RURAL HISTORY TODAY

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WORK BEGINS ON NEW HOME FOR MERL

Construction work has now begun on the new £10.5 million Museum of English Rural Life on the former St Andrew's Hall site in Redlands Road. The Chancellor of the University, Lord Carrington, formally opened the construction and refurbishment work at a 'turf-cutting' ceremony on 4 June.

Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the University, the Project has also received generous financial assistance from a host of regional and local organisations and individuals whose support has been invaluable in bringing the scheme to fruition.

The new Museum will offer superb facilities for the display of its internationally important collections, with much-improved conditions for storage and conservation. Located at the former St Andrew's Hall in Redlands Road, the existing building, Grade 2 listed and designed by Alfred Waterhouse, will house the Museum's archive, book and photographic collections along with enhanced visitor facilities, including a large new reading room and a space for temporary exhibitions. A new wing in contemporary style, designed by Niall Phillips Architects, will house the artefact collections - including wagons, machinery and tools - accessible for the first time in their entirety and brought alive for different groups of visitor by means of web-based multimedia, interactives and more traditional forms of interpretation. The existing large gardens will provide an ideal space for open-air events within

Contractors move into St Andrew's

The turf-cutting was carried out by the Chancellor of the University, Lord Carrington, watched by Barry Jones, Regional Managing Director, Mansell and the Vice-Chancellor Professor Gordon Marshall

the framework of a year-round programme of workshops, activities and educational sessions designed to ensure that MERL remains a lively and popular venue.

'The new MERL will offer something for everyone,' explained Dr Roy Brigden, Keeper of the Museum, 'and we are really looking forward to doing full justice to our wonderful collections at last. A lot of people have helped along the way and we'll be repaying them with an exciting new facility that will put MERL firmly back on the map and be a meeting place for everyone with an interest in the countryside'.

As part of the development process, the Museum will be actively consulting with its users in the coming months, seeking the views of visitors on future displays, exhibitions and public services. There will also be an increased range of opportunities for volunteers to help out with our event and activity programmes, assist with cataloguing and research, or lend support to the ambitious project to repackage and conserve the Museum's priceless collection of glass plate negatives prior to the move to the new site. All those who would be interested in taking part in the audience consultation process, or in volunteering, are invited to get in touch on 0118 378 8660 or email merl@reading.ac.uk

To find out more, go to www.ruralhistory.org

ALSO IN *this issue*

GM CROPS AND AGRICULTURAL HISTORY

By Paul Brassley

Dr Paul Brassley is a Senior Lecturer in Rural History and Policy in the Seal-Hayne Faculty of Land, Food and Leisure at the University of Plymouth.

On 3 June 2003 the great GM debate began with a meeting at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. The committee set up by the government to enquire into public attitudes to the introduction of genetically modified crops held several public meetings in June and July, and invited public contributions to their website (www.gmpublicdebate.org.uk).

Since the effects of an innovation often take some time to become apparent, historians might legitimately ask if they have anything to contribute to this debate. Always remembering the dangers of extrapolating from the particular circumstances of the past to what may be very different conditions in the present or future, the answer should be 'yes', if only because there have been numerous historical examples of agricultural innovations. Can we therefore assess whether or not their impact has been beneficial or malign?

In one sense, all agricultural activity represented an innovation at some point in time, and at a distance of several thousand years the question of whether or not the development of agriculture was good for society, the economy or the environment might be thought to be more the province of the philosopher than the historian. From more recent times, however, it is worth remembering that what now appear to be traditional and well-established features of European agriculture were once recent introductions. Turnips and some of the leguminous fodder crops such as red clover and sainfoin were new field crops in seventeenth-century England, although turnips had been a garden crop long before that. Maize was not widely grown in Britain before the nineteenth century, and sugar beet was introduced in the early twentieth century, although it had been widely grown in continental Europe long before. Peas and French beans were also garden crops that moved into the fields on a significant scale in the 1960s. Oilseed rape, which is often considered to be another newcomer dating from the late 1960s, was in fact being grown in this country at least as far back as the seventeenth century. Perhaps the closest parallel to GM crops can be found in the USA, with the introduction of hybrid corn (i.e. maize) in the interwar years. Because it was a first generation cross, farmers had to change their old habit of saving their own seed and buy new seed from the seed companies each year; the extra yield produced made it worthwhile.

'What is less well understood, even by farmers, is that higher yielding crops are not always good for farm profits in the long run'.

The impact of these foregoing examples generally seems to have been benign, but there are plenty of examples of problematic introductions. Nature conservationists have written extensively about the ecological impacts of grey squirrels, sycamore trees, rhododendron, Japanese Knotweed, and rabbits, and it is perhaps these examples, with their implications of the unpredictability of ecosystems and the long time periods required for the impact of introductions to become apparent, that have affected the views of professional ecologists. These can hardly be said to be the results of agricultural change, but there certainly are examples of agricultural innovations directly affecting wildlife: organochlorine pesticides were concentrated in the food chain and eventually reduced the thickness of the eggs of birds of prey, with consequent effects on their breeding success in the 1960s. More recently it has become apparent that increased fertilizer use has been affecting freshwater ecology, perhaps from the late nineteenth century onwards. Most tragic, perhaps, has been the recent development of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). All of these have been cited in support of the view that it takes a long time for the effects of change to become apparent.

Less discussed in the GM debate, at least so far, have been the more complex bio-social interactions of new crops. The best known historical example of this must be the potato. Without it, the high population densities in parts of nineteenth-century Ireland could not have been sustained, but in consequence the Irish population was that much more severely affected by the potato blight epidemics of 1845 and after. The dangers of such over-reliance on one crop are well known; what is less well understood, even by farmers, is that higher yielding crops are not always good for farm profits in the long run. Although at first sight this seems unlikely, and in the short run another few kilogrammes per hectare must add to incomes, it must be remembered that the demand for food raw materials increases only slowly in developed countries, so extra supplies have to be sold more cheaply to find a market. Even with government price support programmes, agricultural prices in Britain halved between the end of the Second

World War and 1986, and then halved again by the end of the twentieth century. Attitudes to risk have also changed, as Ulrich Beck has argued. Up to about 1980, agricultural policy fairly reflected the views of most people in Western Europe by being most concerned with producing enough to eat; since then consumers have been much more concerned with the safety of their food, and the animal welfare and environmental effects of its production.

Looking at the GM debate in its historical context therefore suggests that, to some extent at least, we have been here before. Agriculture has been responsible for previous widespread introductions of new genetic material into our environment: some have been benign, others less so, and a few extemely problematic. What is historically unprecedented is the control that just a few commercial companies have over that material, and, perhaps, their influence over the national and international agencies that decide upon what they might be permitted to do with it.

CONTEMPORARY COLLECTING AT MERL & THE RURAL LIFE MUSEUM NETWORK

By Brenda Jones

Over the past fifty years significant changes have taken place in the countryside. There have been considerable technological advances in the science of agriculture and its application, as well as social change within rural communities. The outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001 thrust rural issues into the spotlight, and they have since continued to remain high on the media and political agenda.

Rural life museums have generally remained static in the face of this change, both in terms of collection practice and exhibition scope and have thus become increasingly removed from a contemporary audience. This is reflected in a national decline in visitor numbers as identified by Rob Shorland-Ball in *Farming, Countryside and Museums*, 2000, and *Seizing the Opportunities*, 2001.

The challenge for rural life museums today is to record the relationship between people and the land and the increasing diversity emerging in the rural economy, environment and society. As well as documenting this change, rural life museums must interpret their collections in a way more relevant to groups without nostalgic interest in, or direct knowledge and experience of rural life.

Part of my work as Designation Challenge Fund Officer is to implement a programme of contemporary collecting to address these issues. This has involved a two-tiered focus: documenting rural issues at a national level by tracking websites, publications and relevant conferences, and by observing the local impact of rural issues. By working with rural related organisations such as the Shinfield and Poundgreen Women's Institute, Reading Young Farmers Club and the Berkshire Conservation Volunteers, as well as individuals (a local farmer and large animal vet) we are gaining a wonderful insight into the attitudes and experiences of those living contemporary rural life. Types of material collected include audio recordings, photographs and documents.

One aspect of the project which readers of *Rural History Today* may be able to help with involves documenting the transition of Shinfield village from a rural idyll to a developing commuter base. I am looking for information about the village in the years 1953, 1973 and 2003, focusing on St Mary's Church, the Village Green, the Six Bells Pub and the Infant and Nursery School. If you have or know of anyone with information, photographs, or memories about these time periods then please contact me at the Museum of English Rural Life on 0118 378 8669 or b.m.jones@reading.ac.uk.

The Rural Life Museum Network

Rural life museums face a number of challenges not least of which can be physical isolation, insufficient resources and the prevalent belief amongst the public that these museums contain a proliferation of agricultural implements and very little else. Volunteers or transient freelance curators often operate these smaller museums, making it difficult for professional development in terms of staff and/or museum practice. Small rural life museums in remote areas often miss out on useful news concerning successful projects and information about funding opportunities, resulting in a glut of rural life museums struggling to keep afloat in today's heritage market.

Working in association with the Rural Life

Brenda Jones is a Designation Challenge Fund Project Officer at MERL, with responsibility for the development of the Rural Life Museum Network and contemporary collecting.

'The challenge for rural life museums today is to record the relationship between people and the land and the increasing diversity emerging in the rural economy, environment and society'.

Museums Action Group (RuLMAG), and within the context of the reports covering this sector, I am implementing a mechanism for wider communication between these museums through the new Rural Life Museum Network, working to encourage a shared agenda for progress in all aspects of museum practice.

A number of key rural life museums have been identified within England as well as taking into account the principal collections of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Current membership of the Network stands at 30 with a second batch of museums to be approached later in the year once the Network is firmly established.

An email discussion group has evolved for the museums to debate issues of relevance with topics such as terminology problems, the concept of a national distributed collection and the use of online access for education. A website is currently under development with proposed features including a list of exhibitions and events held by all the museums, staff specialities, rural objects in need of identification and collecting policies of the museums. Positive steps have also been taken towards the first collaborative project with an invitation to tender circulating for a short development study of the distributed national collection held by the member museums of the Network.

The next major Network event will be a seminar in November involving guest speakers and a forum to implement future strategy.

For further information, please contact Brenda Jones on 0118 378 8669. b.m.jones@reading.ac.uk.

The Rural Life Museum Network was discussed at the recent RuLMAG Meeting at Beamish. Attendees included Gareth Beech, Roy Brigden, John Gall, Brenda Jones, Fiona Lockhart, Brian Loughborough, Bob Powell, Rob Shorland-Ball, Gavin Sprott, Richard Statham, David Viner, Catherine Wilson and Diana Zeuner.

ABOUT FACE

By Bill Graham

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What does the crisis in agriculture mean to young people when there is plentiful food in the shops? Why should the rural economy matter when they perceive their future employment to be in the city? Does the countryside offer them anything apart from a large green space for the occasional recreational visit with parents?

Farming and Countryside Education (FACE) aims to help reconnect young people with the countryside. Since its inception it has been piloting innovative ways for working with schools.

FACE is a non-campaigning organisation with over 40 members representing the full spectrum of views across the agricultural sector such as the Dairy Council, Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens and the Soil Association. This approach was commended in the Report of the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food. Much time and activity has been spent trying to create curriculum materials and activities of direct relevance to what is required in the classroom. The regional teams highlight local opportunities and support farmers or growers offering educational access while the creation of a comprehensive website provides a range of opportunities for pupils to find out about the real business of farming, examine the options and become informed citizens of the future. Many teachers have asked for an historical dimension on the website, and presently FACE is working on a number of projects. For example, "Countryside Past - Countryside Present" is a time line of images being prepared in collaboration with MERL. It is based on a range of themes and issues moving forward to allow comparisons with contemporary views and opinions. Credibility has come from a seriousness of intent to underpin this work with objective and independent evidence through research.

Two major studies commissioned by FACE have recently been completed and their conclusions have been found to be of value to many working in this sector. Much is made in the media of the negative images which young people have about food, farming and countryside issues. However, the key finding from the research is that given the right stimuli and encouragement, town can meet country.

For further information and contact details please go to: www.face-online.org.uk

A PENNINE DAIRY FARM IN THE 1930s

By Dan Byford

Between 1932 and 1937, I lived 150 yards from my maternal grandfather's dairy farm in a place so small it could hardly be called a hamlet. Grandfather had spent a lifetime as a tenant of the Fawkes Estate which was centred on Farnley Hall and covered a large part of the northern side of the mid-Wharfe Valley, much of Washburndale and extended south through Menston towards Shipley and Bradford. From c. 1900 to the mid-1920s he was the tenant of Riffa Farm which bordered the road to Harrogate from Pool-in-Wharfedale. Riffa was, at 350 acres, the largest farm on the estate and had been, in the mid-nineteenth century, according to the estate's historian, Marion Sharples in her book of 1995, *The Fawkes Family and their Estates in Wharfedale*, the only farm which was not dominated by pasture.

By the early twentieth century, I suspect that pasture was dominant at Riffa too, and I always thought of my grandfather as a dairy and beef farmer although he still had farm servants living in up to the 1920s, which suggests some continuation of arable farming. Nevertheless, milk, sent by train from Pool to Leeds, and beef were his main businesses; many years later, I was told by old farmers that 'he had a good eye for a beast'. In the mid-twenties when many large estates were being sold or curtailed he lost the tenancy and moved a year or two later to a dairy farm of 30 - 40 acres at Chevin End. This was a comedown though he probably owned it as I never heard him grumbling about a landlord.

The Chevin is a Pennine hill which rises to over 900 ft. and overlooks the market town of Otley and mid-Wharefdale. Chevin End was on a shoulder of the Chevin to the west of the apex. The farm was the only building of any size and it was a short distance along a rocky track from the other buildings - an inn and two cottages, with a barn and yard opposite housing the farm bull. There was also a small shop which we moved to in 1932, which my grandmother had bullied my mother to take over. At the highest point of the shoulder there was a terrace of four cottages with long views to the south west towards Harry Ramsden's original fish and chip shop and the Aire Valley. All these buildings except the shop were, like the farm, built of gritstone. There were also three brick bungalows and a large electricity substation all built about 1930.

One of the bungalows was my grandparent's home. They had obviously had enough of living in primitive farm buildings. Grandfather was semi-retired, but he still turned up at 5am and 2.30pm to help my uncles with the milking. Below the shoulder on the Otley road a small estate of semi-detached houses, mostly occupied by commuters, had been built on the hillside and further down the road there was a large Clarion Camp with residential and sports accommodation and a camp site. At weekends large groups of walkers and cyclists from nearby West Riding towns passed the shop on their way to the camp.

Three of the roads to the junction were very steep but the fourth, to Guiseley, was fairly flat. All the roads had marvellous views of the dale and over Ilkley Moor. Although Chevin End was so small and difficult of access, it was not cut off as Samuel Ledgard ran an hourly bus service through it between Otley and Horsforth. My grandmother used this service regularly to go to the pictures every Wednesday and Saturday night and to go to the Methodist Chapel in Guiseley on Sunday. My grandfather preferred daily visits to the shrine of St. Joshua Tetley up the road.

Although all the houses had electricity, which was not common in rural areas at that time, conditions in the stone buildings were primitive. There was running cold water but hot water came from a tapped cylinder next to the fire. There were no bathrooms and no W.Cs - the outside dry closets were emptied once a week by a poor chap from Guiseley with a horse and cart. I did not pay much attention to this at the time as I lived in a new building with all modcons, but in retrospect the implications of producing and retailing milk in those conditions has made me wonder how the customers survived.

The farm was a rambling and ramshackle building. Its kitchen cum-living room was about ten feet above the farmyard and was reached up a steep and often slippery slope. Beyond the kitchen was a surprisingly large and elegant, but rarely used, sitting room with a view over the fields. The yard was surrounded on three sides by the farmhouse with the hayloft, stable and fodder store attached to it and, at right angles was the mistal holding about twelve to fourteen cattle. Opposite the farmhouse was the dairy and

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associated buildings; beyond them was a corrugated iron waggon shelter and garage. The hen house was in a field behind it. The yard and buildings were surrounded mostly by rough pasture. There was a large, relatively flat, meadow and a field with a moderately steep slope which was ploughed for oats and provided wonderful sledging. There was also an undulating field between the farm and the roads which seemed to have no agricultural use. In spite of its unevenness it was used by the local men for casual games of cricket and even for golf, although there were neither tees nor greens.

The cattle spent about half the year on the rough pasture but were brought in at night and for the afternoon milking. They came in response to the shouts of 'cush, cush' and found their own way to the stalls. If one made a mistake and got in the wrong stall, great pushing and mooing would ensue. In winter they spent almost all the time inside. They were a motley bunch reminiscent of the early nineteenth century herds of the West Riding before the shorthorn spread. The cows produced a great deal of excrement which they dropped into a channel the length of the mistal, although some of it always seemed to be stuck on their rear quarters. The muck was shifted by shovel and barrow to the manure heap outside the mistal door. The mistal would be well sprayed with cold water. Then the hands which had been clearing up would, without the benefit of soap and water, start to milk the equally unwashed udders. The dairy and its utensils would also be liberally sprayed. The milk, after being put through the cooler, would be put into a large churn, fitted into the Ford 8 Saloon with the front passenger seat removed and taken to the new estates in Guiseley to be delivered by pint and half pint measures into the jugs of customers. They also delivered cream and very 'free range' eggs from birds which wandered about the fields.

There was only one other boy about my age in the area and we roamed the fields and played endless games of cricket and soccer, one against one, but there is a limit to the time that even a small boy can do that. The farm, therefore, was a great distraction for both of us. I even attempted to learn to milk but after being knocked over from a wobbly milking stool into the mucky channel, I decided to give it up.

The mid-1930s saw increasing regulation of farming, especially of the milk trade. Anxiety about the rapid souring of milk, the many germs in milk as a result of hand delivery and the connections between TB and milk was widespread. The creation of the Milk Marketing Board in 1933 was partly a response to these concerns, although it was the domination of the dairy farmers by large users and distributors which was the trigger for its foundation. Nevertheless, the beginning of tuberculin testing of dairy herds and the grading of milk by quality was an important consequence.

I was, of course, totally unaware of all this though I was aware of my grandfather's hatred of the Board which he expressed frequently in the strongest terms. I realise now that it was not only the Board's powers of inspection which annoyed him but its attempt to lighten the burden of low prices for the large dairy farms by subsidies from the more profitable farms with their own milk rounds which were mostly small.

Another aspect of the farm which, in retrospect, I find horrifying was the treatment of the bull,

'The mid-1930s saw increasing regulation of farming, especially of the milk trade. Anxiety about the rapid souring of milk, the many germs in milk as a result of hand delivery and the connections between TB and milk was widespread'.

Hay-making at Chevin End in the 1930s. From the Author's collection

called Billy of course. He spent all his time in a barn without windows or light, fastened in a stall and was never released except to serve a cow in the yard. Not surprisingly, on these occasions he was vicious. In the barn his frustration was such that he regularly banged a horn against the stone wall until it broke and covered his head with blood.

Much of what I observed belonged to an earlier and harsher period of farming but one aspect of the past which was most enjoyable was hay-making (when the weather was good). At this time the solitary farm horse came into its own. It pulled the hay cutter, the hay drying spinner and the hay rake, and it towed the hay cart to the hayloft and an extra stack behind the farm yard in good years. My uncles had help from the local population, many of whom turned out in the evening after work to help with drying the hay and loading and unloading it into the loft. There were not many men but most had worked on farms before moving on to the textile mills of Guiseley. Some women helped too and the children played amongst the hay and rode on the horse or the cart. Whether the adults were paid I do not know, but as it was a rare and enjoyable social occasion they were probably rewarded at the Chevin Inn.

My uncles, being young men in their twenties, hankered after more modern aspects of farming in the period when tractors were beginning a slow spread in England. They were very expensive and not affordable in such a small enterprise which supported four adults (and a new wife) so they created their own tractor. Its basis was an old Model T Ford car which was stripped of its doors, roof and passenger seats. A towing unit was attached to the rear of the chassis. Although intended to be used as a plough, the arable field had a considerable slope and heavy soil and attempts to use motor power did not last long. The 'tractor' was abandoned in a corner of the field, remaining there after 1945.

In 1937 my mother gave up the shop and shortly afterwards the farm was also sold. Whether the abandonment of the farm was due to growing calls on profits, I do not know, but by this time both my uncles were married and had children. There seem to be three aspects of the business which could account for low profits. Firstly it was very small. Secondly, in spite of the regular birth of the calves, there were never any about. They were probably sold immediately after birth at their least profitable. Thirdly, as I remember it, there were never any pigs on the farm, which is odd considering the traditional importance of pigs, fed on surplus and sour milk, to the small dairy farmer.

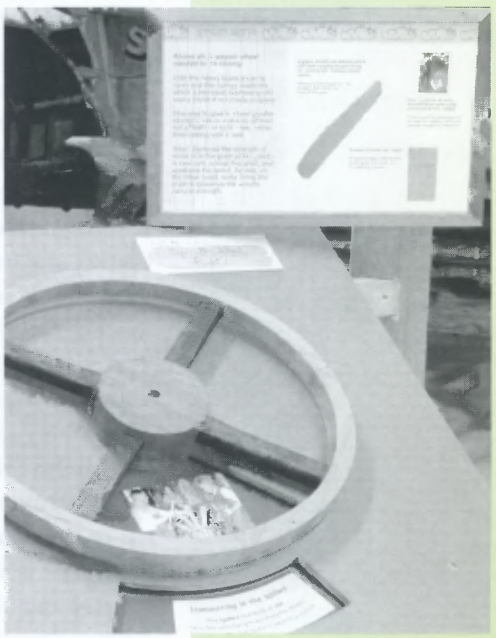
MERL UNVEILS 'WORM HUNT'

The recent 'Woodcraft Day' at the Museum of English Rural Life saw the launch of 'Worm Hunt' - a new range of displays and interactives on the theme of wood and wood crafts.

Developed with financial support from SEMLAC - the South East Museum, Library and Archive Council - 'Worm Hunt' gives opportunities for youngsters with their families or in school parties to explore 'feely boxes', turn a wagon wheel, examine decayed and restored wood through a magnifying glass, solve a giant word-search puzzle with a rake, reassemble a sliding nineteenth century sign, or spin a pole lathe to generate a 'worm that turned'. The new resource also includes new information panels for the general visitor about different types of wood and woodcraft techniques designed to complement the existing rich and scholarly displays and provide National Curriculum links.

The development of 'Worm Hunt' takes place within the context of the HLF Audience Development Project at MERL and is part of a special programme of events and new displays unrolling prior to the move to St Andrew's. If it proves popular, 'Worm Hunt' will be transferred to St Andrew's, whilst in the meantime it provides opportunities to experiment with different types of interpretation and evaluate ways of improving access to the collections for a wide range of different audiences. Developed by a team of staff including the Museum Officer Will Phillips, the Audience Development Officer Richard Statham and the Conservator and Technician Robin Harrison, 'Worm Hunt' aims to motivate and communicate by providing opportunities for social interaction and cooperation, by enabling multiple outcomes which are surprising and unexpected, by engaging the senses and by giving opportunities for physical engagement and control.

Below: Two interactives from 'Worm Hunt'. 'Spin the Wheel, Right?' shows the stages involved in wheel-making, while 'Raking Around ' includes a word-search puzzle which can be solved by fitting the rake tines into the holes.



A Call for Assistance: *Occupational Change and Economic Growth in England before 1851*

By Leigh Shaw-Taylor

If we know about people's occupations, then we know about the economy of which they were a part. And if we can trace how those occupations changed - the way in which some forms of livelihood became more prominent whilst others disappeared - then we can learn a great deal about changes in the larger economy.

'The primary aim of the project is ... to chart the evolution of the male occupational structure of the English economy between c. 1750 and c. 1850 at local, regional and national levels'.

The 1841 census provides the earliest adequate description we have of the male occupational structure of the English economy. The earlier censuses contain only limited occupational information, though the 1831 census is exceptional in providing some data down to the level of the individual parish. Before 1801 though, we currently lack any large-scale systematic data. As a consequence we lack a satisfactory account of the evolution of the occupational structure of the economy for the period of the agricultural and industrial revolutions. We do not know what the economy looked like before the nineteenth century and therefore cannot accurately specify the nature of economic change over the early modern period.

A number of economic historians have tried, with differing degrees of ambition and success, to rectify this gap in our knowledge. Some have tried to establish shifts in occupations within individual sectors while others have tried to construct national profiles for single years. Our knowledge though remains imperfect and patchy. Prof. E.A. Wrigley and I have recently been awarded an E.S.R.C. Grant entitled 'Male Occupational Change and Economic Growth in England 1750-1851'. The primary aim of the project is to fill this lacunae and chart the evolution of the male occupational structure of the English economy between c. 1750 and c. 1850 at local, regional and national levels. This will be done using a combination of militia lists, parish registers and census material. The secondary aim is to investigate the potential of other sources of data which would allow the research to be extended back to the late medieval period and to extend the data sets to include female and child workers.

The project is based at the Cambridge Group which is best known for its long-running project on English population history. That project relied heavily on the work of local history volunteers who collected much of the original data from parish registers. This time most of the data collection will be done by research assistants employed on the grant but there is still considerable scope for volunteer assistance which could take several forms. Many local historians will be aware of documents unknown to us but which nevertheless contain valuable occupational data. In such cases simply being told of the existence of such sources would be invaluable. Even better, of course, would be cases where local historians had already collected occupational data and were happy to share it with us! Although the grant has been very well funded by the E.S.R.C., its resources are inevitably limited. In consequence there are a variety of potential projects at local level which we will not have sufficient resources to effect but which would be eminently suitable for local volunteers who wished to collaborate.

If you are interested in helping in any of these ways, or simply wish to know more about the project, we would be very pleased to hear from you. Please email me at lmws2@cus.cam.ac.uk or by post at the Geography Dept., Sir William Hardy Bldg, Downing Place, Cambridge CB2 3EN. Further information about the E.S.R.C. database can be found at www.regard.ac.uk under Economic and Social History.

MA in Rural History

Applications are invited for the MA in Rural History (full time and part time) taught in the School of History of the University of Reading from September 2004.

The course is designed for all those who wish to extend and deepen their knowledge of the history of the countryside and rural society whether professionals in the heritage land management and conservation professions or academics wishing to make their own contribution to the discipline. Options will include 'Transitions in rural society and economy, c.1300-1640', 'Power in the English countryside, 1500-1700','Labouring life in the 19th century countryside'and 'The 20th century countryside: agriculture, environment and people'. For our leaflet, go to ruralhistory.org/educational_resources/uni_courses/index html. Email enquiries: r.w.hoyle@reading.ac.uk