RURAL HISTORY TODAY

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RURAL HISTORY AND THE END OF HUNTING

Richard Hoyle considers the recent history of hunting, whilst Richard Statham has been to visit the thought-provoking new galleries at the Melton Carnegie Museum.

In Scotland it is virtually all over. Hunting with Dogs, exceptions apart, will be banned from August. In England it could all be over by this time next year. Here the process of legislation has been protracted, not merely in that attempts to ban hunting of one sort or another have been made on and off since the last war, but that the course of legislation since 1997 has been tortuous. Although abolition by a free vote was a manifesto commitment in 1997 (and one to which the Prime Minister stated his personal adherence in July 1999), there is still no statute. A private members bill failed in 1998. A committee of enquiry was convened and reported. The commons voted for a ban in March of this year, the Lords against. A period of consultation ends in July and a new bill will be published in the latter part of the year.

This is all very puzzling. It is puzzling that a minority activity, which some would argue bounds on the ludicrous ('the unspeakable in pursuit of the inedible'), should attract so much parliamentary time and pressure group attention at a moment when there are so may other, greater problems in the countryside. The pro-hunting lobby showed, in its celebrated march thorugh London in 1998, that it could mobilise a very large crowd in defence of hunting. For at least a minority in the countryside, the defence of hunting has become associated not only with a way of life but with personal freedoms. One Welsh huntsman was quoted in *The Guardian* on 14 February as saying that if Westminster followed Edinburgh's lead, there would be a revolution. 'We are prepared to fight for our way of life and even die for it. You will not need to send envoys to Palestine or to go to Africa to sort out problems there, Mr Blair, because there'll be too much trouble here. There'll be rivers of blood in the countryside just because I want to get on a horse a hunt a fox'.

On the other side, the behaviour of government is equally puzzling. The illegalisation of hunting commands a majority in the Commons (but not the Lords). The opinion poll evidence shows that legislation would be popular; a MORI poll held just two years ago in July 1999 found that 52% of respondents 'strongly supported' a ban on hunting with dogs when only 14% 'strongly opposed' such a ban. In a poll for *The Economist* in the month before the last election, 57% of respondents strongly supported a ban on hunting (with 31% opposed). For many of those inclined towards an outright ban, hunting is rural barbarism: it is part of a piece with veal crates, the export of lambs and intensive poultry farming. But the present government seems unwilling to press the abolitionist case to its conclusion, perhaps mindful of the unpopularity which legislation might bring it in rural society.

Whatever the outcome of the present push for abolition in England and Wales, there is a story to be told of the public campaigns, the private members' bills and the twilight manoeuvres

'A horse inclined to balk his leap,' from Blaine's Encyclopaedia of Rural Sports, *1870*

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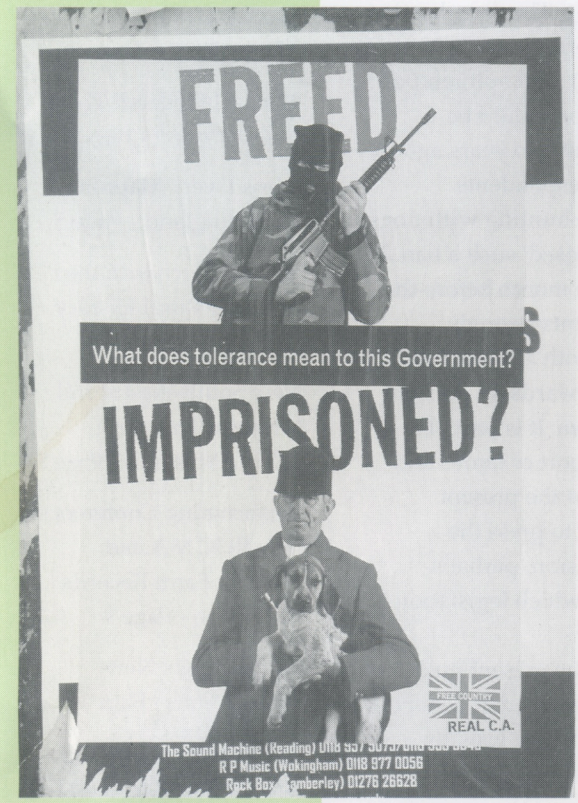
'So the survival of the hunt is, at the moment, a puzzle: it might easily have withered away in the twentieth century, but it did not'.

which have held off an outright ban ever since it was first proposed in the Commons in 1949. But at a deeper level the mystery is how hunting survived so long.

One of the few serious historical works on hunting, David C. Itzowitz's *Peculiar Privilege* (1977) draws a picture of hunting in grave difficulties at the end of the nineteenth century. Hunts were making serious losses, beyond the ability of masters to sustain or hunts to guarantee, and could not sustain the numbers who simply came long for a day's entertainment in the field. Farmers, under their own financial pressure, began to look for compensation for the damage foxes did to poultry, so placing an additional burden on hunt finances. A further economy resorted to by farmers and detrimental to the hunt was the wire fence: hunts finally came to recognise that they had a financial interest in seeing wire fences taken down.

Below; Angry sentiments expressed on a fly-poster seen in Reading, June 2002



If this was the situation at the end of Victoria's reign, then it is hard to think of many developments which have favoured hunts in the twentieth century. The past hundred years have witnessed the collapse of landed society and the disappearance, in many districts, of the country house as the focus of rural life. There has been creeping suburbanisation, even the establishment of new towns in prime hunting territory (think Milton Keynes). The countryside, having been divided up by canals in the eighteenth century (which pessimists thought marked the end of hunting) and railways in the nineteenth (ditto) has been segmented further by motorways in the last fifty years. Hunting has survived agricultural depression in the 1920s and 1930s and again in the 1990s. Wire has spread; so too have shooting estates with their paramount concern to keep down fox numbers. Even the skill of riding is no longer ubiquitous; certainly farmers no longer keep horses. Our own preliminary researches suggest that hunts were only kept afloat by injections of cash from rich supporters who were willing to serve as Masters of Foxhounds. Michael Clayton, writing in the mid-1980s, thought that a master of a four-day a-week pack was probably putting £10,000 a year into the pack.

If, after further research (which we here at the Rural History Centre hope to undertake) it turns out that hunts were reliant on the subventions of a handful of rich members, then the question arises of who these people were. Indeed, there is a real question to be posed about who hunted in the twentieth century. One subscriber to the Oakley hunt, perhaps significantly writing from an address in Eaton Place, gave his opinion in 1948 that 'fox hunting is branded in the minds of many ignorant people as a rich man's sport. This is now misleading - it is run by farmers for the good of the farmers'. But was this really so? And if true in 1948, was it true 50 years later? After all farmers have good reasons to dislike the hunt, not least for its cultivation of the fox and discouragement of vulpicide (although one also recognises its utility to them). And one suspects that farmers' income over much of the last century has not run to keeping a good hunter in stables. If not farmers, then who hunted? The question is little discussed in Michael Clayton's authoritative study of 1987, but its advice, directed to the neophyte, on how to choose a hunter, on appropriate dress and decorum, implicitly makes the suggestion that anyone could join a hunt. The Duke of Beaufort, in his introduction to this same book, said that 'we have to turn away a lot of people who would like to hunt with us - modern foxhunting is anything but an exclusive sport: our mounted field is the most cosmopolitan collection. Nowadays anyone who lives in the hunting country and pays a subscription can, by invitation, wear the blue and buff livery of the Hunt'.

There has been a great deal of debate in recent years about the place of the rural in English society. At an extreme it has been suggested that the aspiration of the self-made man was (ideally) to buy an estate and certainly to adopt the mores of the countryside. What role does the hunt play in this? Is it as much a dimension of commercial and professional society as of rural society? Are amongst those who hunt today the successors of the men who, even by the 1850s, could leave Euston on the 6.30 morning train, enjoy a day in the field with the Pytchley or Quorn and be back in town the same evening?

So the survival of the hunt is, at the moment, a puzzle: it might easily have withered away in the twentieth century, but it did not. Even if hunting has little economic importance, its symbolic importance is considerable and it needs to be explored.

Professor Richard Hoyle is Director of the Rural History Centre. He becomes very inscrutable when asked his views about hunting, and neither the RHC nor the BAHS takes a position on the rights or wrongs of the argument. He is grateful to Dr Kyle Jones for research assistance and hopes that they will publish a more detailed account of hunt finances in the future.

PAINTING THE TOWN RED

Fox-hunting has been an important - and sometimes controversial - part of the economic and social life of Melton Mowbray since the eighteenth century. 'They are like an alien community set down in our midst,' complained one Victorian resident about the hunting set, which once maintained over five hundred stables in the town and included such luminaries as the Marquis of Waterford, whose notorious exploits with a paint pot gave rise to the expression 'painting the town red'.

This incident is recalled in the bright red walls of Melton Carnegie Museum's new permanent Gallery - 'Fox and Fare' - which addresses the issue of hunting both as an aspect of Leicestershire history, and as a subject in its own right Although core funding of £369,000 was provided by the HLF, the Museum of Hunting Trust donated £100,000. Additional funding was received from Leicester City Council, (which banned hunting on its land in 1992), Melton Borough Council and the Friends of Leicester and Leicestershire Museums.

Given the diverse range of sponsors - and the controversial and topical subject matter - it was essential for the new Gallery to strive towards absolute impartiality and balance. 'We have tried to make the salient points from different perspectives,' explained the Museum's Curator, Jenny Dancey. 'It's not up to us to be judge and jury'. From the main entrance, the eye is immediately drawn to the mannequin-mounted costume of a red-jacketed master of foxhounds, but accompanying text asks the visitor to define and calibrate their emotional response in a series of questions. Alongside, the panel cites facts and figures about hunting's contribution to the economy, while a series of quotations, both pro and anti, are projected overhead in random sequence, ranging from the views of Roger Scruton to those of Sir Paul McCartney.

Radiating out from the mannequin, a sequence of five graphic panels accompanied by display cases pose further questions, present factual information, and juxtapose opposing viewpoints. Framed by hunting gear to one side, a saboteur's outfit to the other, one panel lists some of the arguments for and against hunting. Another panel outlines the hunting process from start to finish in sequenced bullet points. 'It's our intention to be as accurate, honest and factual as possible,' explained Jenny Dancey. 'Most people seem to have an opinion on the hunting issue. Our intention is to provide visitors with an opportunity to consider the subject in closer detail, clarify their point of view and reflect on different thoughts and ideas. Visitors are encouraged to form their own opinions and share their views'.

Although small in scale and largely traditional in format, the challenge posed by a difficult subject has engendered a thoughtful, imaginative and stylish exhibition. Though space is limited, display cases feature an eclectic range of artefacts - everything from children's books ('Has the fox had a bad press?') and kitsch household items ('Hunting around the house'), to paraphernalia directly associated with hunting. A touch-screen presentation to be installed shortly will offer more detailed archival and photographic material. There is also a post box for visitors to express their own views, and in due course the results will be incorporated into the displays, which will also be updated in the light of future political and legislative developments.

The countryside has never raised more public debate or controversy, and tackling issues such as GM crops or Foot and Mouth presents potential risks for any Museum prepared to take them on. Jenny Dancey is in no doubt about accepting those challenges. 'In some respects, Museums have a duty to take on board a wide range of issues regardless of whether they are contentious or not. It should not be our place to cleanse aspects of our local history for whatever reason, but to record events, particularly those which have impacted on our social and economic development'. She notes that the response from visitors with different viewpoints has so far been positive, and that the project has successfully brought together individuals and organisations from both sides of the fence. The opening ceremony in May, performed by Baroness Mallalieu QC., Chairman of the Countryside Alliance, was also attended by local hunts and representatives from the RSPCA and the League Against Cruel Sports.

For any Museum wishing to address a controversial and topical issue and wondering how best to proceed, a visit to the Melton Carnegie Museum could well be the first stop.

Richard Statham is Audience Development Officer at the Museum of English Rural Life and Rural History Centre

'It should not be our place to cleanse aspects of our local history for whatever reason, but to record events, particularly those which have impacted on our social and economic development'.

Melton Carnegie Museum, Thorpe End, Melton Mowbray, 01664 569946

Below; Contrasting display cases with anti (on the left) and pro (on the right) hunting paraphernalia

THE SWING PROJECT

By Michael Holland

Michael Holland has researched 18th and 19th century rural protest and crime in Essex at postgraduate level; he is the academic adviser to the FACHRS Swing Project. Additional references to the Swing disturbances or enquiries about the Project can be directed to Michael Holland at; swingprojects@aol.com

When the wars against France broke out in 1795 a great many agricultural workers were absorbed into the armed forces, either with the army or Royal Navy, or, on home defence with the militia. This created a manpower shortage which ultimately affected the ability of farmers to process their crops for market. Industrialisation came to the rescue in the form of the threshing machine. Once the war ended and the men returned to agriculture, many farmers were reluctant to return to the old, inefficient, labour intensive ways.

In 1816 and 1822 there were localised outbreaks of violence against the newly-invented threshing machines, mainly centred on the wheat growing areas of East Anglia. However, waiting in the wings was the biggest and most extensive response to mechanised farming, the Swing Riots. These first erupted around the parish of Lower Hardres in Kent where a mob smashed a local farmer's threshing machine. The ringleaders were arrested and taken before a magistrate who decided that a paternalistic approach to the crime would be the preferable way of addressing the matter and virtually let the men off with a warning. This was taken as a sign that the magistracy was supportive of what the men had done and so between 1830 and 1832, the protest exploded across Kent, Sussex and Hampshire.

Various historians have commented upon the Swing Riots. The Hammonds, in their work, the *Village Labourer*, dubbed them the 'Last Labourer's Revolt'. During the 1960s, the Marxist historian George Rudé referred to the riots in his study on collective crowd action, his perspective being developed in 1969 when he and Eric Hobsbawm published *Captain Swing*, which catalogued a total of 1473 incidents in England.

Since 1969 there has been a great deal of research at local (and occasionally regional) level on the incidence of the riots, but no national project. In the course of this local research, historians have frequently concluded that the true level of Swing protest was higher than that identified by Hobsbawm and Rudé. However, nobody has revisited Swing from a national perspective. One assumes that cost was a factor in that regard, for if such a project were undertaken it would require a large band of research assistants, and where could such a group be recruited?

The Project

The Swing Project has its roots in an exchange of emails between a committee member of the Family and Community History Research Society (FACHRS) and myself during 2000 in which we discussed the possibilities of collaborative research on Swing in Essex and Cambridge. This germ of an idea developed as time went on and we began to consider the wider picture. Would it be possible to recruit a small band of researchers from the ranks of FACHRS to undertake a regional assessment of Swing? The idea was put forward at the 2000 AGM, and the committee considered that it had distinct possibilities. Accordingly, a mail shot to all members went out and a total of forty-one researchers covering thirty-five counties volunteered to participate. The necessary project notes were written, recording forms designed and distributed and research began in record offices and libraries. It sounds a good deal simpler than it was in reality, I must say! Our modest plans for a small piece of collaborative research evolved into a national research project taking in the Welsh and Scottish borders, in addition to England.

The timing of this project was, from the technological viewpoint, perfect. The geographical spread of the researchers meant that it would be virtually impossible to get them all together for a briefing session. The cost of constantly circulating messages via the postal system would have been prohibitive, and so we fell back on email as our main means of contact.

In the early days of the project, even before the researchers joined us, so to speak, we were aware that the methods used by nineteenth century provincial newspapers would mean that foreign incidents (meaning incidents relating to other counties) would be reported amongst the material relating to individual counties. Accordingly, researchers were asked to make a note of any foreign reporting and forward that on a separate form. In this way we have been able to cover the counties for which no researcher could be found.

Additionally, it has introduced a double check by ensuring that virtually 99% of Swing incidents will be recorded for posterity. Despite the best efforts of the research team we will never know the true extent of Swing simply because a certain proportion was never reported! There are a number of possible reasons for this such as

reticence on the part of the victim to admit to a problem with his workforce or fear of emulation.

The Next Stage

A great deal of discussion, mainly by email, has gone on concerning what we do with the material once it is all recorded in the databases. It has been decided that the finished databases will be published on CD ROMs for the benefit of the research team and society members. A database of incidents will be placed on the website, with the question of access to the full database by subscription being considered.

Each of the researchers is now an expert on their county's Captain Swing riots, and it is to be hoped that at least a proportion of them will publish their findings in their own right. This is extremely important not only because each individual has done the work on their county (in some cases counties), but they have the local knowledge that can only serve to complement their work. At the time of writing one researcher has produced a paper on his county's contribution to Swing for the benefit of his local record office. I sincerely hope that he is the first of many. With a project of this type, there is tremendous potential to educate, whether it be Year 9 children engaged on a local history research assignment, a local WEA class, or university students. All levels of learning have something to gain from the local Swing Expert! Hopefully, each county will shortly be swamped with new and updated information on the Swing Riots.

Even once the basic information is published up on the website and CD ROMs there will be a need to analyse the material in great depth. For example we need to know what proportion of the victims were associated with the vestry or the clergy. It would be very useful to learn something of the age group and marital status of the protesters. Are there any common names that emerge either between parishes or across county borders? On a more mundane note, what patterns emerge on the time of day, day of week, or season of the year in which the offences occurred?

This project could not have gone ahead without the keen and dedicated band of members who have worked so hard to research the incidence of Captain Swing in their respective counties. Working on old newspapers, court and Home Office papers is by no means easy, and the problems are exacerbated by the fact that much of the material has been preserved on microfilm. That the project has been feted a winner is entirely due to their hard and painstaking work.

MAPPING RURAL ENGLAND

An Atlas of Rural Settlement in England by Brian K Roberts and Stuart Wrathmell has not attracted a great deal of attention from rural historians. We asked Professor Chris Dyer to explain why historians should seek out this work.

Roberts' and Wrathmell's splendid atlas was published at the end of 2000, but its origins lie in the late 1980s when English Heritage embarked on an ambitious plan to preserve a larger number of archaeological sites, called the MPP (Monument Protection Programme). This was welcomed by the whole archaeological community, but ran into problems when the MPP began to tackle the numerous, large and complex sites of medieval rural settlements. How was English Heritage to deal with a deserted medieval village covering 10 hectares, with a mill site nearby, a moated site in the next field, all associated with 100 hectares of ridge-and-furrow? There were hundreds of such sites throughout England, each with distinctive features, and if they were all preserved, with their surrounding landscapes, the total amount of land involved would run to thousands of hectares. To add to the complications, in the many parts of England where villages were not the main form of settlement, such as the Welsh Marches, the south-west , or Kent, what was to be done about the thousands of small deserted hamlets and farmsteads?

A strongly argued debate developed between English Heritage and the organization lobbying for these sites, the Medieval Settlement Research Group (MSRG), which was continuing the work on deserted villages initiated by Maurice Beresford and John Hurst. The MPP produced an official description of medieval settlement sites, the first stage for implementing a programme of protection, but this was heavily criticized by MSRG, who wrote their own version. One of the problems in selecting sites for preservation was the criterion used by English Heritage, that a site

Christopher Dyer is Professor of Regional and Local History at the Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester. One of the most distinguished social and economic historians of the medieval period, he has also served as Secretary and President of the Medieval Settlement Research Group. An Atlas of Rural Settlement in England *is published by English Heritage, price £25.*

should be of national importance. The MSRG argued that this was meaningless because settlements lay in regions, and a site which was characteristic of its region should be given a high priority for preservation, even if it was not very well documented or lacked prominent physical remains. English Heritage accepted this argument, but then asked 'What are the regions'? At which point we could refer them to Joan Thirsk's farming regions, or Alan Everitt's *pays* , neither of which were focused precisely on villages and hamlets.

English Heritage then commissioned Roberts and Wrathmell (an historical geographer and an archaeologist) to carry out a mapping exercise that would define the regions within which the importance of sites could be assessed. Since then the original object has been achieved, and large numbers of representative sites have been recommended for preservation. The maps drawn by Roberts and Wrathmell have a larger significance, and now they have been published in colour for everyone to see and use.

'The most striking feature of their maps is the distinctiveness of the area which they call the 'Central Province', which runs through the middle of the country from the north-east to the south-west'.

Their method was to map systematically the size and density of the inhabited settlements from the nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey maps. Their maps are dominated by the dots of varying size which represent the settlements. They call this a 'top-down' method of mapping, because they are taking an overview of the whole country, rather than carrying out the usual painstaking reconstruction of settlements and landscapes in a single parish or group of parishes.

The most striking feature of their maps is the distinctiveness of the area which they call the 'Central Province' which runs through the middle of the country from the north-east to the south-west. This stands out because the large black spots marking the big villages cluster closely together, and the province has very sharp boundaries. In many parts of the country there is little sign of intermediate zones - there is a precise frontier between the central province and the zones of dispersed settlement known to Roberts and Wrathmell as the South-Eastern and the Northern and Western provinces. It can be seen at its sharpest running through Nottinghamshire to the east of Sherwood, and in Warwickshire and Worcestershire between the Forest of Arden in the west and the village-dominated feldon and vale of Evesham. A very precise line runs along the northern edge of the Chilterns, and between the villages of Cambridgeshire/Huntingdonshire and the fenland. And its western frontier in the north is clearly marked on the edge of the uplands. Although this is based on nineteenth-century data, the Provinces and their frontiers are still visible today. Developers and county councils in the last century may have created some pseudo-villages outside the Central Province, and there has been a growth in isolated farms and housing among the villages of the midlands, but this has not been sufficient to change the general character of the countryside.

Some readers of the Atlas react negatively by saying that their district has been wrongly depicted. An audience of local historians in Essex, for example, protested at a lecture given by Roberts and Wrathmell that they had just driven through a series of villages to reach the meeting - how could their county be regarded as an area of mainly dispersed settlement? The answer was that their anecdotal evidence did not stand up to the hard statistics of the hundreds of hamlets and isolated farms which greatly outnumbered the village centres. We are very attached to villages, which represent an idyllic picture of English rural life, and we imagine that they are numerous when in reality in some regions they are few and far between. This modern preference for villages has also created them - some of the clusters of houses around village greens and picturesque pubs which we like to think are primeval settlements can be shown to have been formed in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries from a core of a few cottages.

Another reaction to the Atlas is to say the 'we knew all this already' and it is true that maps have been published which depict a zone stretching across England bearing a close resemblance to the Central Province. It can be see in H. L. Gray's map of the midland field system (published in 1915) and Oliver Rackham's 'planned countryside', of 1986. Indeed, Harry Thorpe produced a map of rural settlements in Britain in 1964 which shows a distribution of nucleated settlements uncannily similar in general terms to the maps in this Atlas. But every generation restates old truths in a new form, and in the new Atlas results from a systematic and detailed analysis which gives the Central Province a new scientific authority.

The Atlas has other maps which are designed to indicate the wider meaning and the antiquity of the Provinces defined from nineteenth-century maps. A map of deserted medieval villages prepared by Beresford and Hurst fits the Central Province almost exactly. You only find deserted villages in regions which had villages in the first place. To the west and east there are many deserted hamlets and farms, but not large nucleated villages. Therefore the deserted villages are found almost entirely within the Central Province. The importance of this observation is

that it shows that the distribution of nucleated villages did not change much between the fifteenth century (when most of the deserted villages lost their populations) and the nineteenth. As we are fairly certain that villages formed between *c.*850 and 1200, the Central Province can be regarded as in existence by the twelfth century and earlier.

This long-term continuity is also suggested by the Atlas's map of woodland recorded by Domesday and in the centuries immediately preceding the making of that survey in 1086. The woodland lay mainly outside the Central Province. The close connection between settlement forms and rural landscapes has already been suggested by the distribution of 'midland' field systems. Open fields divided into two or three fields are mainly found in the Central Province. Roberts and Wrathmell confirm this by producing a map of parliamentary enclosures, which are again confined to the Central Province. You needed open fields to have an enclosure act, and open fields are found in close association with nucleated villages. The contrast between the large open fields of the Central Province, divided into furlongs and strips or selions, and the mixed landscapes of the western and eastern provinces, with their hedges, crofts and occasional patches of cultivated land, is described in the charter boundaries of the tenth century. Leland in the early sixteenth century encountered similar characteristics, with 'wooded and enclosed ground' alongside a road in north Worcestershire for example, and open corn fields beside the route that passed through the vale of Evesham.

Roberts and Wrathmell have therefore restated and made more certain a great generalization about the English countryside that has been perceived for at least a century. We can identify a champion or fielden landscape, with its emphasis before the agricultural revolution on arable cultivation in large open fields. As I mentioned, it has been called the 'planned countryside' by Rackham, and can still be identified from its straight hedges and recently established farms. This was a countryside dominated by nucleated villages. The contrasts between this Central Province and the rest of the country are clear - in these western and eastern provinces the settlements were less compact, and the fields more irregular with much old enclosure. The differences still influence the appearance and character of the countryside today, and they have been apparent for the last millennium.

While it is satisfying to be able to report such clear and well-established conclusions, there is plenty of uncertainty surrounding this subject. One is the degree of local variety, and the validity of the smaller subdivisions of the Provinces which are identified in the Atlas. These will be subject to debate and local scrutiny. I would argue that Roberts and Wrathmell have wrongly excluded the chalk country of Wiltshire and Hampshire from the Central Province. For some reason the long lines of villages closely packed in the river and stream valleys of those counties have not appeared on their maps as concentrations of nucleated settlements. But the chalk country is fundamentally similar to landscapes such as the Cotswolds or the Yorkshire Wolds which are included in the Central Province.

Roberts and Wrathmell have been concerned with the proposition that their provincial boundaries have a longer antiquity than the thousand-odd years already established. They believe that they go back to the Roman period and even earlier. This does not accord with research which seems to show Roman settlements and cultivation as thickly distributed in areas of later woodland and dispersed hamlets as on land which later became open fields and nucleated villages. It may well be that the provincial boundaries were established in the second half of the first millennium AD, and there are currently research programmes addressing this question, such as the Whittlewood Project on the Buckinghamshire/ Northamptonshire border.

Finally, historical geographers and agricultural historians have been producing maps for the last half century in the Darby tradition, culminating in the ground breaking work of Bruce Campbell. Based on written sources, from Domesday to tax lists to manorial accounts, they show distributions of wealth, population densities, land values, land use and agrarian practices which seem to bear little resemblance to the boundaries defined by Roberts and Wrathmell. The major boundaries defined by Darby, Glasscock, Sheail and Campbell all run from north-east to south-west, but cut through the middle of the Central Province. These are all valid and well- documented mapping exercises, and an urgent problem must be to explain the discrepancies between the results which are using different data, but which ought all to be throwing light on the same rural societies.

Anyone working on the history of the countryside in the last two millennia should look at this Atlas, and ponder why their data is sometimes in accord with its findings, and sometimes tells a different story.

The companion volume to An Atlas of Rural Settlement *will be published this August by English Heritage.* Region and Place: A Study of English Rural Settlement, *by Brian Roberts and Stuart Wrathmell, uses the new data presented in the* Atlas *to make preliminary explorations of some of the patterns revealed, comparing the maps against the distribution of other types of archaeological sites and buildings.*
Price approx. £35.00 ISBN: 1 85074 775 X, Product Code: 50203

Ordering details for both books are as follows: English Heritage Postal Sales, c/o Gillards, Trident Works, Temple Cloud, Bristol BS39 5AZ. Tel: 01761 452966 Fax: 01761 453408 or email: ehsales@gillards.com
Postage and Packing: No charge on orders up to £10. Add £2.50 for orders up to £25. Add £3.95 for orders up to £50. Add £5.00 for orders over £50. All cheques should be made payable to Gillards.

INTERWAR RURAL HISTORY RESEARCH GROUP UPDATE

By Jeremy Burchardt

Dr Jeremy Burchardt is Lecturer at the Rural History Centre

The Interwar Rural History Research Group was established just over a year ago at a meeting in the Rural History Centre. The aim of the group was to address the large gap in the historical literature on the countryside between the wars. Here's a little exercise: think of all the scholarly books on interwar rural Britain you know - you will be doing well if you get beyond half-a-dozen. We also wanted to reassess the orthodox view that this was a straightforward period of doom-and-gloom in the countryside, in which not a lot happened. Many of those present at that inaugural meeting were just beginning to research the interwar countryside themselves. We were convinced that a lot of interesting things had been going on - even if we weren't quite sure yet what they were!

'We wanted to reassess the orthodox view that this was a straightforward period of doom-and-gloom in the countryside, in which not a lot happened'.

A few months down the line, this bore fruit in the IRHRG's first conference, held at Dartington Hall in Devon on 9-10 January 2002, with financial aid from the BAHS. I think everyone who was there would agree it was a very enjoyable conference (not least because of the hard work of the organisers, Paul Brassley and Lynne Thompson, helped by Angie St John Palmer of Dartington Hall). More than 40 were present, almost half of whom gave papers. One of the key aims of the IRHRG is to promote a richer understanding of the interwar countryside through fostering interdisciplinary exchange. It was particularly pleasing that a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds was represented at the conference: geography, sociology and literature/drama studies as well as history.

We also want to open up new sources and perspectives, an objective which was on display at our most recent meeting, held at the Rural History Centre on 22 May. John Creasey, the RHC's librarian, gave a stimulating paper on a hitherto little-explored source, the RHC's Rural Life Collection. This is the UK's most comprehensive specialist collection of rural and agricultural reminiscences and we hope that cultural and social historians will work on it in future. The other paper, by Keith Grieves, offered an equally innovative exploration of the influence of wartime forms of leisure and sociability on the development of village halls and huts after 1918.

The next objective for the group is to take a fresh look at the central component of the orthodox 'doom and gloom' interpretation: farming itself. We will be holding a one-day conference, *Rethinking the 'Agricultural Depression': British Farming between the Wars*, at the RASE, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire on 16 October 2002. The provisional list of speakers includes Paul Brassley and Ted Collins, both of whom will be presenting new estimates of agricultural output and productivity, John Martin, author of *British Agriculture since 1931*, and Philip Conford, who recently published *The Origins of the Organic Movement*. The conference is supported by the Economic History Society and travel expenses for postgraduates and those not in full-time university employment will be met by the IRHRG.

For more details, contact Jeremy Burchardt (j.f.burchardt@rdg.ac.uk, 0118 9318665) or, even better, join the group's mailing list via www.jiscmail.ac.uk (the name of the list is interwar-rural-history).

NEW SOUTH-WEST RURAL TRAIL FOR 24HOURMUSEUM

As one of its responses to the dramatic effects of F&M disease in the south west of England last year, South West Museums Council has developed a new regional trail for the principal national museum information website, the 24HourMuseum, written by David Viner.

'We plough the fields and scatter' promotes ten rural life and agricultural history museums between Gloucestershire and Cornwall. The trail starts at the Cotswold Heritage Centre in Northleach, and from there visits Dean Heritage Centre in the Forest of Dean and the agricultural collection at Lackham College near Chippenham. Somerset is represented by the Rural Life Museum at Glastonbury and by the Chard & District Museum. Devon does well with four museums - the newly-refurbished Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life, the Museum of Dartmoor Life at Okehampton, the Torquay Museum and the Cookworthy Museum in Kingsbridge. The tour ends at the Helston Folk Museum in Cornwall.

The Trail is accessible at the 24HourMuseum on www.24hourmuseum.org.uk

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Historic Farm Buildings Group

Inverness. 6 - 8 September 2002

This year's conference has been timed to coincide with the final phase of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Buildings of Scotland's farm buildings survey. Site visits will include farms created by James Lock in the 1810s and illustrated in his book of 1820 as well as some fine examples of industrial 'high' farms of the mid and late-nineteenth century.

Accommodation will be at the Royal Highland Hotel in the centre of Inverness. Fees; £160 (resident HFBG member); £65 (non-resident HFBG member); (£175 (resident non HFBG member); £75 (non-resident non HFBG member). For further details, contact Jill Betts on 0118 926 4222; JILL.BETTS@btinternet.com

Society for Folk Life Studies

The Annual Conference of the Society for Folk Life Studies will be held at Wisbech, Cambs., from 12th-15th September, 2002. The twin themes are 'Wetlands as a resource' and 'Fenland culture'. If you would like to attend, please contact the Conference Secretary, Dr Dafydd Roberts, Welsh Slate Museum, Llanberis, Gwynedd, LL55 4TY; Dafydd.Roberts@nmgw.ac.uk

RURAL HISTORY CENTRE AND MERL NEWS

MA IN RURAL HISTORY AT THE RHC

From September 2002, the Rural History Centre will be offering the UK's only Rural History MA.

The degree is designed for those who want to understand the countryside in the past and the present. It aims to give students a grounding in a broad sweep of rural history over the last half millennium whilst allowing them to specialise in more closely defined periods of rural history, whether early modern or modern. It will place an emphasis on the experience of real people in real places whilst exploring how they have often been at the mercy of forces - markets, landowners, governments - who knew nothing of them and probably cared less. Above all, it is a course designed for those who see the countryside as complicated, always changing, always contested, always central to the experience of life.

Available via full-time (12 months) and part-time routes (24 months), the course will be arranged on a modular basis, involving 2 - 3 hours tuition per week. Core modules include: 'Debates in Rural History' and 'Sources and methods in Rural History'; options include: 'Transformations in rural society and economy, c. 1300 - 1640', 'Power in the English countryside, 1500 - 1640', 'Enclosure and social change in England, 1600 - 1640', 'Labouring life in the 19th century', 'The 20th-century countryside: agriculture, environment and people', and 'Farming, tools and technology in the nineteenth and twentieth century'. All students will also submit a dissertation of 12 - 15,000 words.

For an informal discussion of the MA, please call or email Professor Hoyle (0118 931 8660; r.w.hoyle@reading.ac.uk). Application is by a form which can be obtained from the RHC. The RHC also welcomes enquiries from students wishing to read for higher degrees in British rural history from the later middle ages onwards.

HISTORIC FARM RECORDS COLLECTION

During the late 1960s the Museum of English Rural Life actively sought to collect records of individual farms on a national scale. Over 330 collections have been added since. The archives are known as the Historical Farm Records Collection. The collection includes correspondence, accounts, leases, valuations, labour books, herd books, sale catalogues and personal records of farmers including diaries. The records, which date from the nineteenth and twentieth century, embrace many different aspects of farm life and work and reflect the highly integrated nature of the farm community.

Previously held at the Reading University Library, the Collection and other agricultural collections will be transferred to the Rural History Centre during June 2002. All enquiries about the Records should now be directed to the RHC.

Caroline Gould took up the post of Archivist at the beginning of January. She has already overseen major changes at the Centre, with more to come, which she will describe in the next edition of *Rural History Today*.

GOLDEN JUBILEE PRIZE ESSAY COMPETITION, 2003

To mark the celebration, in 2003, of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the BAHS, the Society invites submissions for its Golden Jubilee Prize Essay Competition. The winner will be awarded a prize of £500 and the runner-up £250. Prize winning essays will also be read at the Society's Spring Conference in 2003 and published in *Agricultural History Review.*

There is no restriction on subject matter save that essays fall within the remit of the *Review.* The competition is open to all, with no restrictions on age, but essays from younger authors, and those employing new methodologies or exploring new areas of interest will be especially welcomed. Essays should not exceed 10,000 words including footnotes and any appendices. They should be submitted in the *Review* house style and intending authors are asked to obtain a copy of the *Review's* 'Guidelines for contributors' from the editors or at; bahs.org.uk. Essays will be judged by a panel appointed by the BAHS Exec.Committee. Three copies of each essay, with author's names on a separate detachable cover sheet, should be sent to the BAHS Sec., Dr John Broad, School of Arts and Humanities, Univ. of North London, 166-220 Holloway Rd, London N7 8DB. Closing date; 30 Sept. 2002.

NEW MERL ACQUISITIONS

By Roy Brigden

Dr Roy Brigden is Deputy Director of the Rural History Centre and Keeper of the Museum of English Rural Life

Holloway Bequest

The Museum has recently acquired a further collection of beautifully-made wrought iron work by the Bradfield blacksmith Arthur Holloway. This came to us from a distant relative now residing in Devon and supplements another similar collection of Holloway's work given to the Museum by his grand-daughter in 1997.

Arthur Holloway at his Bradfield forge in the 1920s

Arthur Holloway was born in 1844 and was the resident blacksmith in the Berkshire village of Bradfield from the early 1870s to the mid 1920s. In addition to the routine of general iron work and shoeing horses, Holloway taught himself to make exquisite items, such as candle holders in the form of a tulip with each leaf and petal delicately and individually fashioned. Snails, lizards, snakes and spiders were other favourite sources for his art.

In the later nineteenth century, through the influence of William Morris and others, the work of the craftsman-artist, especially for furniture and domestic objects, was very fashionable. Close by Holloway's workshop was the boys public school Bradfield College. The parents of boys proved a ready market and took Holloway's art and reputation around the country.

Selection of wrought iron creatures and rose candelsticks created by Holloway

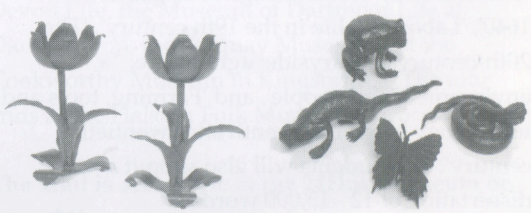
The Wilder Archive

A chance meeting brought me into contact recently with Mr JHW (Tim) Wilder at St Lucians, his splendid home by the Thames in Wallingford. Tim Wilder retired in 1986, having spent most of his working life with the family firm, John Wilder Ltd. Since then, he has been writing an autobiography and distilling a huge collection of company records and papers into a digest which he has now deposited with the RHC.

The Wilder family business at Wallingford was originally established by Tim's great grandfather Richard (1805-1866), the eighth son of the Ipsden ironfounder Leonard Wilder, six of whom also went into the trade. One of the brothers, James, established a successful foundry in Reading which subsequently passed into Wallingford ownership in 1903. Between them, the Wilder businesses were involved in the Victorian period with structural ironwork for factories and public buildings, with construction of farm implements and machines and with contract steam ploughing and threshing. Two Wilder innovations that saw the firm through the difficult times of the 1920s and 1930s were the 'pitch-pole' self-cleaning harrow and a grass cutter-elevator, useful for supplying the grass dryers that were in vogue at the time, which achieved fame as the Wilder Cutlift.

In the post-War years, Wilders enjoyed a high reputation for ingenuity in bringing out a wide range of new equipment. Its forage harvesters of the mid-1950s, for example, were in the vanguard of the silage-making revolution, even bringing Wallingford for a time into a patent dispute with the giant American manufacturer, John Deere. The manufacturing side of the business continued to be family-owned until 1998.

Tim Wilder has produced both a remarkable personal memoir and a detailed record of the firm, complete with statistics, technical information and promotional film. As he says in his foreword, 'the thought that this material will be kept by the Museum of English Rural Life so that it will be available to future researchers gives me very great pleasure'.



ANDREW JEWELL 1918-2002

By John Creasey

Andrew Jewell, Keeper of the Museum of English Rural Life, 1957-1978 and Treasurer of the British Agricultural History Society, 1964-1978 died at his home in Stratton, Cornwall on 17 May at the age of 83.

Charles Andrew Jewell was born on 27 August 1918 at Totnes, Devon and at the age of nineteen followed his father into the employment of West Devon & North Cornwall Farmers Ltd., a cooperative supply company, later qualifying as a Chartered Secretary. After war service in India he was admitted to the University of Reading to read Agriculture and in 1952 was appointed Lecturer, specialising in crop husbandry.

Andrew succeeded John Higgs, founding Keeper of the Museum of English Rural Life, in 1957 and was also appointed Lecturer in Agricultural Economics in 1958 (Senior Lecturer from 1964). As Keeper he consolidated the work that Higgs had begun, sponsoring a comprehensive recording project on traditional farm transport. He reluctantly came to believe, however, that the original model of a Scandinavian Folk Museum was not appropriate to England with its long experience of industrialisation. His own career led him to the view that an approach to agrarian history based on research and enhanced by an understanding of the scientific basis of agriculture would be more fruitful.

He therefore supported the creation of new documentary collections and the reorganisation of the Museum and its staffing structure to accommodate them. The first significant deposits of photographs were acquired in 1963-64; an Archive of Historic Farm Records was set up in 1965 and a librarian appointed in 1966. Other MERL research projects resulted in publications on the Berkshire villages of Ardington and Lockinge and Stratfield Mortimer. These new developments culminated in the establishment of the Institute of Agricultural History in 1968 of which Andrew became Co-Director with a particular responsibility for the Museum, the library and photograph collections.

Andrew published several articles on the history of agricultural museology, on the US impact on English farming and on cultivation techniques in the south west which combined his special research interests in the plough and the farming of that region. He compiled a bibliography of craft industries for the Standing Conference of Local History and in 1975 edited a selection of material from Henry Stephens, *The Book of the Farm* under the title of *Victorian Farming.*

He had a long institutional link with the British Agricultural History Society, being a member of its Executive Committee from 1961. In 1964 he succeeded Edgar Thomas as Treasurer, a post he held until his retirement . Several of Andrew's initiatives were to bear fruit decades after his retirement. With the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries he discussed a project to create an English folk museum based around MERL and sponsored a design project for a new national museum of agriculture. His close contacts with the former Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas and the Ministry of Agriculture Library have, in the course of time, led to the transfer of major collections to Reading. Andrew's wide interests bridged the gulf between science and art and his enthusiasm for the creative arts led to his encouraging the work of several young photographers, designers and typographers to the benefit of the Museum. He was a generous and patient teacher with a great ability to impart his own knowledge to others.

Andrew married Angela, a Fine Art student at Reading, in 1951 and they had three children, Mark, Simon and Lucy. On his retirement in 1979, he was succeeded by Ted Collins, his fellow Co-Director, who became sole Director of the Institute (renamed Rural History Centre in 1993) and by Roy Brigden as Keeper of the Museum. Ted also followed Andrew as Treasurer of the BAHS. In retirement Andrew served as North Cornwall Secretary of the CPRE and became actively involved in local planning and community issues. He was a Director of the Guild of St George from 1977-99 and advised it on the agricultural side of its charitable donations, including support for city farms and organic farming projects, the development of peatless compost and the recreation of Ruskin's garden at Brantwood. A previous Master of the Guild, Anthony Harris, has described him as "erudite, quietly humorous, always courteous, loyal and generous". His last work was to transcribe his family diaries and make them available to local historians. At his funeral, the readings from John Ruskin and of the Creed of the Guild of St George and Angela's request to wear bright colours reflected Andrew's Ruskinian philosophy and made the service, at Launcells Church, both a moving and aesthetic experience.

John Creasey has been Librarian at the Rural History Centre since 1974 and Information Officer since 1971. He is grateful to Angela Jewell, Ted Collins and Cedric Quayle (of the Guild of St George) for their assistance in compiling this account.

Rural History Today is jointly published by the British Agricultural History Society and the Rural History Centre, University of Reading. The next issue will appear in January 2003.

Rural History Today would be pleased to receive short articles, press releases, notes and queries for publication. Articles for submission should be sent to Richard Statham at the RHC (r.i.statham@reading.ac.uk).

Rural History Centre, University of Reading, Whiteknights, PO Box 229, Reading, RG6 6AG, tel: 0118 931 8660 email: rhc@reading.ac.uk

Visit the RHC website www.ruralhistory.org

Membership of the BAHS is open to all who support its aim of promoting the study of agricultural history and the history of rural economy and society. Membership enquiries should be directed to the Treasurer, BAHS, c/o Dept. of History, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter EX4 4RJ. Enquiries about other aspects of the Society's work should be directed to the Secretary, Dr John Broad, School of Arts and Humanities, University of North London, 166 - 220 Holloway Road, London N7 8DB. Tel: 020 7753 5020, Fax: 020 7753 3159, broadj@unl.ac.uk Articles for submission to *Agricultural History Review* should be sent to Prof. R. W. Hoyle at the Rural History Centre.

JOAN THIRSK AT EIGHTY

The Rural History Centre and the British Agricultural History Society are mounting a conference celebrating the eightieth birthday of Dr Joan Thirsk FBA and her contribution to economic, social and rural history. The highlight of the conference, to be held on 20-21 September 2002 at Reading, will be a lecture, *Food on the Table, seen from the Fields, 1500 - 1750*, by Joan Thirsk herself.

Joan Thirsk was born in 1922. She started a degree in Languages before the Second World War, but later served at Bletchley. After the war she read History at LSE and remained there to write her doctorate under Tawney. In 1951 she moved to Leicester to become Senior Research Fellow in Agrarian History: then in 1965 she became Reader in Economic History at Oxford, from where she retired in 1983. She has filled many offices within the profession: for many years one of the editorial board of *Past and Present*, editor of *Agricultural History Review*, 1964-72 and twice President of the BAHS. She was latterly General Editor of the *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, editing and contributing to Volumes Four (1967) and Five (1984) and seeing the series through to its recent conclusion. She was elected to a Fellowship of the British Academy in 1974.

Over the past fifty years Joan has produced a string of seminal and influential works; her study of Lincolnshire, *English Peasant Farming* (1957); her Ford Lectures, *Economic Policy and Progress* (1987) and *Alternative Agriculture* (1997). In 2000 she edited *The English Rural Landscape*. Her collected essays appeared as *The Rural Economy of England* (1985). Happily she remains extremely active, with much more work projected.

Joan has had a happy knack of opening up new areas of research. In the 1950s she was one of the pioneers of the study of inventories. In the early 1960s she was writing on the family before Laslett published his *The World We Have Lost*. In *Economic Policy and Progress* she explored the world - sometimes shady - of government policy, entrepreneurs and speculators and in *Alternative Agriculture* she explained how change in agriculture comes at moments of crisis and reconfiguration. Throughout, her writing has been marked by the nuance which only detailed and thoughtful study can give history: and she has always been concerned to locate her history in the experience of place and ordinary people. Hence she has always encouraged and supported local historians, and especially of her adopted county, Kent.

Papers at the conference will be given by a mixture of long-time associates and her former students, many of whom have also become prominent and influential in the profession.

Professor David Hey; *Barlow: the landscape history of a Peak District township*
Professor Peter Edwards; *Disputes over drainage in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The case of the Eylemore, East Shropshire*
Joan Thirsk FBA; *Food on the Table, seen from the Fields, 1500-1750*
Professor Richard Hoyle; *Woad, government and the crisis of the later sixteenth century*
Professor John Chartres; *A special crop and its markets in the eighteenth century - the case of Pontefract's Liquorice*
Professor Chris Dyer; *Alternative agriculture: the fall and rise of the medieval English goat*
Dr John Broad; *Regional perspectives and variations in dairying, 1650-1750*
Professor Pat Hudson; *Everyday life in textile manufacturing townships*
Dr Nicola Verdon; *Women and the informal economy*
Paul Brassley; *Industries in the twentieth century countryside: the rural industries survey, 1921-6*

For further details of the conference, or to make a booking, please contact Prof. Richard Hoyle at the Rural History Centre on 0118 931 8660. Fee; £60 for residents for two days, £35 for non-residents both days, or £21 for non-residents, attending on Saturday only (including lunch).

BAHS WINTER CONFERENCE

Saturday, 7 December 2002
Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, Malet St., London WC1

POPULAR POLITICS IN RURAL ENGLAND

10.30 Registration and coffee
10.45 Dr Miriam Muller (Birmingham); *Freedom through the court of law: peasant protest and ancient demesne in a fourteenth-century Wiltshire manor*
11.45 Dr Andy Wood (East Anglia); *Rethinking popular politics in rural England, c.1500-1700*
1.00 Lunch
2.00 Dr Jane Pearson (Essex); *Conflict and community in eighteenth-century Essex: the case of Great Tey*
3.00 Prof. Alun Howkins (Sussex); *The fight for the Headington Magdelens 1850-1900: work in progress*
4.30 Conference ends
Fee: £16 (with lunch) or £10 (without lunch). Booking form available on BAHS website.