



Issue 19 July 2010

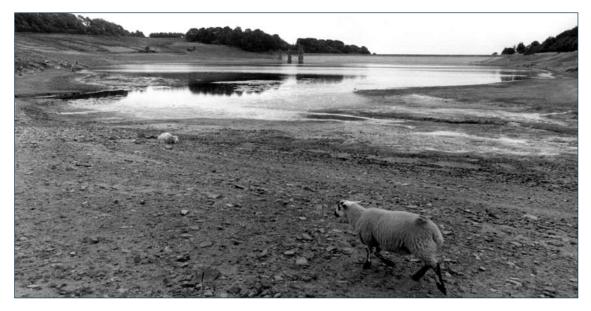
Above – The greasy pole. See page 6.

Going dry – the water level in 1976 (Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading)

Dr John Martin is reader in Agrarian History, at De Monfort University and has recently been awarded a Research Fellowship to investigate the impact of the weather on the agricultural sector, using 1944–5, 1963 and 1975–6 as case studies.

Long hot summers revisited

Following Dr John Martin's prophetic article on the winter of 1947, he now recalls the long hot summer and drought of 1975–6.



The UK Climate Projections 2009 report predicts that, in the foreseeable future, Britain will experience more frequent droughts, floods and storm damage. By 2040, it is anticipated that summers in southern England are likely to be, on average, 2°C hotter than at present, accompanied by a 20 per cent drop in summer rainfall.

Such forecasts are supported by the fact that, globally, the hottest ten years on record have all occurred since 1990. It is an opportune time, therefore, to reflect back on the challenges posed by previous dry summers. The hottest and driest summer since the Second World War was experienced during 1975, but this was rapidly eclipsed by weather conditions in 1976. During this period holidaymakers travelling from Britain to the Mediterranean often found to their disappointment that it would have been considerably warmer if they had stayed at home.

What differentiated this period from other hot spells was not only the intensity of the heat but also the lack of rainfall. During the period from June 1975 to the end of August 1976, 756 mm of rainfall were recorded for England and Wales generally, compared with the long term average of 1203mm. This is by far the lowest sixteen month total since records began in 1727. However these national figures mask significant

regional variations; rainfall was considerably less in the southern half of Britain than in the rest of the country In Scotland the eastern half of the country was rather dry but in the Western Highlands, rainfall levels were higher than normal. The drought was also not simply a British phenomen with France and to a lesser extent Germany being adversely affected.

Dry weather commenced in June 1975, with the drought lasting throughout the following winter, spring and summer until late August 1976, when torrential rain affected most of Britain. The effects of the dry weather in the summer of 1975 were mixed. Cereals and root crops on light soils bore the brunt, although sugar beet yields were reduced as the parched conditions caused tap roots to snap in the ground during harvesting operations. Conversely the dry weather provided ideal conditions for harvesting both cereal and grass in the form of hay and silage. Hay crops although, slightly lighter than usual were of consistently high quality. The dry autumn of 1975 enabled a record acreage of winter wheat to be sown in good conditions at the optimum time of the year. Land which might normally have been planted with spring barley was sown instead with winter wheat. The dry autumn and winter also allowed ploughing to be completed ahead of schedule and an

Continued on the back page.

Also in this issue

Museum news - 2

New publications – 3

Rural elections after the 'Great Reform Bill' — 6

Conferences – 8



Discovering rural Yorkshire at the Yorkshire Museum of Farming

Esther Graham, the assistant curator at the Yorkshire Museum of Farming describes recent developments at the museum.

The historic Ridings of Yorkshire encompass a diverse agricultural area, including the Pennine Dales, the coastal North York Moors, and the Wolds. The Yorkshire Museum of Farming, which opened in 1982, is dedicated to preserving material relating to farming within Yorkshire, from early agricultural practise up to the mid 20th century.

Diverse by its very nature, the subject of rural history has prompted the museum to acquire an enormous wealth of artefacts and archival material over the years. The result today is a rich collection relating to agriculture in Yorkshire, including a substantial library, photographic record, archive and artefact collection. Thanks to recent funding success the museum is currently involved in a full audit of these holdings, allowing us to both enhance our understanding of the collection and to develop a fully searchable electronic database with specialist museum software. We expect this new database will prove a great boost in helping to stimulate interest and accommodate future researchers.

Admittedly the process of auditing can be tedious trawling through thousands of record cards, crossreferencing as you go - but it does yield rewards. Often, a museum can discover items it didn't even know it had because of the vagaries of early cataloguing techniques. There are often instances where a single item has been given a unique number but on closer inspection consists of several parts. For example, what looked like a single example of Land Girls' correspondence on paper turned out to be over 150 individual letters. Indeed, it is becoming clear that our Women's Land Army archive may be one of the largest and richest collections in the North of England. It is certainly an area we hope to develop in the coming years. Furthermore, we suspect our collection of eighteenth century manorial documents will help to supplement other regional collections of this type.

Work on developing access to our extensive collection of books, journals and manuals has also begun. Visitors have always been welcome to come and use our library by appointment, but we hope that our work in creating a formalised and user-friendly

catalogue will increase interest amongst students, historians and enthusiasts. We hope that with website improvements this catalogue will be available online. It is truth universally acknowledged that many small independent museums simply do not have the staff and the resources to index many of the items they have acquired through gifts and donations, and cataloguing backlogs can be daunting. In this little corner of Yorkshire at least, we are working to remedy this for the benefit of all.

But looking after the collection and working to interpret it further and more fully is not simply about preserving physical or tangible heritage. It is also about fostering relationships with local people whose intimate knowledge of an area and landscape can prove to be a vital resource. Tapping into this reservoir of regional knowledge can and should be a key objective museums concerned with rural heritage. The collecting of oral histories, for example, not only adds a new dimension and media but also ensures the preservation of memory and experience for future generations. Here at the Yorkshire Farming Museum we have recently completed an oral history project called Farming Families, which encouraged farmers in the region to share and document changing practices. These recollections now form part of our Four Seasons exhibition, bring a new dimension to our permanent displays; a dedicated audio-visual studio has also been installed in the gallery and has proved very popular.



The preservation of historic 'crafts' and 'skills', the practical 'hands-on' knowledge of previous generations, is of equal importance particularly in helping us to maintain our working vehicles and machinery. By having a professional blacksmith working on site at the museum helps us to bridge the historic and contemporary, engaging visitors directly with crafts and skills of the rural past. Preserving rural heritage is as much about these vital 'living' traditions as it is about the more conventional museum collection.

We would like to take this opportunity to encourage anybody interested in our holdings to contact us to discuss research opportunities

➤ Yorkshire Museum of Farming, Murton Park, Murton Lane, Murton, York, YO19 5UF Tel: 01904 489966 Email: enquiries@murtonpark.co.uk www.murtonpark.co.uk

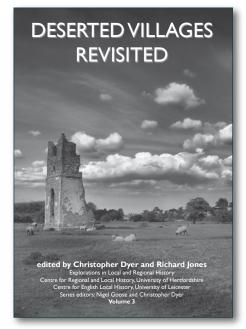
Right: Blacksmith at work in the Yorkshire Museum of farming

Far right: The new library at the Yorkshire Museum of farming

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Deserted Villages Revisited

Chris Dyer and Richard Jones (eds) Hertfordshire University Press 2010, price £14.99



The study of deserted villages can be given a surprisingly precise starting point; in June 1948 when a group of historians, geographers and archaeologists visited the sites of 'lost' villages in Leicestershire. The scholars involved (including Professor Postan of Cambridge, W.G.Hoskins, Grahame Clark and Edward Miller) had been at a conference in Cambridge to discuss the relevance of archaeology for economic history. In 2008 a conference was held at Leicester to mark the 60th anniversary of this event. The sites were visited again and the whole subject revisited as a field of academic enquiry. The results are the subject of this book. It looks at the dates and causes of desertion from the middle ages to the eighteenth century and examines the implications of survey and excavation of village sites. It covers settlements smaller than villages in the southwest and Wales, as well as the regions with nucleated villages that were abandoned in the Midlands, Yorkshire and East Anglia. The book will be relevant to rural history, archaeology and geography.

The Warrens of Breckland, a survey by the Breckland Society 2010

Available free from 01760 755685, or anne@providence28.fsnet, or downloaded from www.brecsoc.org.uk

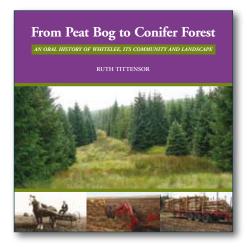
'Nowhere in Britain, and arguably the worldhas such a complex and extant system of warren-related earthwork perimeter banks, internal enclosures and trapping banks, and medieval warren lodges as the Brecks' (p.56). This detailed study undertaken by the Breckland Society under the guidance of Anne Mason and supported by English Heritage sets out to provide a field survey of the earthwork evidence for rabbit warrens in this unique sandy area of south-west Norfolk and north-west Suffolk. The survey work was accompanied by documentary research and the interviewing of people who could still recall the days before afforestation when rabbits were all-important to the economy of the region. The book begins with a short historical introduction, followed by the field



surveys of the earthworks of 27 identified warrens and a section on the documentary and oral evidence. It will be of interest to medieval and later rural social and economic historians as well as archaeologists of the landscape. It is a fine example of a well-integrated piece of research undertaken by a team of volunteers.

From Peat Bog to Conifer Forest – an oral history of Whitelee, its community and landscape

Ruth Tittensor Packard Publishing £27.50 Available from info@packardpublishing. co.uk



Short-listed for the Saltire Scottish History Book of the Year in 2009, this book describes, using oral and landscape evidence, the transformation of the barren Whitelee Plateau in Ayreshire into 5,000 hectares of coniferous forest. The ecology, environment and way of life before the forestry is described as well as the farming and economy of the area. This is followed by a description of the dramatic changes to the landscape and the destruction of a way of life that the forestry brought. The latest changes involve the erection of wind turbines. Nobody asked the local people for their consent for any of these developments and this book tells their story in their own words. The book is lavishly illustrated with colour photographs, tables and maps and is a pleasure to handle. It represents the best of a new type of social and environmental history.

CORRECTION

It is good to know that Rural History Today has at least one reader. Philip Saunders of the Cambridgeshire Record Office wrote to point out that J.L. Brereton's college in Cambridge (see 'An experiment in secondary education' in RHT 18) known at the time as Cavendish College was subsequently taken over by Homerton College, and not the Leys School as stated in the article. Many thanks for this correction.

Old-style deer leaps

King Henry III elevated his son Edmund to the earldom of Lancaster in 1267. Eleven years later, Edmund enclosed a large park in the forest of Quernmore, which lies about five kilometres to the east of the town of Lancaster.

Mike Derbyshire was a scientist and statistician before seeing the light and studying for an MA in local and regional history at Lancaster University.

The principal overt motivation for enclosing the park will have been the preservation of the deer, both as an accessible source of venison, and for hunting. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the creation of a deer park near Edmund's castle at Lancaster will have drawn attention to the recent enhancement of his status and provided conspicuous evidence of his wealth.

There also appears to have been a further motive for the creation of Quernmore Park. The park is described as having a circumference of five leagues and thus a very large park by the norms of the thirteenth century, particularly for one that was not owned by the king. Furthermore, from its creation, the park comprised two enclosures, with a 'New Park' being laid out alongside a previous enclosure that became known as 'Old Park'. It is clear that these parks fulfilled a role of some importance. In fact, it appears that the imparkment constituted the enhancement of a pre-existing stud farm, which was presumably devoted to the breeding of war horses. The development of such a stud farm will have been an attractive investment at this time, in view of the shortage of war horses experienced by the English during the continuing Welsh Wars and the consequent high prices that these horses commanded.

The parks were certainly being used as a stud farm shortly after their creation; in 1297 there were 12 mares with foals supported in the two parks, in addition to the maintenance of the deer. A few years later, ten mares

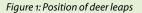
were sold and six foals were taken from Quernmore Park to the stud farm at Ightenhill Park in Bowland Forest, which was, at that time, also owned by the earl of Lancaster. By this time, the park was also generating income from the renting out of the grazing.

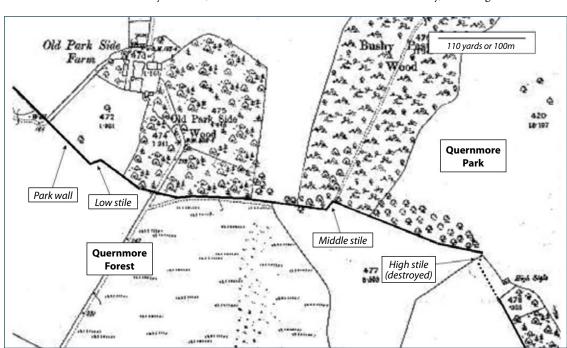
Equally soon after its creation, Quernmore Park was fulfilling its more conventional role, as a larder for venison. For example, in 1291, the itinerant justices took 38 deer, by order of the earl's council. Whilst there is a steady trickle of references to the deer poaching there is no record of legitimate hunting taking place within or near the park.

Some early records survive of claims for the cost of maintaining the park. In 1314, 2s was allowed for cutting down branches to feed the deer in winter, 5s for putting up the stone wall round part of Old Park and 27s 4½d for making and setting up paling. Clearly the cost of repairing the park's formidable perimeter fence, or pale, was considerable; it exceeded the value assigned to the support of the twelve mares.

In the middle of the fourteenth century, the technology of warfare changed which led to a decline in the market for war horses and we find no further reference to the horse stud at Quernmore Park. However, the park continued to be maintained as a source of venison and to attract income from the renting out of grazing for cattle.

The increase in the cost of the labour in the second half of the fourteenth century, following the 'Black





Death', led to an increase in the financial burden of owning a park, in particular with regard to the labour and amount of timber involved in maintaining the pale. One way to mitigate the recurring labour cost and to obviate the destruction of woodland was to replace the pale with a stone wall. By later in the fourteenth century, a sum of a penny a day, or 30s 4d per annum, had been set aside for the erection and maintenance of the wall and, by the middle of the fifteenth century, a wall surrounded much of the combined parks.

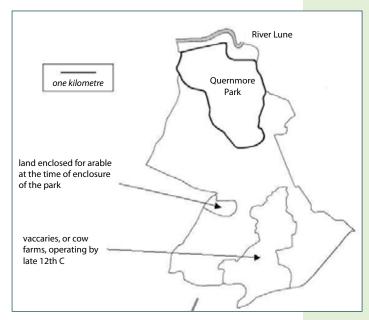
There still exists a stretch of massive dry stone wall to the south and southeast of Old Park Side Farm, along a line that has been part of the boundary of Quernmore Park from the earliest enclosure. The effectiveness of the wall as a deer fence was enhanced for much of its length by aligning it along the contour of ground that falls away towards the park. Such an arrangement made it easier for deer to jump into the park than to escape, since deer can jump downhill more easily than uphill.

At three points along this stretch of wall, zigzags occur in its line, where deer leaps have been installed; see figure left. Deer leaps were devices in the park wall that were designed to facilitate the entry of deer into the park, while impeding their exit. Unfortunately, there is little clear evidence concerning their design during the medieval period. The site of the most easterly of our three deer leaps has been destroyed by later building work. The location of this leap is the highest of the three and the site is, appropriately, still called High Stile. Each is sited at a point where the ground falls quite steeply into the park, making entry much easier than exit. Each leap is 12.8 m in length, that is 14 yards or two customary rods. The layout and location of the leaps suggests that, as the deer were driven from the forest towards the park, temporary fencing was used to funnel them towards the park wall, then along the outside of the wall and over one of the leaps.

A particular type of deer leap is to be found at two locations on the opposite side of Quernmore Park; one at Lythe, the other at a place called Cragg Stile. In each case, the boundary wall of the park incorporates a little crag in the zigzag. Each of the two crags rises above a small quarry, which lies inside the park, adjacent to its boundary. This arrangement provides an easy jump down into the park for the deer, but no easy escape.

In the case of four of our five deer leaps (the exception being High Stile) the exact line of the park boundary is still marked by a dry stone wall whose height is much less than that required to contain deer. Only Low Stile retains a wall that must be near its original height; see photograph right. Standing inside the park beneath Low Stile, it is not difficult to visualise the scene when the medieval deer were being driven from the forest into the park; and to imagine the terrified animals soaring over the leap and bounding down the hillside.

From the photograph, it can be seen that Low Stile is in need of some care and maintenance. This



The various elements within Quernmore Forest



Low stile looking south from inside the park

is the kind of feature that one would hope could receive protection under the Stewardship schemes, which provide farming subsidies that are targeted on protecting the environment and the landscape. Indeed, the rate of subsidy for the restoration of stone walls, in new agreements that are made under Higher Level Stewardship, will be increased from £16 per metre to £30 per metre on 1 July 2010. It is to be hoped that it will be possible, to gain access to these funds for preserving important historic features such as Low Stile.

Rural elections after the 'Great Reform Bill'

With all the talk of electoral reform, it is worth remembering that until 1918 the majority of rural constituencies sent two MPs to Westminster and the electorate had two votes each.

Susanna Wade Martins reflects, with the help of two remarkable paintings, on the affect of the Great Reform Bill of 1832 on rural Norfolk. She would be interested to know of other similar depictions.

Previous to 1832 Norfolk contained just over 5,000 electors who could elect two County Members. The passing of the reform bill that year immediately doubled the number of voters and the county was divided into two constituencies; West and East, each with two MPs; however while voting was in still public at hustings, with the way individuals voted marked off in poll books rather than by secret ballot (not introduced until 1872), the opportunities for bribery and intimidation remained as great as ever and nearly all the trappings of the old system remained.

While the first election following the Reform bill, including the retirement speech of Thomas William Coke as he addressed the Swaffham crowds, is fully recorded in the press, it is the elections, of 1837 and 1847 which are the subject of two unusual paintings. It was the Whigs who had gained most in the first reformed election, but by 1837, there was serious competition as the issues of free trade and the Corn Laws came to dominate political debate and the sitting Members could not expect an easy win. The Tories (who now styled themselves Conservatives), put up two local landowners as candidates (William Bagge of Stradsett and William Chute of Pickenham).

They saw a real possibility of winning and so threw an enormous amount of effort and money into the fight. The influences which had controlled elections before 1832 were still obvious, with the press stating that the real contest was between the wealth of the Albemarles and the Cokes for the Whigsagainst that of the Tory Townshends and the clergy. The banners carried by the Tory supporters were said to be of 'the most costly kind'. The Tories referred to the Whigs as 'trammelled' by the 'Holkham dynasty'. The Whigs on the other hand claimed that they had been responsible for the Reform Bill and that one of their candidates, Sir Jacob Astley was the 'only true farmers' friend'; all these points made in speeches made in Swaffham market place (now the principal polling centre for West Norfolk, and were greeted with cheers and boos from a lively audience, many of whom no doubt would not have been entitled to vote. The final result was, as elsewhere in the English counties, a disaster for the Whigs as both of the Tory candidates were elected.

An oil painting of the election by an unknown artist recently been purchased by Swaffham Museum shows the Market Place at Swaffham. Although it is undated, it is likely that it is this Tory triumph after



long years of Whig supremacy that is depicted. The wooden hustings appear to be behind the brick gable end depicted on the left of the picture and both Bagge and Chute are standing on the wooden platforms which are being carried by their supporters and on which their respective election chairs have been placed. The Market Place is crowded with men women and children with several red-coated soldiers on horse back as well as a young man riding a waiving his hat from a spirited little mount. Banners with the words 'Bagge and Chute for ever' are flying along with Union Jacks and the pink and purple flags of the Tories which have replaced the buff and green of the defeated Whigs. An open carriage, pulled by liveried riders on white horses in which is a bowing gentleman, possibly one of the Tory's aristocratic sponsors, is entering from the left. The whole scene is depicted in great detail and conveys the excitement of a local election, somewhat akin to that which surrounds a football match today.

While the Tories were returned unopposed in 1841 the election of 1847 caused much more excitement. The disarray of the Conservatives who were split after the repeal of the Corn Laws gave optimism to the Liberals, and it was clear by early 1847 that Russell would attempt to strengthen his parliamentary position by calling an election.

Two Whig candidates came forward; Edward Coke the younger son of the late Thomas William, and Anthony Hammond of West Acre with William Bagge of Stradsett and Henry LeStrange of Hunstanton standing for the Conservatives. As before there was much excitement at the declaration of the poll. This was increased by the fact that between 500 and 600 people had been brought by the first train to run between Lynn and Swaffham, 'many of them well-dressed females anxious to see the chairing of the members.' In the event William Bagge came top of the poll with 3,106 votes and Edward Coke second with 3,056. There was much criticism of the election in the Conservative Press which claimed that Coke had 'spared no expense'. Every voter was entitled to two votes but, it was claimed, many of Bagge's supporters had not used their second vote which had allowed Coke to take second place. They had been loath to support Le Strange who was not well known in the neighbourhood.

It is this Tory victory that is depicted in the cartoon-style oil painting, again by an unknown artist and still hanging in Stradsett Hall. It shows a triumphant Bagge at the top of a pole waiving his top hat with Coke, depicted with the tail and hind legs of a sheep, following on closely behind and saying 'How slippery is the pole- however did Bagge get up it? Shove away from below or I might come down.' One of the supporters pushing is complaining that 'This is really Melton's work', referring to the wealth of Lord Hastings of Melton Constable, a well-known Whig supporter. A second is being butted from by some of Lord Leicester's rams with a price tag of £50. He is shown uttering the



words, 'Those Leicester Tupps butt well' referring to the name of Coke's political agent Mr Butt. Below Coke is Hammond, trying to reach Coke's sheep tail and saying 'Let me get hold of your tail, Coke. I need help. You always said you would help me'. The only help he is receiving is assumed to be from Col Francis Astley who is pushing him with the words 'I said I would help you and you know I was always Frank'. At the bottom is LeStrange sans trousers, and calling for his friend, Bagge, 'He is so far off I can hardly see him'. Instead he has been debagged. The various Tory placards read 'Bagge for Ever', 'Vote for Bagge', 'No bribery' and 'Bagge for Liberty', while those for the Whigs simply read Coke for ever'. The message must surely be that while Bagge was triumphant at the top of the pole, it was only as a result of bribery and particularly the great agricultural wealth and influence of the Coke family that the Whigs had come in second place and forced LeStrange into fourth.

The two illustrations of the 1837 and 1847 West Norfolk elections are highly unusual survivals which help to re-create the atmosphere of election days. They are a reminder, if one is needed, that, contrary to what Nick Clegg believes, in many ways very little changed as a result of the 1832 'Great Reform Bill'. Landed money and influence would long be important to potential candidates, while voters would continue to look to their landlords for guidance. The existence of the truly independent voter had to wait for the introduction of the secret ballot in 1872 when the familiar sight of wooden hustings being erected in market places, and all the anticipation of excitement that might follow, gave way to the much more sober polling booths in public buildings, often with the local policeman standing at the door.

CONFERENCE NOTICEBOARD

Rural History 2010, an international conference

To be held at the University of Sussex 13–16 September 2010

With five separate sessions in parallel over the four days it will obviously be difficult to choose where to go with such an eminent line-up of lecturers from all over the world. Plenary lectures are by Bruce Campbell 'Agriculture and national incomes in Europe, c.1300–1850' and Jules Pretty 'Sustainability in agricultural and rural systems: recent history and future challenges'. For a full programme and details on how to register go to www.ruralhistory2010.org

Historic Farm Buildings Group

Friday 10 September 2010 – Sunday 12 September 2010, based at the Swan Hotel, Wells, Somerset

The conference will focus on farms in the Mendips.
To register interest, please contact Miriam Kelly,
FCB Studios, Bath Brewery, Toll Bridge Road,
Bath, BA2 4DP miriam.kelly@fcbstudios.com.

BAHS Winter Conference Woods and their uses in Medieval to Modern Britain

Saturday 4 December 2010, 10.30–4.30 Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1

The programme includes papers by Dr Della Hooke (Birmingham University) 'Woodland usage in early medieval England; Dr John Langton (Oxford University) 'Early-modern English forests as human habitats: the clearing of woods or the running of deer?'; Dr Paul Warde (University of East Anglia) 'Woods and wood products in the British economy:c.1550–1750'; Prof. Charles Watkins (Nottingham University) 'English estate forestry in the nineteenth century'.

Cost £30 with lunch, £15 without. Application form is available on the BAHS website of contact Dr Jane Whittle, History Department, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter EX4 4RJ before 26 November at the latest.

Continued from page 1.

early start made to spring sowing. Crops were planted in seedbeds which, on heavier soils, were lumpy because of the prolonged dry weather, leading to uneven germination.

In most regions the amount of rain falling during the winter months and spring of 1976 was insufficient to remedy the moisture deficiency in the soil. During the warm, dry weather of May and June, spring sown cereals in particular made little growth, with yields significantly below the ten year average. Winter sown cereals, of which wheat was the most important crop, were less affected by the drought. It is worth noting that if dry summers of this magnitude were to recur today, when a large proportion of cereals are autumn sown, the effects on cereal production would be considerably more acute.

The drought led to reservoirs experiencing all time low water levels, with restrictions on public usage and the irrigation of farm crops. On 5 August a Drought Bill was rushed through Parliament, granting the water authorities the power to limit or even cut off water supplies. This was followed on the 24 August by the appointment of Dennis Howell as the 'drought supremo' or Minister of Drought. Ironically, during the August Bank holiday, heavy and prolonged rainfall falling on parched ground which had become iron hard in places, led to widespread flooding, and Howell was immediately appointed as Minister of Flooding. The rain brought the drought but not the water saving measures to an abrupt end. While root crops such as sugar beet benefited from the precipitation, it came too late save the potato crops and caused extensive disruption to harvesting operations. The diminished supply of potatoes, coupled with difficulties in harvesting and storing the rain sodden crop, resulted in a threefold increase in prices. Although this benefited farmers who had had managed to harvest their crop in reasonable conditions, it accentuated the long term decline in potato consumption.

It is considered highly unlikely that the weather conditions of the 1975-6 will ever be repeated in quite the same format of a prolonged dry spell followed by prolonged rain. According to a number of contemporary estimates the return period of the drought is likely to be in the order of once in a thousand years. British academics, whether they be historians, economists or sociologists, have consequently paid scant attention to the impact of the weather not only on the agricultural sector but also the wider economy. This neglect is partly excusable in that the drought of 1975-6 was overshadowed by the effects of Britain's entry into the European Community, which seemed to epitomise the country's declining importance in the world. Of more profound significance was the international crisis of 1973-4 encompassing the commodity price explosion, the collapse of the Bretton Woods agreement, and the OPEC oil crisis. Collectively these seismic shocks destabilised the international economy, heralding an end to the world trade boom and stability which had prevailed since the early 1950s. In 1976 the embattled Labour government was forced to go 'cap in hand' to the IMF in order to secure a \$3.9 billion dollar loan, the largest up to date ever granted by the institution. Nevertheless, in an era of potential global warming, neglecting the historical lessons which can be learnt from previous periods of abnormal weather is a risky gambit. Reflecting on the economic and political crisis which presently engulfs the country, we may wish to remember the proverbial bus, that when crises arrive, often turn up in convoy.

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 enquries 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 Nicola Verdon, Department of History, Arts A, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN2 88H

Rural History Today is published

History Society. The editor will

by the British Agricultural

be pleased to receive short

articles, press releases, notes

and queries for publication.

Articles for the next issue

should be sent by

The Longhouse,

Eastgate Street,

North Elmham,

NR205HD

Dereham, Norfolk

or preferably by email scwmartins@hotmail.com

30 November 2010 to

Susanna Wade Martins,

Tel: 01273 67844

n.j.verdon@sussex.ac.uk

RURAL HISTORY TODAY