

# RURAL HISTORY TODAY

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## BAHS goes into Europe

*Paul Brassley outlines some exciting European initiatives in which BAHS is taking a leading role.*

The members of the British Agricultural History Society have a long record of involvement with their colleagues in other countries, with Olive Ordish's translations of Slicher van Bath (1963) and Abel (1980), and the surveys of the agrarian history literature of other European countries that appeared in the *Agricultural History Review* in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

More recently, we have seen the increased prevalence of articles concerned with other countries in the *Review*, the Anglo-French conferences at Le Mans in 2002 and Canterbury in 2005 (the proceedings of which will be published this year as a supplement to the *Review*), and the international conference on the interwar period at Royal Holloway in 2007. Rural historians from the UK have also taken part in projects initiated in other European countries, most notably the Belgian-led seminar series on the comparative rural history of the North Sea area (CORN), which began in 1995, and the more recent COST seminar series, financed by European money and led by Gerard Béaur.

This expansion in international relationships is set to continue through three forthcoming initiatives. There will be a further Anglo-French meeting at Rennes this coming September, involving

The more observant regular readers of RHT will notice that the layout and design for this issue has been changed. We hope you like this 'new look' and that it reflects the vibrancy and forward looking attitude of BAHS which is evident in Paul Brassley's article. Our thanks to Jane Glennie, our designer, for coming up with such an attractive revamp.



eight papers from each country, to reinforce contacts between BAHS members and our French colleagues.

Then in 2010 the BAHS proposes holding an international conference. This will be at the University of Sussex in the first half of September (the precise dates have yet to be agreed). A call for papers should be forthcoming early in 2009, and while most of the contributions will probably come from European countries we also hope to attract historians from elsewhere in the world.

The third development has emerged from the informal contacts made at recent international meetings: it is now becoming clear that there is increased interest among historians and learned societies across Europe in forming some kind of pan-European organisation to promote rural history and dialogue between rural historians. The BAHS and its members are closely involved in this process, and indeed the 2010 international conference should be seen as a contribution to maintaining the momentum of international co-operation. There will be more details forthcoming in future editions of RHT – watch this space!

*Above – Ancient oak on the Thynghowe trail (S Horne & Friends of Thynghowe) see page 7.*

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British Agricultural  
History Society

# WORK IN PROGRESS

## ‘Not waving but drowning’?

### Research into the current state of medieval zooarchaeology

Tara-Jane Sutcliffe draws attention to the importance of animal bone evidence to our understanding of medieval life and this article will strike a chord with those who heard Umberto Albarella’s paper at the BAHS spring conference this year.

*‘I was much further out than you thought  
And not waving but drowning’*

Stevie Smith, *Not Waving But Drowning*

It is one thing to read about animal husbandry practices within the pages of the early medieval texts; to ‘read’ practices directly from the animal bones themselves is, however, a fascinating enterprise of quite another order. For the early medieval period the archaeofauna provide a significant source of evidence: a source of delight to the zooarchaeologist, but often one of frustration to the medieval or agrarian historian. For example, what meaning can be gleaned from taxonomic lists, in Linnaean nomenclature or otherwise? How can MNI and NISP be used comparatively to understand the relative importance of species? Moreover, what is the relationship of skeletal element or mortality profile to meat yield, secondary product use, or general husbandry practices? Namely, how can ‘animal bone’ reports be used to address the specific research questions proposed by medievalists? Indeed, dare one ask how the tables of raw data and summary statistics relate to the perception of animals in the medieval past? It is little wonder therefore that historians look more to the written and visual record to address the ideational and less functional-economic aspects of medieval human-animal relationships.

Animal remains are ubiquitous in the archaeological record, so it is not for want of data that they have yet to fully contribute to our understanding of the medieval past. It is essential, therefore, to ask what

types of inference can legitimately be made from this class of evidence. This is no small question, and yet it has received remarkably little attention within early medieval studies. Zooarchaeologists themselves have focused rather on methodology, providing increasingly detailed description of faunal assemblages. This is an essential pre-requisite and attests to the dynamism of the practise of zooarchaeology, but as an end in itself does not equip us to progress from physical remains to the past conceptual units they represent. Fascinating as the zooarchaeological data is, we are left wondering: what does it mean? How do we get from the ‘statics’ in the present to the ‘dynamics’ of the past - as Binford classically framed it - is not sufficiently addressed by the current volume of work. We are indeed ‘not waving but drowning’ under our data.

This is not to suggest that zooarchaeology is praxis, devoid of theory. Quite the opposite: zooarchaeologists have been active in calling for greater integration, emphasising the necessity of interdisciplinary study. Yet this has predominantly been at sessions of the International Council for Archaeozoology (ICAZ) Conference and papers in zooarchaeological publications: which suggests that there is some way to go to achieve this end. A ‘theorising in animal bone studies’ session at TAG (Theoretical Archaeology Group) York, addressing a wider audience of archaeologists, is a welcome step in the right direction. Moreover, a number of zooarchaeologists – namely Terry O’Connor, Umberto Albarella, Aleks Pluskowski and Naomi Sykes – have been instrumental in the development of a *medieval zooarchaeology*. Nonetheless, as titles prefixed ‘a zooarchaeology of...’ suggest, tensions remain between the component disciplines.

In response, research is underway at the University of York that is exploring the theory and practice of animal bone studies by aligning the zooarchaeologist’s technical expertise with the wider ranging needs of narrative history. An inquiry into the inclusion of fauna in Anglo-Saxon inhumations provides a test-case for the developed methodology. Adopting a multi-scalar approach, this combines re-analysis of the fauna in the Mortimer Collection, Hull and East Riding Museum. with archive analysis of developer-funded excavation.

Input is greatly welcomed from medievalists and agricultural historians alike. Questions and suggestions can be directed to the following address:

Tara-Jane Sutcliffe, Department of Archaeology,  
The King’s Manor, York. [tjs502@york.ac.uk](mailto:tjs502@york.ac.uk)



Finds from the Mortimer collection, Hull and East Riding Museum.

## A new collaborative Research Institute is launched in the west of England

**The Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) was officially launched on the 23rd April 2008, a creation from a unique partnership between the Countryside and Community Research Unit (CCRU) at the University of Gloucestershire, the University of the West of England and Hartpury College.**

This collaboration has brought together a wide range of expertise in rural social and policy research, and created 'the largest social science and policy-related rural research institute in the UK'.

The CCRI has programmes of research in rural community development, rural poverty, agri-environment policies, agri-tourism, local sustainability, local economic development, EU and UK rural development, and the planning system in the countryside. Much of its research is aimed at informing government policy for rural issues, including historic landscapes and buildings.

Dr Peter Gaskell, a Senior Research Fellow in the CCRI, has undertaken extensive research in the historic environment, including research for English Heritage and the Countryside Agency aimed at identifying local character in traditional farm buildings. This research resulted in a booklet 'Living Buildings in a Living Landscape', available from English Heritage. The project also produced 8 web-based regional booklets which can be viewed at [www.helm.org.uk/ruraldevelopment](http://www.helm.org.uk/ruraldevelopment). Dr. Gaskell also represents Heritage Link on the programme Monitoring Committee of the Rural Development Programme and is Chair of the Historic Farm Buildings Group.

The CCRI recently hosted the 2007 conference of the Society for Landscape Studies, and is the organiser for the National Seminar Series on Common Land and Town and Village Greens, sponsored by Defra. It is also organising a major international

conference for the International Association for the Study of Commons, which will be held in Gloucestershire in July 2008. The conference will facilitate a global gathering of scholars, practitioners and policy makers for a mutual exchange of information for the management of common land and other resources, used collectively by communities in developing or developed countries.

The work of the old CCRU was highly respected by policy makers and practitioners in the environmental and cultural sphere. The new CCRI plans to build on this reputation ensuring that decisions on rural policy and practice are grounded on rigorous academic research.

We wish the CCRI every success in this new initiative, and keeping its links with the historic environment!

► *More information on the work and activities of the CCRI can be found at [www.ccri.ac.uk](http://www.ccri.ac.uk)*

## O B I T U A R Y

### Harold Fox

**Harold Fox died in August 2007 at the age of 62. His life was devoted to agrarian and rural history: he contributed to the *Agrarian History* and often attended Agricultural History conferences.**

He took a degree in historical geography at University College London, and moved to the University of Cambridge, along with his thesis supervisor, H.C. Darby. On completing his thesis he taught geography for a few years at Cambridge, and spent a year at Queen's University Belfast, before joining the Department (now Centre) of English Local History at the University of Leicester in 1976. He flourished there, gaining much praise for his teaching, and was promoted to a personal chair

in 2003. Much of his research was on the south west, especially his beloved Devon. In his thesis and subsequent articles he revised the orthodoxies about the region's field systems, and showed that there had been extensive enclosure of open fields in the later middle ages. He applied his deep understanding of field systems, and in particular the balance that they struck between arable and pastoral farming, to the fields of the Midlands, and contributed a major essay on the 'Origins of the Midland System' to Trevor Rowley's book published in 1981. He also demolished the theory that there was a wholesale movement from two-field to three-field systems in the period of population pressure in the thirteenth century. His insights into fields were used in an important essay on landscape history published in 1989, in which he characterised the special features of the wold landscapes of eastern England.

One of his most original contributions to settlement and landscape history, was the discovery that the fishing villages on the south coast of Devon only became permanent settlements after about 1400. At the time of his death he had completed the text of a book on Dartmoor, which developed themes of transhumance and seasonal settlements.

He lectured in style, both to Leicester students and at conferences. He was a good citizen in the academic world, serving as Reviews Editor of the *Journal of Historical Geography*, and was an active president of three societies. He was kind and courteous in an old-fashioned way, and a witty conversationalist.

*Christopher Dyer*

► *Harold Fox will be remembered, and his work celebrated, in an event to be held at the University of Leicester on 19 July 2008.*

# FUTURE EVENTS

If you know of any conferences or courses that be might of interest to readers of RHT, then please contact the editor [scwmartins@hotmail.com](mailto:scwmartins@hotmail.com)

## BAHS winter conference 2008

**Saturday 6 December at the  
Institute of Historical Research, London.**

This one-day-conference will consider the topical subject of climate change in an historical perspective. Speakers will include Bruce Campbell on The Great Famine of 1300–1340 and John Martin on the cold winter of 1946.

## The Historic Farm Buildings Group 2008 September Conference

**5 – 7 September 2008 in Derbyshire.**

Accommodation has been reserved in the Alan Booth Centre at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick near Alfreton ([www.cct.org.uk](http://www.cct.org.uk) and follow link to The Hayes) to enable us to visit buildings in central Derbyshire.

Derbyshire is a county with a varied agricultural past dependant on the underlying geology and relief. The gritstone and limestone of the High and Low Peak contrasts with the gentler landscapes of the coal measures sandstone in the east and the river valleys of the Trent and its tributaries to the south. Professor David Hey has agreed to talk to us about agriculture in the county in the 17th and 18th centuries on Friday evening.

Two very contrasting days of visits are planned. One will be spent looking at planned farmsteads of the early nineteenth century built by the Strutt family around Belper, now part of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. For details for three of these farms see HBFG Journal Volume 17, 2003. The other day will be in and around the village of Bonsall, near Matlock. This will enable us to see what the work a local group of enthusiasts is managing to do with an extraordinary heritage of field barns, over 100 in the parish. For further details of this visit [www.bonsallfieldbarnproject.org.uk](http://www.bonsallfieldbarnproject.org.uk) Time will also be spent in the village looking at surviving farm buildings within a constricted village site.

As in past years time will be available on Saturday evening for members contributions and short talks will be given on Saturday and Sunday mornings relevant to the days' visits. Further information and booking forms can be downloaded at [www.HFBG.org.uk](http://www.HFBG.org.uk)

## Courses at the Oxford University Department of Continuing Education

Of the many courses being put on by the OUDCE at Rewley House, Oxford this autumn, two may be of interest to readers:

26–28 September 'Vernacular Interiors in the British Tradition'.

24–26 October, 'Capability Brown and the Brownians'.

► Further details from [www.conted.ox.ac.uk](http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk)

## If you go down to the woods today ...

Tea in the woods.  
Photo by Bill Shannon.



The spring conference of the BAHS was based in Nottingham and included a trip to Sherwood Forest where we saw ancient oaks, forest boundary ditches and archaeological sites ranging from a water meadow culvert to a second-world-war gun post.

The highlight of the walk was the discovery in the middle of the forest, not of Robin Hood's hide-out but green-tee-shirted forestry workers beside a wood fire brewing tea and dispensing delicious cake. Our thanks go to the Forestry Commission team who organised the visit and those who brewed the tea. The attractive leaflet about the Thynghowe Trail, part of which we walked, can be downloaded from the Forestry Commission website, [www.sherwoodforest.info](http://www.sherwoodforest.info)

► If you have never been to the Spring conference of the BAHS, then why not give it a try next year? In 2009 it will be held in Northampton from 6-8 April. See you there!

# Folk-song's unsung heroine

*Had you taken a walk down a Sussex country lane at the end of the nineteenth century, you might have heard snatches of song from the fields, the traditional accompaniment to the rhythms of haymaking or hedge-cutting.*

**Over the hedge a more curious sight might have greeted you. Perhaps that singer already had an audience, a handsome well-to-do woman, mud drying on her hem, listening intently as she scribbled in a notebook.**

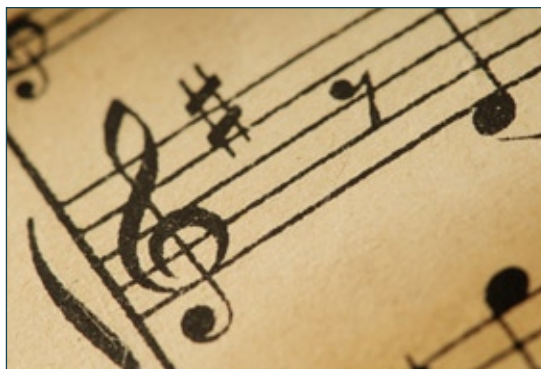
That woman was Lucy Etheldred Broadwood. Born on 9th August 1848 into the famous family of piano manufacturers, she was a passionate collector of folk-songs and one of a group of Victorian songhunters who fuelled a revival of interest in England's traditional music at the end of the nineteenth century.

It seemed obvious to Lucy and her fellow enthusiasts that songs from the oral tradition needed to be written down in case they died out, and the emphasis fell on collecting 'in the field'. To find these songs Lucy turned to "gardeners, artisans, game-keepers, shepherds, rustic labourers, gipsies, sailors, fishermen, workers at old-fashioned trades such as weaving or lace-making and the like, as well as domestic servants, especially nurses."

She felt enormous empathy for these tunes which did not adhere to the conventional harmonies of the Victorian drawing-room. "The pure English folk-tune is exceedingly simple, usually only eight bars long," she explained, "yet it has perhaps the most beautiful, original and varied cadences to be found in music."

A gifted pianist and singer in her own right, Lucy was equipped with the ideal skills needed to note down folk-songs and trace their origins. Beginning close to home, she eventually travelled as far as Devon, Ireland, Scotland and Lincolnshire. She stayed either with friends and family and listened to young and old wherever they would sing for her, whether on a windswept hillside or in a sweltering orchid-house. "A Surrey hedger, looking like a Viking, has sung across a hedge at me, emphasising the tragic points of his ballad with vicious snaps of his shears," she recalled.

In 1893, in partnership with the music critic and writer J A Fuller Maitland, she published the influential *English County Songs*. With her sensitive piano accompaniments, the songs were suddenly accessible to the amateur pianists of the drawing-room. This was followed in 1908 with a second volume *English*



*Traditional Songs and Carols*, mostly the result of her own fieldwork.

However Lucy's most important legacy to the folk-song movement was in her contribution to the newly formed Folk Song Society, founded in 1898. She took up editorship of the society's *Journal* in 1904, which consequently developed a reputation for accuracy and scholarship. From then on until her death in 1929 she dropped her fieldwork to concentrate on editing other collectors' submissions to the *Journal*.

She proved to be the ideal person to bridge the gap between the worlds of 'art' music and folk-song, and Lucy herself led a life that bridged these two worlds, easily moving between town and country, from the sophisticated concerts and recitals that she would host in London to the fields and farm buildings that cradled her treasured folk music.

*Emmeline Ledgerwood*

► *The English Folk Dance and Song Society is based at Cecil Sharp House, 2, Regents Park and the Vaughn Williams Memorial Library, an invaluable resource for those interested in the subject has a thriving programme of events and dance classes that cater for all levels of experience around the country. For further information visit [www.efdss.org](http://www.efdss.org)*

## Free to a good home

Paul Brassley has several unbound volumes of *The Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*, mostly dating from the 19th century and some from the early 20th. They are bound in blue paper, many in several parts, and so have the original advertisements still included (binders often removed them). Delivery/collection method to be discussed. Email [paulbrassley@aol.com](mailto:paulbrassley@aol.com).

## Archive Film Footage available for the first time at Reading Museum of English Rural Life



The Ministry of Agriculture's Film Library and promotional films of the National Dairy Council have been transferred to preservation and viewing copies as a result of a generous award by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The films are now available for the first time.

Sixty seven collections of major national countryside organisations have also been catalogued as part of the project. The archive collections include: National Union of Agricultural Workers, Country Landowners Association, Council for National Parks, National Institute of Research Dairying, Milk Marketing Board and Butter Council.

One significant collection which has been catalogued as part of the project is the Farm Management Survey (FMS) collection. FMS was financed by the Government through the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and undertaken by universities and colleges in England, Wales and Scotland and the Department of Agriculture in Northern Ireland. Beginning in 1936 the survey was voluntary and concerned the collection of financial information. FMS was renamed the Farm Business Survey in 1986. Each university or college was

responsible for certain geographical areas. These areas have changed over time. The University of Reading was responsible for the following counties: Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. Hilary Crowe Department of History, University of Sussex reviewed the opportunities and problems, and the contents and uses, of the newly catalogued Farm Management Survey in a seminar at MERL on 6 May 2008 at 4.30pm

The seminar included a case study based on analysis of the results for farms in Weardale, County Durham from 1936 to 1939.

► Full catalogues of the films and archives catalogued by the project are available on the MERL website ([www.reading.ac.uk/merl](http://www.reading.ac.uk/merl)) and the Access to Archives website. ([www.a2a.org.uk](http://www.a2a.org.uk)). For further details contact [merl@reading.ac.uk](mailto:merl@reading.ac.uk)

## MERL and the Green Agenda

The last few months of 2007 were busy ones at MERL. November 2007 was the busiest ever month for researchers looking at archives and library materials in the Reading Room and the wide range of events on offer attracting more and more visitors. The following are just a few of the activities that took place.

Our main summer exhibition, 'Going Green: Sustainability Past and Present', created an opportunity to explore issues such as the sustainability, energy conservation and climate change through the historical perspective of the Museum's collections. It also provided scope for visitors to engage in a variety of events. We held a panel debate on sustainability in June and Ben Law, author of 'The Woodland House', spent a day at the Museum in July where he shared his experiences of pursuing a sustainable lifestyle and undertook a workshop with students from Thames Valley University

as part of an ongoing partnership-learning programme. Sustainability was also the subject of our 'Summer Spectacular', which combined talks, demonstrations and family workshops.

The Annual MERL Lecture, delivered by Jonathon Porritt, Founder Director of Forum for the Future and Chairman of the UK Sustainable Development Commission, in front of an audience of over 300 people, was a fitting end to the season of events. His talk, entitled 'Exploring Tomorrow's Low-Carbon Countryside' painted a challenging picture for farming and rural life in the future.

As part of our Learning Programme, we ran successful family and adult craft workshops, a series of Lunchtime Network talks and hosted another series of seminars, supported by the Rural Research Forum. Speakers have included Richard Tranter, MERL Fellow and Deputy Director of the



Jonathon Porritt lectures at MERL. © Nigel Keene.

Centre for Agricultural Strategy at the University of Reading, on the effect of the 1921-38 agricultural recession on farming on the downlands of Berkshire, and Dr Gavin Parker, Senior Lecturer on Town and Country Planning on the history and development of the country code as a regulatory tool.

## The Weald And Downland Museum

For the first time the Museum is hosting Continuing Education courses from the University of Sussex.

These include a two-term course starting in September, entitled 'Rural Lives 1300-1900' tutored by Diane Tankard; a series of day courses on Saturdays from the end of September through to November on English Country Houses by Sue Berry; three study days in October on Sussex landscapes led by Geoff Mead and six Saturdays from November 1st on Sussex Rural Culture by Chris Hare.

► Further details are obtainable by e-mailing the museum on [courses@wealddown.co.uk](mailto:courses@wealddown.co.uk)

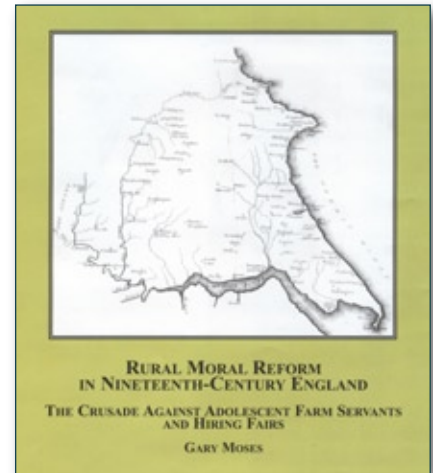
## NEW PUBLICATION

### Rural Moral Reform in Nineteenth-century England

#### The crusade against adolescent farm servants and hiring fairs

By Gary Moses

This book examines a campaign of moral reform conducted by Church of England clergymen against hiring fairs and farm service in the East Riding region of Yorkshire during the mid-Victorian years. 'It opens up the world of the farm servant at work and above all at play. It gives a vivid and even colourful account of some small part of the world we have lost, but most of all it helps put the farm servant centrally into the history of the nineteenth century rural working class.' (Alun Howkins)



► Published by Edwin Mellen Press Ltd,  
price £24.95, ISBN 978-0-7734-5277-0

[www.mellenpress.com](http://www.mellenpress.com)



## Oxfordshire Museum new gallery

Cherry Gray, the curator of the Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock wrote,

'The new gallery at the Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock opened on 19th February and is a thought-provoking look at the rapid changes that have occurred in farming, transport and rural development since 1945 and some of the unexpected effects that have become apparent on wildlife and climate. Starting with a nostalgic view of country life recorded in 1946 in the film '24 square miles', which featured village activities near Banbury, the exhibition quickly turns to more recent events.

Villages are no longer self-contained communities with life revolving around agriculture.

This interactive exhibition will intrigue visitors of all ages. Try using Google Earth to see a satellite view of the county and then zoom in to find out more. Or find out about food rationing, new crops found in Oxfordshire, how the railways and roads have changed or tell us about your countryside concerns. From statistics about who uses the M40 to why we almost starved during WW2 and how this affected post war agriculture, you will find out something that will surprise you.'

# NOTES AND QUERIES

## Tobacco growing in England

**A query from Nick Patrick of Radio 4's 'Making History' programme has set the Inter-war Rural History Group searching their notes and tapping at their key boards.**



A listener was interested to know whether tobacco was grown in England between the wars and was specifically interested in a Hampshire reference he had some across. Mary Ann Bennett came to the rescue here. Mr Brandon of Redfields House, Church Crookham sold his tobacco to H. Stevens and Co. of Salisbury and was reported to be the main grower in England, attempting to persuade the government to repeal the Imperial Preferences Tax which favoured Commonwealth countries. The tobacco was sold under the names of Blue Pryor, Smyrna, Samos, Burley and Green Dragon. Production ceased in 1937 when Mr Brandon died.

However, once the subject had been opened and interest raised, others joined the discussion. Paul Stamper drew attention to the fact that the crop was grown during the second world war, often as a garden or allotment crop and David Matlass high-lighted a book by Ronald Duncan who was experimenting with growing it in north Devon, entitled 'Tobacco cultivation in England' published in 1951. Tom Williamson took the discussion back to the experiments of the nineteenth century when tobacco was seen as a crop into which farmers suffering during the depression could diversify. In their book to be published later this year, *The East Anglian Countryside: Changing Landscapes 1870-1950*, Tom Williamson and Susanna Wade Martins describe how, although its cultivation in Britain had been prohibited by law in 1782, limited trial crops of tobacco were permitted after 1886 and H.M. Jenkins, the secretary of the Royal Agricultural Society wrote a lengthy article in the Society's Journal on its cultivation in north-west Europe (mainly in France, Holland and Belgium). In that year Lord Walsingham on his estate at Merton planted some

in the Norfolk Breckland. A security had to be paid and then, when the crop was dried, the full customs duty was levied or the crop deposited in a bonded warehouse approved by Customs and Excise. Walsingham was one of a small number of growers in England, led by Faunce de Laune of Sittingbourne in Kent, an individual with whom Lord Walsingham frequently corresponded. A quarter of an acre was sown and was said to be 'growing well, but not a very heavy crop'. By September the crop had all been hung in drying houses but a later note in the estate archives states simply: 'I believe that the experiment will show that tobacco cannot be grown profitably in England.' The following year (1887) Faunce De Laune himself contributed a long article to the JRASE extolling the virtue of the crop, followed by contributions from other growers, also in Kent. Messrs Carter, the seed merchants planted three quarters of an acre which produced a 'lush crop' with which they were very satisfied. No further attempts seem to have been made to grow it at Merton, although there were trials elsewhere, most notably around Methwold and at Croxton (also in Breckland). Seventeen acres of the crop were being cultivated by ten growers in 1916, falling to twelve acres and eight growers by 1917 and 12½ and nine in 1918; Mr Meade of Croxton alone grew ten acres in 1921 and 1922. Experiments were not confined to Breckland: the sale of £2 worth of tobacco is recorded in 1911 on the Earl of Stradbroke's home farm at Henham in east Suffolk.

Joan Thirsk in her book *Alternative Agriculture* pointed out that tobacco was in fact grown in the seventeenth century and it was only when the price of the Virginian crop fell in 1690 that it was given up. The main problem was one of taste. Rather than having the flavour of fine Virginian tobacco, it was more like the Arabic crop, from Smyrna favoured by the poor of the Middle East. The fifth edition of Stephens' Book of the Farm, published in 1908 was probably right when it claimed that while tobacco could be grown, 'in this moist and comparatively sunless climate, the fine-flavoured weed, which is the natural product of tropical and semi-tropical regions, can not be equaled. It is doubtful therefore, if much will come out of the facilities now offering for trials with tobacco cultivation in Great Britain'.

► *The editor would welcome further contributions to this discussion. Anyone who would like to join The Interwar Rural History Mailing List should contact Dr Jeremy Burchardt: j.f.burchardt@reading.ac.uk*

*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 November 2008 to Susanna Wade Martins, The Longhouse, Eastgate Street, North Elmham, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 5HD or preferably by email scwmartins@hotmail.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, c/o Dept. of History, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter EX4 4RJ. Enquiries about other aspects of the Society's work should be directed to the Secretary, Dr John Broad, Dept. Humanities, Arts and Languages, London Metropolitan University, 166-220 Holloway Road, London, N7 8DB Tel: 020 7753 5020 Fax: 020 7753 3159 j.broad@londonmet.ac.uk