RURAL HISTORY TODAY

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Above: Workhouse doll (GRLM) see page 6

The return of the pickers

Artist Kathryn Böhm describes how a 21st-century company links the history of Londoners going hop-picking to a new drinks enterprise of which she is a founder member on the edge of London.

Boys playing in Eastonbury gravel pits 1939 (Valence House Local Archive)

A group of boys are jumping in a recently dug pit. It is summer and there are no adults about. They have obviously made their own way to the water. The photograph was taken in 1939 and the boys are probably East End Londoners who have recently moved to the new Bacontree estate in Dagenham, the largest residential development in Europe at the time.

Many of their parents, and these children as well, would have spent their late summer holidays hop-picking in Kent, an activity which reached its height between 1850 and 1950 when up to 250,000 east Londoners, mainly women and children, would catch the 'Hopping Express' from London Bridge, or later, share a pick-up truck with friends and head for the hop fields in the 'garden of England'.

The contrast between leaving the East End and going to Kent confirms preconceptions of urban-rural distinctions. One was inner London, densely populated, highly polluted with no green outdoors and with little to do for the children. The other was the Kent countryside, hop gardens, fresh air and space. The families would stay in terraces of tin huts known as hopper huts and the adults (mainly women) would pick all day, being paid by the bushel while the children who were old enough would pick for a while, or, if they were too young, roam the orchards and fields beyond.

To leave London for the countryside seems less of a clear-cut affair today. Firstly there is no London as such. Barking and Dagenham for instance, are officially an Outer London Borough and located in Essex. The lake in the picture is in Eastbrookend Country Park and part of London's Metropolitan Green Belt. The lakes were created by gravel workings to provide the raw materials for the building of the estate. No one from Barking and Dagenham goes hop-picking any more. Working women no longer take on casual employment while at the same time giving their families a break in the freedom of the countryside. The introduction of women's and workers' rights now mean divisions between work and leisure are clearer with regular hours of work and paid holidays. The mechanization of harvesting hops has meant a reduction in the need for seasonal workers. Any manual work needed is now done by eastern Europeans.

However unfair and exploitative were the long-gone 'hopping holidays', they are fondly remembered by many. It was a temporary matriarchy and 'freedom'

Going picking – 2015 style (Kathryn Böhm)

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Grain milling in England in the Anglo-Saxon period

Gavin Bowie considers the importance of water-powered grain milling in Anglo-Saxon England

In *Anglo-Saxon Farms and Farming*, by Debby Banham and Rosamund Faith, (OUP 2014), it is stated that, although water-powered grain mills represented a novel technology in the Anglo-Saxon period, they did not have a significant function in the Anglo-Saxon economy. This short note challenges these two assertions, and also proposes that hand milling alone would have been inadequate to support the Late Saxon farming system.

Firstly, it is unlikely that these watermills represented a novel technology in the Anglo-Saxon period. Rather the evidence points to the continuity or revival of an existing technology. Two types of water-powered grain mills were introduced in Western Europe in the Roman period. One type had a vertical and the other a horizontal waterwheel. Roman mills with vertical waterwheels have been thoroughly excavated. For example a mill complex at Fullerton, Hampshire had two vertical waterwheels located side by side, with an undershot waterfeed, and dates from the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D.

It would also seem that these Roman mills had a fairly standard design. A stone-built example at the Athenian Agora, Athens, dating from the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., was probably typical. The vertical waterwheel had one-step multiplying gearing to a pair of millstones in the adjacent mill building. This technology may well have been a modernising feature in the expansion of Roman Christianity in Western Europe after the late 6th century, and the design was to remain essentially unchanged for centuries to come. A mill complex has been excavated at the site of the royal palace, Old Windsor, Berkshire dating to the late 7th century; with three vertical waterwheels. It should be noted that each of these waterwheels operated just one set of millstones. This meant that further complete units had to be built if more capacity was required. Gear systems which allowed a waterwheel to operate more than one set of millstones at a time were not developed until after the medieval period.

Mills with horizontal waterwheels have been found on early Christian monastic sites in Ireland. The earliest dendro-date of 619 AD is for a tide mill excavated at Nendrum Monastery, Strangford Lough, Co. Down. With this type of mill all the working machinery was located in the mill building itself. The horizontal waterwheel might best be described as an 'open' impulse turbine which was mounted on a vertical spindle; the latter linked directly with a set of millstones above. Mills with similar horizontal

An Anglo-Saxon 'side shot' mill reconstructed from the dig at Tamworth (Roland Wiliamson)

waterwheels have been excavated in England at Barking, Essex and Corbridge, Northumberland, which both date from the 8th century. At Ebbsfleet, Kent, a tide mill with two horizontal waterwheels located side by side was built in the late 7th century. The mill at Tamworth, Staffordshire is particularly important as it was sufficiently complete to establish the dimensions of its moving parts, and how it was worked. It has been dendro-dated to the late 850s. Its horizontal waterwheel assembly, with its distinctive spoon-shaped wooden paddles, is closely comparable with Irish examples which date from the 7th to the 9th centuries.

The output with both types of mill may be estimated at 40–50 lb. of wheat meal per hour compared with the 10–12 lb. per hour achieved with hand milling. The maximum practical diameter with a rotary hand quern was about 18in, and in the Late Saxon period powered millstones varied between 30 and 36 inches in diameter. It can be appreciated that a water-powered mill offered the flexibility of a much higher output at short notice, and that hand milling was labour intensive compared with powered milling; the latter required the services of only one person, the miller, most of the time. Hence it can be readily understood that such watermills were appropriate for royal residences, burhs / boroughs and trading towns or ports – places with significant sedentary populations that were not primarily involved with agriculture.

It is also probable that an investment in a waterpowered grain mill could be justified if it supported a market-orientated farming sector where there was an emphasis on cultivating crops and growing livestock with the aim of regularly supplying the needs and demands of an external market. There is strong

evidence for the latter in the Late Saxon period. A good indication of a developing market-orientated arable farming economy is a shift in emphasis to the cultivation of autumn-sown 'winter' wheat. This implies a reorganisation in crop management as autumn-sown crops depend on reliable fertiliser/manure inputs to survive the winter and thrive in the spring, whereas spring-sown barley and oat crops do not need such a level of support. Excavation evidence points to the increased cultivation of wheat and barley in southern England in the Late Saxon period. There was also a probable link between the cultivation of wheat and the making of leavened or 'raised' bread. It should be noted that 'white' leavened bread, made from wheat flour which had been sieved to take most of the bran out, was an important upper-class status symbol from this period onwards.

Significant literary evidence for water-powered grain mills exists for the Late Saxon period, though further research is needed. For example there are details of at least eight of them at work in Winchester and its immediate area in this period. These were based on the creation of a network of watercourses and millraces that formed an integral part of the planned conversion of the settlement into a fortified *burh,* c 890–905. Excavations directed by Martin Biddle demonstrated that by the mid -10th century there were at least two mills to the north of the city, two within the city walls, one on the main course of the River Itchen outside East Gate, and three mills immediately to the south of the city. Domesday Book provided comprehensive and definitive evidence of the ubiquity of water-powered grain mills in 1086. This provides information about six thousand in England, and there were nearly 350 of them in the County of Hampshire alone. It is likely most of these mill sites would have been developed before 1066.

It may be concluded that the evidence for both the scale of diffusion of the technology and the extent of the investment in water-powered grain mills shows that they clearly formed an integral part of a developing agricultural sector in the Late Saxon period, a sector which was efficient enough to support a monetised Late Saxon economy where food stuffs were one of the main products.

Endnote: The above paper draws on sections about medieval mills in Ireland in the author's PhD (QUB 1975). Helpful advice has been received from John Langdon, Barry Cunliffe, Alex Langlands, Patrick Appleby and Ross Dunworth.

Continued from front page

(a term used by many former pickers) where children could roam, women be financially independent and in charge of making decisions whilst having family and friends around and having a good social time. It allowed for a strong collective culture to evolve. At one of the regular informal 'Hopping Afternoons' held monthly at Valence House Local Archive in Dagenham one woman former hop-picker recalled, 'It was not just about the money, it was about being in good company'.

Something of this spirit and tradition is being revived by a Community Drinks enterprise set up in May 2014 by the artist group *My Villages* with the support of Create London and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Local groups, communities and individuals living in Barking and Dagenham are encouraged to return to the collective labour ethos of 'going picking', but having picked the crop it is then processed and the drinks sold, the profits returning to the community-led and community-owned company. Picking is only part of the whole cycle of production, trade and re-investment. An organic farm has been established in the former municipal nurseries in Central Park, Dagenham, and fruit from the organic vegetable enterprise in the walled garden at Eastonbury Manor House is picked for the drinks company. Fruit is picked and foraged from hedgerows and local parks as part of the community project. We are constantly surprised by how much grows wild and unharvested-blackberries, wild plums, cherries, elderflower, rosehips and sloes are all there for the taking. They all grow faster than we can arrange groups to go picking.

Once picked, the fruit needs processing and a whole range of cordials are produced by us, while sodas and beers from wild hops are processed by local small-scale breweries and sodaworks in Bermondsey and Hackney. The drinks are sold through cafes and restaurants in the borough as well as public events and cultural venues in west London.

As much as the hopping days were streamlined and focused on single production lines, and used a polarity of places and communities (working class East Enders and Kent farmers), Company Drinks is set up as an enterprise which can incorporate a variety of local social and economical desires addressing the problems of the economical exclusion of large parts of society and counters the lack of opportunities for making a living in a fulfilling manner. We are still a small company but are set to stay and grow. We are an optimistic project that sees the glass half full.

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in *The Land* 19, 2016

▶ *For further information see*
www.myvillage.org *and* **www.c-o-m-p-a-n-y.info**

The Brown Rat

The brown rat (Rattus norwegicus) was unknown in Britain, and apparently in western Europe, before the 18th century.

Taking up the theme of rats, introduced in Karen Sayer's article in the last issue of Rural History Today, *historic building architect and joint author of* The Dovecotes of Historical Somerset, *(Taunton, 2003) John McCann, describes the rise of the brown rat and measures taken to protect farm buildings from it.*

The black rat on the left is much smaller than the brown rat shown here on the right. As drawn in Barrett-Hamilton, G.E.H, and Hinton, M.A.C., A History of British Mammals 1910–12, *vol. 11, plate XXIV, by permission of the British library.*

In 1693 John Ray classified all the known fauna; he recorded only one species of rat, that which we now call the black rat (Rattus rattus). In early farming literature mice were evidently regarded as more harmful pests to the farmer than rats. For instance, between 1713 and 1722 Edward Lisle in *Observations in Husbandry* (London 1757) under the heading 'Enemies to husbandry' devoted a section each to foxes, hares, moles, mice, rooks, pigeons, sparrows, snails, ants, worms and various insects but he did not mention rats.

The attitude of the time was that any creature which was not specifically helpful to man must be harmful; all sorts of creatures, even including bats, were regarded as vermin. By the 4th century A.D. black rats had been introduced to Britain from south India, where they were indigenous; they were not adapted to a temperate climate, and in Britain they could survive only in man's heated buildings. As natural tree-dwellers they always made for the roofs of buildings, so typically they made their nests in thatched roofs. They were familiar in the towns, but there is little evidence that they spread to the countryside.

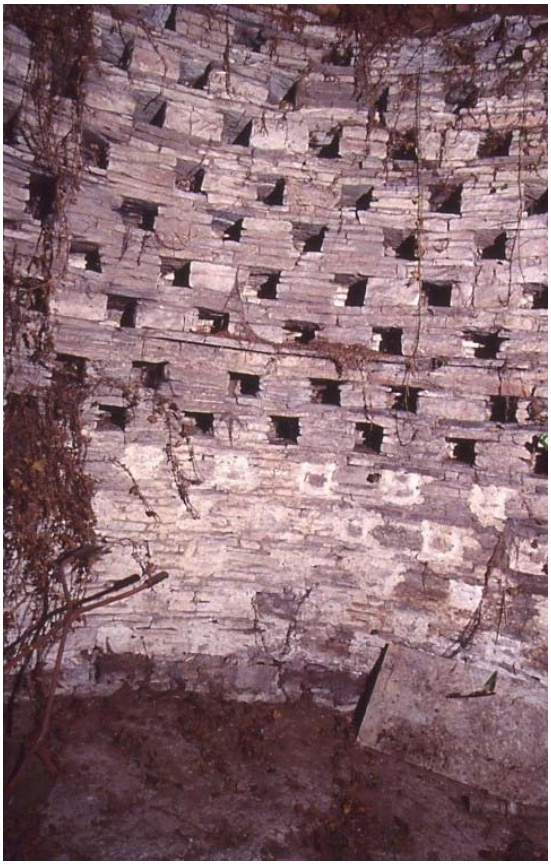
All this changed about 1730. An anonymous contributor to *The Sportsman's Dictionary* of 1735 under the heading 'pigeon and pigeon houses' reported rats as a new hazard to dovecotes; at that date he regarded them as an urban phenomenon. He proposed various ways of defeating them, but most of his devices were useless because they were based on the behaviour of black rats, which was quite different to that of brown rats. Whereas black rats were found mainly in the roofs of houses, brown rats always made for the cellars. They were creatures of the river bank, naturally living in burrows and spreading along rivers and ditches. They were indigenous in eastern Asia at the same latitude as Britain, and were naturally adapted to a temperate climate. The evidence indicates that they spread across Asia and Europe as far as the rivers terminating in the Baltic, possibly due to major climatic change, and were carried through the Baltic to Copenhagen by 1716. From there they were carried by shipping to the port of London some time between 1725 and 1735. They spread rapidly up the Thames and had reached its headwaters by 1748, and were carried by coastal shipping to other ports (see my article in *Journal of the Historic Farm Buildings Group,* vol. 10 (1996), 10–1. 'The influence of rodents on the design and construction of farm buildings, to the mid-19th century'). They were impeded for a while, but by the 1760s they had reached everywhere in the English lowlands. The critical period in which brown rats first influenced farm buildings in England was between 1740 and 1765 – earliest in the Thames basin, latest in the remote uplands. In 1788 William Marshall wrote in *The Rural Economy of Yorkshire,* 'Should their numbers continue to increase with the same rapidity they have done since the present breed got footing in the island, they will in no great time become a serious calamity'. They spread more slowly through Scotland, but eventually they reached every part of Britain and its offshore islands.

As they spread black rats declined. There is no evidence that the the brown attacked the black, but they were larger and more aggressive; they competed more successfully for many of the same foods. By 1782 Charles Waterton reported in *Essays on Natural History* that black rats were almost unknown in Britain, except

in colonies newly-introduced by shipping at some ports. Rats, being natural tunnel-dwellers, can find their way in complete darkness. They took readily to drains, and have colonised most of the town drainage systems in the British Isles. Where one rat enters a building it leaves traces which others follow until it rapidly becomes totally infested. They leave a greasy black trail, so their routes can be recognized easily. In farmsteads they tend to stay in or near the farm buildings during the winter, and in spring and summer they spread out through the surrounding ditches and fields. They breed rapidly, so culling is useless unless it is carefully planned. Shooting a few rats has no measurable effect on the rat population, but they can be controlled by carefully planned programmes of destruction.

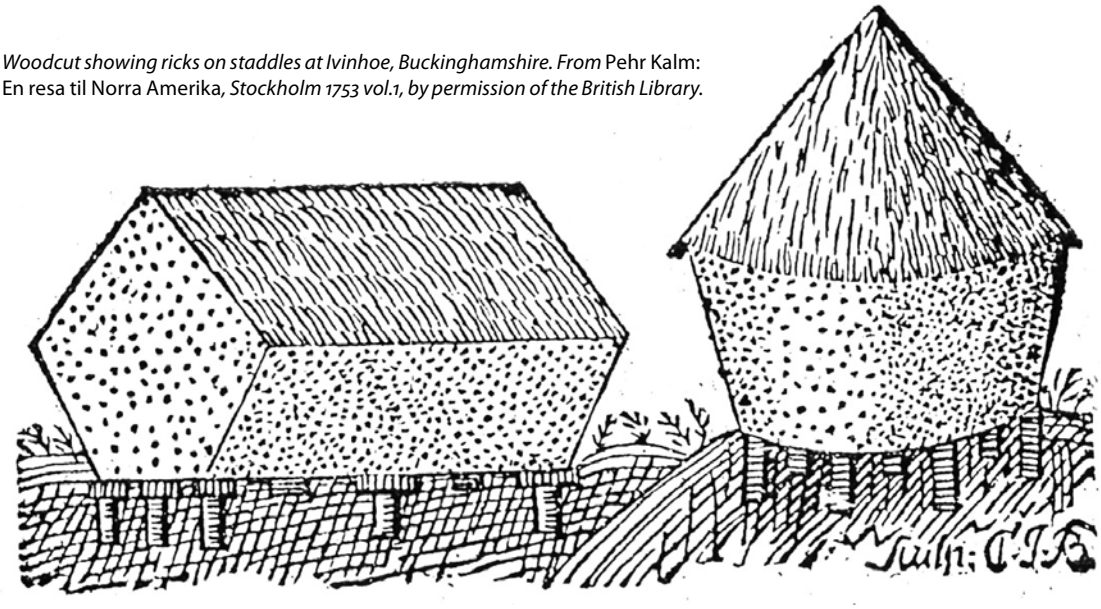
They were a particular problem to pigeon-keepers. When once they managed to enter a dovecote they predated on the eggs and helpless young birds, rapidly wiping out the breeding stock. Many dovecotes fell out of use and were never used again for their original purpose. In others, pigeon-keepers found that the best way to protect their stock was to fill the lower tiers of pigeon-holes, and to apply smooth plaster over them to a height of 1.22 m (4 ft) or more, which the new rats could not climb. Therefore whenever one sees that a dovecote has been altered in this way one knows that the dovecote is older than the mid-18th century, and that it has been modified to defeat brown rats.

Rats also had a major effect on corn storage. Before the middle of the 18th century it was common practice to build corn ricks on a layer of branches or furze, just high enough to protect the corn from rising damp. From then onwards it became increasingly common to raise the rick on stone staddles about 1.22 m (4 ft) high. They were introduced first in counties which had plenty of workable stone, but later these counties exported stone staddles to other areas. Typically the staddle consisted of a shaft like a truncated cone surmounted by a stone slab with a rounded top to throw off rainwater; but initially some staddles were formed of wood or bricks, always capped with a flat stone with a long overhang to defeat brown rats. Other devices were developed, such as a stone wall built in a circle, capped with flat stones which overhung the base by 15 cm. Some of these survive at Hennock, Devon.



At this medieval stone dovecot at Yatton, Somerset, the five tiers of nest-holes at the base have been blocked with stone and lime mortar in the eighteenth century to protect the upper tiers of nest holes against brown rats.

It can be seen therefore that the arrival of the brown rat in Britain had a profound influence on the methods of protecting food supplies and thus the design of agricultural buildings.



Woodcut showing ricks on staddles at Ivinhoe, Buckinghamshire. From Pehr Kalm: En resa til Norra Amerika, *Stockholm 1753 vol.1, by permission of the British Library.*

Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Museum

Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Museum, Norfolk opens its doors again following a multi-million pound redevelopment of the Workhouse galleries.

The entrance to Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Museum looking towards the main workhouse block of the 1770s (GRLM)

A new chapter in the long history of one of Norfolk's most important historic buildings begins thanks to National Lottery players, with the opening of the completely redesigned *Voices from the Workhouse* galleries at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse. This follows the £1.8 million Heritage Lottery Fund project which will make Gressenhall a national centre for workhouse research and interpretation.

The result of extensive public consultation, the new displays focus on the true stories of the people who lived and worked at Gressenhall over 200 years, immersing visitors in the sights, sounds and even smells of life in the workhouse.

Alongside the HLF's £1.47m investment, other key funders have supported the ambitious project, enabling the complete transformation of the galleries. These include DCMS/Wolfson Museums & Galleries Improvement Fund, Breckland District Council, Friends of Gressenhall, Norfolk County Council and Arts Council England PRISM Fund.

Cutting edge technology allows visitors to 'meet' real people from the workhouse's history through sophisticated projections. Evocative room recreations and authentically produced reproductions sit alongside displays containing rare surviving relics from Gressenhall's nationally important workhouse collections – the largest such collection in the country – to provide visitors with a vivid impression of what life was actually like in the workhouse. Specially commissioned sculptures of real people associated with the workhouse – some of which are based on descendants' photographs – add extra visual interest and emotional resonance.

Central to the redisplay is the focus on true stories from the building's past, many of which have only come to light during the research phase of the re-development project following the detailed study of original workhouse archives by a team of staff and volunteers. The voices and histories of members of staff and of inmates, of those responsible for the running of the workhouse and of those for whom it provided the only safety net in difficult times, breathe real life into the facts and statistics.

People think of workhouses as these grim environments straight out of *Oliver Twist*, but the truth was more complex. Certainly the workhouse regime, particularly after the introduction of the New Poor Law in 1834, could be very harsh but for many, including the elderly, the sick or injured, the workhouse offered a safe place to live when no other option was available. It provided inmates with basic food and healthcare. For children it provided an education and the opportunity to learn a trade and we have unearthed touching stories as to how this helped people get a decent start in life.

On the other hand, the institution's treatment of unmarried mothers, or those who rebelled against the strict regime was tough with punishments meted out to those who wouldn't toe the line. Debates about how communities should care for the vulnerable, about 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor and how best to pay for welfare are looming large again in our national debate. Visiting the new galleries at Gressenhall provides a fascinating introduction to how our ancestors tussled with the same issues. We hope all our visitors will leave having been fascinated, moved and inspired by some of the amazing stories this wonderful building contains.

Alongside the re-imagined workhouse galleries, the Museum of Norfolk Life has also been redisplayed, bringing together significant objects with real life stories. The result allows visitors to explore the social hierarchies of Victorian rural life and the roles assigned to different classes of people, from the wealthy large-scale landowners, through tenant farmers, skilled workmen and agricultural labourers like Christopher High who lived with his seven children in a tiny cottage with only two rooms. What happened to Christopher and his family dramatizes the fine line between life inside and outside the workhouse trodden by many of the rural poor in the 19th century.

With debates about austerity, welfare and social justice hitting the headlines every day, Gressenhall's history has never been more relevant. Throughout the new galleries, visitors are invited to reflect on connections between the historical past and key issues facing society today, with the intention of challenging pre-conceptions about what life was like in the workhouse and opening up debate.

Dr Megan Dennis, Curator at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse who has been leading on the new displays, describes the multi-million pound developments there.

Cusworth Hall

Life on the Land is a new exhibition at Cusworth Hall, South Yorkshire which showcases a rich and varied agricultural past.

It combines original research with artefacts from Doncaster Museums and Archives and private collections. Key themes in agricultural and rural history are explored including landownership and agency, agricultural work and workers, housing conditions and innovation. Doncaster, historically part of the West Riding of Yorkshire and now within South Yorkshire, has over time come to be synonymous with Romans, racing, railways and coal mining. Yet it was once a vibrant and important agricultural district.

The countryside around Doncaster was not heavily industrialised until the development of the collieries in the early twentieth century. Agriculture and agricultural trade remained an important albeit evolving component of the town's history. The vestiges of what was an important trading centre can still be seen in Doncaster's architecturally notable market buildings. Documents and artefacts have helped to uncover the hidden stories of rural Doncaster. One of the challenges of staging the exhibition was to tell some of these stories in a coherent and interesting manner, which was also closely interlinked with the artefacts, documents and ephemera.

The exhibition begins by considering the role of landownership and a case study of local estates. A number of large landowners had estates in the Doncaster district. As White's *Gazetteer and General Directory of Sheffield* noted in 1852 "The absence of manufactories, the wealth of its Corporation, its cheap and abundant supply of provisions, and the fertility and salubrity of the surrounding country have combined to render Doncaster a favourite residence of genteel families". Documents from Cusworth Hall Home Farm reveal everything from farm expenditure to the names of the dairy cattle.

Agricultural implements from Doncaster Museums, the majority of which were hand tools, are indicative of the agricultural work undertaken in the area. Principal crops grown were wheat, barley and turnips, together with oats, beans and potatoes. Livestock included cattle, sheep and pigs. Implements exhibited include a scythe, sickle, turnip fork and knife, seed drill, plough, and bull leader and rings. Various forks that were just too large for the display case were effectively displayed by mounting them above the text panels.

The theme of agricultural work is set within the context of innovation and trade. It considers the role local farmers' clubs and agricultural societies played. Ephemera produced by the Doncaster Agricultural Society and a medal they awarded for the best sheep is exhibited alongside the story of enormous turnips grown and exhibited by local farmers and images of the Royal Agricultural Society Show of 1912 in Doncaster. The campaign to Repeal the Corn Laws in the 1840s was hotly contested, with meetings held in Doncaster market place and local landowners divided. William Aldam was a member of the Anti-Corn Law League and his election campaign material features the Repeal prominently. A petition signed by hundreds of electors of the Borough of Leeds, which Aldam represented, demanding the Repeal of the Corn Laws is on show.

Although agricultural smocks are not rare in museum collections, the one exhibited as part of *Life on the Land* has an interesting story and is a significant object in the museum collection. It was one of the first objects acquired by the Museum in 1912, purchased for 10 shillings. It suggests the curator recognised the historical value of the object at a time when Doncaster was increasingly urbanised and industrialised, and such clothing was becoming obsolete. It is a tangible portal for exploring the agricultural workers of the district, who included men, women and children, and those employed on regular contracts and as casual labourers. The exhibition includes evocative images of the farm workers on local farms, harvesting, haymaking and working with animals.

The exhibition also tells the story of a farming family through a private collection of documents. This includes farm cash books, an auction sale book. A hand-drawn map, letters to the family from Italian Prisoners of War working alongside the family and numerous family photographs. In addition to being the fascinating story of one farming family, whose lives intersected with the Doncaster area from the First World War onwards, it also features in a forthcoming article in Family and Community History about the experience and realities of the farming ladder for those on the lower rungs.

The curator, Dr Sarah Holland in action preparing a display of agricultural implements

Representations of the rural often shape perceptions of the countryside. The exhibition features children's toys and books and a range of artworks. These include model farmyard animals, a tin tractor, a Lego farmer, and copies of *The Enormous Turnip* and Dick Turnip. Some of the items on display must surely have inspired the curator to become a rural and agricultural historian!

Life on the Land runs until 18 September 2016 at Cusworth Hall, near Doncaster and is free to visit. For opening times and visitor information see **www.doncaster.gov.uk/services/culture-leisure-tourism/cusworth-hall-museum-and-park**

▶ *For more information about the artifacts and stories featured in the exhibition, visit* **sarahholland3012.wordpress.com** *and* **@DrSarahHolland**

Dr Sarah Holland is a rural and agricultural historian who lectures at the University of Nottingham. She describes here the exhibition she has researched and curated and is anxious to hear from readers with memories of life on the land or their own collections of documents or artifacts by e-mail sarah.holland@nottingham.ac.uk or via twitter @DrSarahHolland

Rural History Today is published by the British Agricultural History Society. The editor will be pleased to receive short articles, press releases, notes and queries for publication.

Articles for the next issue should be sent by 30 December 2016 to Susanna Wade Martins, The Longhouse, Eastgate Street, North Elmham, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 5HD or preferably by email scwmartins@btinternet.com

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, Dr William Shannon, 12A Carleton Avenue, Fulwood, Preston PR2 6YA Email: bill_shannon@msn.com

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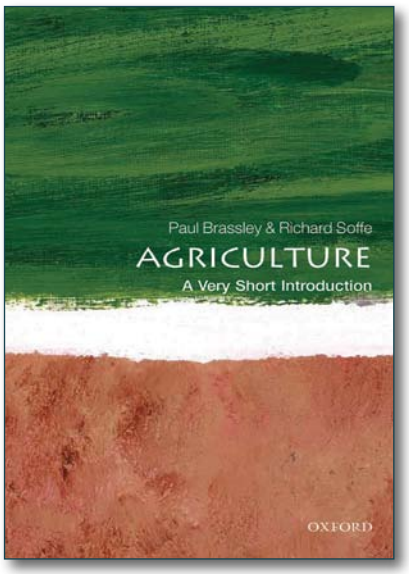
A NEW BOOK

'Agriculture is a very wide subject, and no one can master it all within the limits of an ordinary lifetime', wrote Primrose McConnell, in The Diary of a Working Farmer, published in 1906. These rather forbidding words often came to mind during the writing of *Agriculture: A Very Short Introduction*.

Agriculture is the 473rd volume in Oxford University Press's Very Short Introductions series (**www.oup.com/uk/vsi**). Introducing a wide subject such as agriculture in the 35,000 word format of the VSIs is a challenge, to put it mildly. Rural historians coming from a background of history, rather than agriculture, should find the first two chapters, which account for nearly half of the book, especially useful. Chapter 1 looks at soils and crops, explaining how the composition and structure of soils enable them to support and nourish plants, examining how plants grow and what prevents them from doing so, and putting all this together to show how different cropping systems emerge. Chapter 2 does the same for farm animals, beginning by explaining the importance of the difference between ruminants and non-ruminants and going on to look at their feeding, breeding, housing and diseases and to show how differences in these lead to different livestock production systems. The remaining chapters are about present-day input and output markets, about the differences between modern and traditional farming, and finally about problems that will become increasingly important, such as climate change and the challenge of feeding a growing world population. An extensive bibliography takes the reader to a wide range of more detailed material. It's worth emphasising that the book is not an introduction to English agricultural history – Oxford UP think that's too narrow a subject for the VSI series – but it should be useful for those who need some technical information on agriculture.



▶ *Agriculture: A Very Short Introduction by Paul Brassley and Richard Soffe, 127 pages, was published by Oxford University Press in April 2016, price £7.99, ISBN 978-0-19-872596-1*

AUTUMN & WINTER CONFERENCES

Historic Farm Buildings Group

2 – 4 September 2016
in the Abergavenny – Brecon area of Wales

This Conference is being organised by the 'Village Alive Trust' in the Abergavenny area and by Jeremy Lake and Sam Hale in the Brecon area.

It will be an opportunity to visit this area on the edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park where there have been some exciting recent restorations of historic farm buildings, including for innovative new uses.

The Saturday programme will be based around Ty Mawr, near Llangorse Lake, about 6 miles south-east of Brecon, The site retains the foundations of an impressive manor, now demolished, but the Great Barn and other outbuildings remain. Lectures, will include overviews of the heritage of farmsteads across Wales, longhouses and the issues for reuse. The afternoon visits will include a model courtyard farm, ranges of 17th century and earlier longhouse-type dwellings, and a rare set of buildings erected by the Ministry of Agriculture when the farm was taken in hand by the government during the Second World War.

The Village Alive Trust (see **www.villagealivetrust.org.uk**) was founded in Monmouthshire in 2002 to help private owners obtain grants and access best practice to conserve the fabric of their historic buildings. Sunday will start at their latest completed project, Grade II* listed Croft Farm Barn, built in the 1580s and noted for illustrating the introduction of framed principals in a cruck-trussed structure. Nearly derelict before restoration it is planned for community use and a learning space for heritage and viticulture (the owners of the barn run White Castle Vineyard). See **www.wineandheritage.org.uk** For more details and application form, visit the HFBG website: **www.hfbg.org.uk**

British Agricultural History Society Winter Conference

3 December 2016

Trade and markets in agricultural goods: from plough to plate, field to fork.
Further details will be available on the Society's website: www.bahs.org.uk

RURAL HISTORY TODAY

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Professor David Hey (1938–2016)

David Hey died at his home in Dronfield Woodhouse on 14 February this year. He was a long standing member of the British Agricultural History Society, and served on its Executive Committee for many years. He was chairman (1986-9) and President (2001-3). A regular attender at the Spring and Winter conferences, he would always greet members as life-long friends and acquaintances, and he could usually be found somewhere near the bar or leading the way on the Society's annual field trip.

David Hey graduated from Keele University, and then returned to his native south Yorkshire to become a school master, but he quickly turned his attention towards local and agrarian history. His first foray into agricultural history came in 1969 when he was appointed to the position of Research Fellow in the Department of English Local History at the University of Leicester, in succession to Dr Joan Thirsk when she moved to Oxford. This position carried with it the responsibility for producing the annual list of publications in agrarian history, which was published in the *Agricultural History Review*. David compiled the Annual List for volumes xxii and xxiii, and he also produced the list of books and articles on agrarian history for 1969 (volume xix, 82–7), for 1970 (xx, 64–75) and for June 1971 (xxi 57–65).

David's first academic paper in the *Review* was published in 1969. Entitled 'A dual economy in South Yorkshire', it showed how as a young scholar he was developing an academic interest which paralleled Joan Thirsk's work on 'the dual economy' in the early modern period. It linked as well to the interests of W.G. Hoskins, his first PhD supervisor at Leicester, and Alan Everitt who took over when Hoskins retired. David always acknowledged a debt of gratitude to Joan Thirsk and, with John Chartres, edited a festschrift for her in 1990: *English rural society 1500–1800* (Cambridge).

In 1973 David moved to the Division of Adult

Davis Hey at Hutton-le-Hole, June, 2015 (Pat Hey)

Continuing Education at the University of Sheffield. He spent the rest of his career at Sheffield until he took early retirement in 1998. In this post he was concerned primarily with teaching and researching local and family history. He became one of the most respected academic local historians in the country – at his death he was still President of the British Local History Association – and he pioneered a whole new range of thinking about family history, including the value of surname analysis and DNA testing.

Despite the range of his family and local history work David never lost his early interest in agricultural history. His regular attendance at the Society's conferences enabled him to keep up with the historiographical trends as well as with old friends! In the papers that he read to the Society, and through field trips, he brought together the academic study of rural society with the broader 'public' perception of how communities have functioned in the past.

David was recruited by Joan Thirsk for the *Cambridge Agrarian History of England and Wales* volumes covering 1640–1750 (1984), partly because he had developed a strong interest in the study of

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probate inventories. This enabled him to view the rural community through documents generated on behalf of farmers and other rural workers in his chapters covering Yorkshire and Lancashire, and the north-west Midlands including Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire and Shropshire. In these regional studies, despite the constraints of the subject matter, and the demands of Joan Thirsk as editor, David was able to describe rural communities at work, and to offer individual examples, drawing on inventory evidence.

David was, by inclination, an historian of the rural community rather than a 'cows and ploughs' man – although famously (or notoriously!) he once led a Society excursion in pursuit of a Tamworth pig which had, alas, left for the abattoir before the Society arrived!

After his early days at Leicester, David wrote only occasionally for the *Review* (apart from book reviews), but his last two contributions were both on the area he loved in south Yorkshire and north Derbyshire, and on landscape. In 2011 he published on 'Kinder Scout and the legend of the Mass Trespass', and in 2014 on 'The medieval origins of south Pennine farms: the case of Westmondhalgh Bierlow' – a paper he had previously read to a Society Spring Conference.

David believed in the Society looking at landscapes to understand both the nature of the rural community and also the evolution of the countryside – following here in the steps of Hoskins. He wanted BAHS members to walk their country. Not all agreed: David was genuinely upset when a number of younger academics wanted to drop the annual field trip, and I recall him being astonished to see two young scholars on a Spring Conference excursion looking completely bored as Chris Dyer explained the intricacies of a Deserted Medieval Village in Northamptonshire.

David will be much missed for his cheerful good humour. He was due to give a paper and lead the annual excursion at the 2016 Spring Conference, activities at which he would have been more than comfortable and at which members would have enjoyed the deep learning, expressed in that characteristic Penistone accent. It was not to be. David was a serious academic historian, but he did not live in an ivory tower. He was wonderfully gifted when it came to communicating with the thousands of amateurs who at one time or another attended his adult education classes. And, of course, there was that mischievous sense of humour. Regular Society conference goers will recall his rendition of Albert and the Lion as the Presidential after-dinner speech at the Annual Dinner in 2003. A fine man and a fine scholar, David will be much missed by the Agricultural History Society.

John Beckett