadly chronologically, with the chapters centred on themes appropriate to the period: 'Seventeenth-century environments: woodland and waste', 'Seventeenth-century environments: farmland', 'The social contexts of wildlife, c.1650–1750', 'The industrial revolution', 'The revolution in agriculture', 'New roles for nature', 'Wildlife in depression, c.1870–1940', 'New urban environments, c.1860–1950'. In each instance the environment includes the farm, but also wasteland and common, town and (eventually) city, and the position and use of 'intermediate' wildlife such as game, as well as the effects on plants and animals of agriculture and husbandry. His interest is in the uses of wildlife for amenity as well as the effects of industry or farming, and he constantly seeks to give the reader pause. Thus, for example, he addresses the nineteenth-century enthusiasm for nature study, which did not necessarily benefit the nature studied given the Victorians' equal enthusiasm for collecting it, and he demonstrates that agricultural depression had a catastrophic effect on many wild species which were no longer able to benefit from the maintenance of land as it fell out of production.

Williamson argues overall that the story here is not a simple, linear one of the steady erasure of wildlife. Instead some forms of agricultural and other types of production increased the diversity of wildlife, both numerically in terms of species but also by sustaining diverse communities of organisms locally. He makes the point that even the highest tallies within the killing

sprees directed at pests and vermin and catalogued by parish officials, leaving a horrific tale for Roger Lovegrove to tell in *Silent Fields* (2007), did not result in the erasure or even significant diminution of those species that were subject to control. The development of towns and cities offered some species new habitats and environments ripe for exploitation and therefore resulted in an increase in their numbers. And, he states in his conclusion, though there are those species that have been denuded in specific localities and regions – thus the pine marten, polecat and wildcat certainly fell foul of the gamekeepers between 1800 and 1853 – very few of the other 100,000 species to be found nationally have been made extinct within Britain as a whole in the period he looks at, even after 1950. In sum, there are always criticisms that can be made of any text if one is so minded: on p. 17, for example, Williamson uses ‘man’ for humanity, which certainly grates. However, the book offers a very useful and accessible introduction to the subject of environmental history for the place and period, and also makes a crucial point overall: it is essential that history remains in the picture.

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ERIC L. JONES, *Revealed biodiversity. An economic history of the human impact* (World Scientific Publishing, Singapore, 2014). xxxiv + 257 pp. £65

The idea underlying this volume is a sound one – to provide a history of biodiversity in the modern world that does not succumb to a simplistic narrative of decline. Jones counterpoints this to a narrative of ecological decline driven by the politics of ‘environmental lobbies’, which, he avers, are driven more by ‘faith’ than science. He attacks the use of historical ecological baselines as a starting point for claims of decline, pointing out that before the late twentieth century they are often weakly rooted in empirical data. Moreover, any linear account of decline is, Jones argues, inherently flawed. Nature is constantly in flux. Even where extinctions take place, there can be no guarantee of which prevailing ecological system is subjectively better or worse. Any project that stands in the way of the great rule of change is flawed.

Yet for all the protestations of objectivity, this book really fails to deliver on its promise. Firstly, as the introduction makes clear, this volume is a political intervention, written to defend free market capitalism as ecologically sound. The author’s own condemnation of those who attack ‘a capitalist market system of which the critics are themselves beneficiaries’ clearly demarcates his purpose. The volume is punctuated by mistimed swipes at opponents, including unsupported

claims such as the view that ‘historical fluctuations hold little interest for environmentalists’, which appear to be derived from the author’s conviction that environmentalists form an implacable band of ideological enemies who fail to recognize change as natural law. Perhaps the nadir of this form of argumentation is reached at the end of chapter three, when a single letter by one individual is cited as evidence for the implication that we should really stop worrying about climate change because of all the ‘wonderful new flora and fauna that surely must emerge’, as well as the ‘economic benefits’.

Jones offers a geographically rather narrow analysis, given the global nature of many claims for biodiversity loss. The majority of this book deals with British and Dutch historical examples from the seventeenth century onwards. Much of this discussion is based on reference to a secondary literature that is sometimes surprisingly narrow. The claim that the relationship between hunting and the environment has been only poorly studied, for example, does not really stand up. There are more (and more recent) studies on the theme than are cited here, not to mention a growing number of relevant studies on animal history. The rest of the world is addressed by Jones in several quite short chapters on ‘European expansion’, which really don’t add much to the existing state of knowledge except for the claim that ‘The transformations of global ecosystems are not being fairly assessed when they are presented as necessarily European, Western, capitalist or Christian’, which is of a piece with Jones’s tendency to return to apologetics at points throughout the text. Jones does not fairly represent the diversity of opinion among environmental historians on these or other factors in explaining ecological change.

Moreover, the author’s suggestion that environmental history has discounted the agency of non-Western peoples in ecological transformations is simply wrong. Jones’s attack on the noble savage myth both wildly exaggerates the purchase of this mythology among contemporary environmentalists and fails to recognize the significant role of historical work in undermining this discourse. Instead, Jones proceeds, bizarrely, to reproduce one of the core components of this very mythology by arguing that ‘The virtue of European and American technology was that it was not static but went on improving’, a claim that suggests a lack of familiarity with those historians who have demonstrated that Western technological dominance has often precisely been used to construct an idea of non-Western peoples as existing outside of progressive historical time.

‘Among environmental history’s problems’, Jones suggests, ‘is a tendency to hark back to a Golden Age when nature was supposedly unsullied’. If this

view ever had any validity, it is increasingly hard to argue for it in the present, when it seriously fails to reflect the breadth of research and intellectual diversity within the field. Jones's insistence on rooting his arguments in stereotyped notions of both environmentalism and environmental history is a great pity because his book raises questions worthy of serious treatment by environmental historians. The author is perfectly right to point to the difficulty of making historical judgments about biodiversity in the past; it is clear that there is a question to be raised over the relationship of environmental history and ecological science. However, and somewhat ironically, it is Jones's very single-mindedness in putting environmentalists in their place for their supposed historical errors that means he slips too often from the position of critical historian to ahistorical apologist.

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DAVID MATLESS, *In the nature of landscape: cultural geography on the Norfolk Broads* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2014). 296 pp., 43 illus. £24.99.

In Wilkie Collins's 1866 sensationalist novel, *Armada*, the Norfolk Broads are a curiosity, the 'hidden labyrinth' of waters suggestive of the unexpected – mysterious, fluid-margined and hard to know. It is a region where anything could happen. For David Matless, growing up in Norwich, Broadland held no such intrigue but was merely a 'remote zone near home', barely experienced – exploration only beginning after he moved away and saw it as a site with academic promise. In this book, he journeys through these slippery wetlands and, whilst doing so, takes a new direction in cultural geography by rigorously revisiting and rethinking the notion of regional cultural landscape; the recombination of the constituent terms 'region', 'culture' and 'landscape' suggested as productive not in spite of, but because of, its inherent complexities and instabilities.

It is an entertaining and illuminating excursion, worth taking not least because it brings a fresh approach to the region, presenting landscape as colloquial, with voices and accents – from the scientific and the institutional to the comic and the vernacular – competing for attention and authority. Sounds, too, emerge from this 'colloquium of voices', the boom of the bittern recorded as well as the blast of the motor cruiser. The book has an unusual structure, its chapters interspersed with two rather grainy photo montages, 'Broadland Scene' and 'Broadland Signs', and two 'interlude' studies of Broads icons, the wherry and the windmill.

The first chapter, which suggests that regional cultural landscape might achieve a new political resonance

in England were Scotland to become independent, discusses academic engagements with Broadland, its institutions and scholarship. This introduction to the region includes a too brief commentary on the Cantley sugar beet processing factory, the first in England, then offers six quirkily descriptive passages – snapshots, as it were, of sites where tensions of landscape are condensed. There is also a helpful outline of the study area and its nomenclature. Six rivers, all flowing into the North Sea, are collected under the name the 'Norfolk Broads' while the broads (lower case) are shallow lakes made from flooded medieval peat diggings, sometimes linked to these rivers by dug channels.

Formation of the broads was long disputed and their artificial origin only discovered in 1952 by the late Joyce Lambert, a key informant whom Matless interviewed several times. These contested narratives, and Lambert's work of scholarly detection, are discussed in the second chapter, 'Origins', which details the ways in which scientific argument was shaped by claims to regional authority. If the suggestion that the broads were man-made initially appeared to diminish their appeal, it later facilitated proposals for their dredging and restoration.

Chapter three, 'Conduct', takes an expansive look at moral geographies of leisure conduct on the Norfolk Broads, a region described by *Nature* in 1887 as the most 'beguiled' in the British Isles and variously imagined over the years as a site of authentic folk culture, a locus for adventure and a holiday pleasure ground. Geographer Vaughan Cornish's 1930 proposal for a Broadland national park sparked debates over regionally appropriate modes of conduct (quiet sailing preferred to raucous cruising, for instance) which continued to shape policy even after 1989, when the Broads Authority assumed the statutory powers of a national park.

There follows a brief study of the wherry, a regional craft latterly resurrected for pleasure cruises but once a working vessel, portrayed in nineteenth-century paintings of the Norwich School. Wherries transported goods such as grain, coal, timber, manure, ice and sugar beet, suggesting an attendant clutch of cultural landscapes that, rather disappointingly, are not unravelled here.

The remaining chapters are likely to be of most interest to agricultural historians. Animal landscapes and plant landscapes are considered in chapters four and five respectively. Here the voices of a vivid, and sometimes eccentric, cast of characters enter the colloquium – from the fervently masculine J. Wentworth Day, who adored shooting and advocated stuffed birds as a way of keeping the 'domestic female' at bay, to broadcaster

E. A. Ellis, who created an experimental nature reserve at Wheatfen – and served coypu (a now extinguished invader) to a visiting party from the British Association for the Advancement of Science. These sections, which present complex narratives, discuss matters such as the emergence of Broadland as a region for scientific study; how disputes over shooting rights – and wrongs – shaped the Broads as public and private space; and the potent cultural harvest of the reed industry.

After another interlude, this time drawing on work by Tom Williamson to focus on the windmill – technology once widely employed in the region to pump water for drainage – Matless moves on to chapter six. Entitled ‘The Ends of Landscape’, this covers narratives of impending environmental disaster and addresses the region’s vulnerabilities to silting, pollution, drainage, drought and flood. An account is included of the political battles over the Halvergate Marshes in the 1980s, in which notions of ‘landscape character’ were successfully deployed to prevent characteristic grazing marsh being drained for conversion to arable.

This is, in essence, a lively and original book, scholarly and rigorous, but also entertaining. More than that, it is thought-provoking: worth reading even for the armchair excursionist to the Norfolk Broads.

REBECCA FORD

JOY HINSON, *Goat* (Reaktion Books, 2015), 224 pp., 100 illus. £12.95.

Joy Hinson’s *Goat* is one of a series of *Animal* books edited by Jonathan Burt and published by Reaktion Books, and thus sits within a menagerie of titles dealing with everything from ants to vultures, from bears to tortoises. The series aims to provide a short but comprehensive review of the animal subject of each book, covering species’ natural and social histories, their place in mythology and religion, their relationships with human animals, and so on. *Goat* is an interesting addition to the series, aiming to provide an overview of all things caprine from the starting point that goats have often been overlooked as domestic farmed animals – the ‘poor man’s cow’ – while in fact having important economic and (fascinatingly ambiguous) symbolic roles.

The Introduction establishes how goats do indeed play a quite startlingly diverse range of roles in their relationships within ecosystems, in their economic relationships with humans and perhaps most interestingly, in how they become culturally meaningful. Thus on the one hand they embody and symbolize human institutions (for example as sporting or military mascots) while on the other they carry a

wide range of often quite divergent cultural associations; for example, goats can be emblems of efficiency in their use of poor-quality agricultural land but can also represent lust, the satanic, fertility and playfulness (capriciousness). The book’s six substantive chapters build on the Introduction’s tantalizing glimpses of the richness of goats’ many (real and figurative) places in the world and their entanglements with human life, giving more detailed discussions of the ‘wild’ goat’s natural history, its domestication, the goat as a feral creature, the place of the goat in myth and folklore, the use of goats in medicine and the place of the creature in the twenty-first century.

The chapters covering the ‘wild’ and ‘domestic’ goat involve a shift from a global mapping of the distribution of goat species, along with discussion of their biology, social behaviour and ecological relations, to a much more geographically specific history of domestication and the entanglement of goats with (human) society and politics, which focuses quite heavily on the UK (saying much less about the Global South, despite goats’ historical and continuing importance to rural economies in ‘developing’ countries). Feral goats get a chapter to themselves, telling a story of how such animals, establishing populations after escaping from domestication, are seen as damaging the ecosystems in which they take up residence and as such tend to be regarded (and thus targeted) as pest species.

The following chapters on goats and mythology and folklore, and goats and medicine, offer stimulating reading on the highly diverse material-semiotics of goat-human relations. As suggested, goats can stand for many things and represent diverse human characteristics. They, and their bodily products (their milk and dung, for example), have also had traditional medicinal uses. There is a sort of bodily potency associated with goats which ties together their symbolization of lust, the devil and playfulness, for example, with the supposed powers of their faeces, milk and bezoars (concretions found in the animals’ stomachs). Finally, a discussion of the twenty-first century goat emphasizes the continuing importance of this species to human societies, despite the way in which goats have tended to be dismissed as major contributors to industrialized agricultural and food systems. The charitable (and perhaps problematic) ‘donation’ of goats to communities in the Global South is just one example. At the same time, goats are still employed as military and sporting mascots, are raced at festivals and fairs, and continue to carry magical and symbolic weight in some parts of the world and in our language.

At the end of the book, readers are also provided with a goat timeline, taking them from the ancestral

progenitors of 'modern' goats 8.2 million years ago, through a history of domestication and representation, culminating with a version of the goat as a 'pest' species in some ecosystems, which leads to the introduction of eradication strategies. For readers inspired to take up goat keeping, details of US and UK goat societies are also provided.

The book is very well illustrated throughout with images of goats in their 'natural' and domestic environments, and with numerous pictures of different cultural representations of goats. These really add to the enjoyment to be gained from this book, emphasizing the cultural significance of these animals, including (for example) their importance to representations of the erotic, and their role (as illustrated in the well-known mid-nineteenth-century painting by William Holman Hunt) as the 'scapegoat'.

While such a short book can really only touch on what goats are and can mean, and as such can sometimes seem to become rather a list of interesting 'facts' and examples, this is the remit of the series and does not detract from what is an enjoyable text. Readers are reminded of how a particular animal's place in the world is complex and heterogeneous, particularly when considered in its relations with humans, and stimulated to think further about the wider complexities of human-animal relationships, which are so significant to our everyday worlds.

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STEVEN PARISSIEN *The English railway station* (English Heritage, 2014). 172 pp., 250 illus. £25.

Dr Richard Beeching is a name known to both railway buffs and rural historians alike. The branch line closures overseen by him in the 1960s transformed the transport landscape of Britain with nearly 2400 of the existing 7000 railway stations identified for shutting down. It was, moreover, in rural areas that the axe came down heaviest and the closures were hardest felt, and this despite the country station being regarded as a uniquely English thing of beauty set in the heart of the rural community. In this book Steven Parissien goes far beyond this popular history, presenting a carefully researched, well-written and superbly illustrated architectural history of the English railway station. From wooden-shed origins in the mid-nineteenth century to twentieth-century modern urban regeneration termini, with stops along the way at Victorian urban grandeur and mid-twentieth-century demolition, Parissien carefully charts the history of this commonplace but little considered architectural form.

Of the themes explored in the book, that of the country

station is no doubt of most interest to agricultural and rural historians. The modernizing influence of railway expansion on rural communities is well-known. It provided access to new employment opportunities for agricultural workers and helped establish new markets for agricultural products – milk being one example noted by Parissien. Whilst the railway, and the location of country stations, could be regarded as an economic benefit to farmers, the new railway age was not wholly embraced by estate landowners. Not only topography, but also landowners' desires influenced the route of railways across the mid-nineteenth-century landscape. Lords Exeter and Egremont are highlighted, for example, as successfully ensuring the railway was diverted around their respective parklands. The latter's influence resulted in Petworth Station being built a brisk two-mile walk from the town it served!

Across England railway companies adopted a range of architectural styles and Parissien provides a number of examples to illustrate how county stations varied from modest brick halts to grand buildings that could be mistaken for country houses. The latter group included, for example, William Hurst's 1856 double stone-fronted, Jacobethan mansion-like train station at Stamford East in Lincolnshire. Similarly, station design in urban areas provided an opportunity to bring country house and estate style to the town. In 1847, for example, J. P. Prichard designed Huddersfield's station in a classical style that resembled the mid-Georgian Wentworth Woodhouse in Yorkshire, influenced perhaps by his close association with the Earls Fitzwilliam as their family architect. In designing the train shed at Newcastle Central between 1845 and 1850, Frank Dobson borrowed techniques of garden glasshouses, most notably Sir Joseph Paxton's Great Stove at Chatsworth. As well as being an architect, Paxton was a director of the Midland Railway and his influence can also be seen at Buxton station, not far from Chatsworth.

Conversely, railway expansion established new wealthy landowners in the country who sought to combine their enthusiasm for the railway and traditions of the county house in creating their vision of a rural community. The railway contractor Sir Morton Peto in the 1840s, for example, commissioned the sculptor John Thomas to design the Jacobethan Somerleyton Hall in Suffolk together with estate village and matching station on the Norfolk Railway.

From the confident expansion era of the Victorian station and its early twentieth-century prime, Parissien's focus turns to consider 'Demolition and decay' under Beeching, and the wider modernizing railway programme. Whilst lamenting the demolition

of many fine country stations, Parissien points out that many were converted into private residences. Within the next two chapters, on 'Brave new British Rail' and 'A new railway age', the country station receives little attention: mid- to late twentieth-century modernization was mainly an urban occupation. Rare exceptions included the replacement of Victorian rural stations with practical, modern pre-fabricated units in the Southern Region during the 1960s. Finally – as Parissien points out – the resurgence of the country station as a reaction to the Beeching cuts is reflected today in the preservation of a number of heritage branch lines.

Throughout this enjoyable journey through the architectural history of the station Parissien maintains focus on his key destination, whilst at the same time

providing interesting tracks for further inquiry. More could have been said, for example, about how country stations fitted in with the existing built environment of rural settlements and to what extent – if any – station architects took into account of the local vernacular. Estate records, too, might be a rich source in helping us better understand landowners' relationships with railway companies, both in relation to estate access and in terms of station design and patronage – a theme for others to pick up perhaps. Yet overall *The English railway station* is a comprehensively researched, beautifully illustrated addition to the small literature on railway stations and their architecture, and a scholarly accompaniment to the booming literature on railway heritage.

MATTHEW KEMPSON