

# RURAL HISTORY TODAY

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THE FRUIT, THE SEED  
AND THE SOIL

JOHN INNES LEAFLETS, Nos. 1-9



PREPARED BY THE STAFF  
OF THE JOHN INNES  
HORTICULTURAL INSTITUTION  
BAYFORDBURY, HERTFORD

## FOCUS ON THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

# The demise of the Royal Show

*The announcement earlier this year that the 2009 event was to be the last of 160 'Royals' marks, for many, a sad end to an institution which, at least until recently, has mostly been a highly valued part of the rural calendar although over the years it has also been subject to marked swings of fortune.*

**The first Royal Show – or 'country meeting' as it was initially known – was held in Oxford by the newly-founded Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) in 1839.**

In its formative period peripatetic annual meetings – facilitated by the extension of the railway network – were seen as an essential part of the RASE's educational mission; not only did the shows offer the opportunity for regional agricultural communities to observe at first hand innovative machinery and the best of farm animals, but in travelling to the occasion visitors from all parts of the country could observe the variability of agricultural practice across different farming areas.

It was, indeed, in the late 1850s that the Royal Shows blossomed as mass spectacles. Urban locations swelled attendance to the extent that the RASE council, in the choice of show location, tended to alternate between unprofitable rural locations (where the rural educational objectives of the Society were most likely to be realised) and large urban centres where a good financial result could be expected. The urban visitors seem to have attended more for a 'day out' rather than in expressing any great interest in observing English agriculture and the one-shilling entry 'holiday folk' appear to have been most attracted to the show's 'miscellaneous' department where there were exhibits which often had only a tenuous connection with farming.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century declining attendances along with the RASE's deteriorating financial situation led the council to investigate the possibility of acquiring a permanent site for the Royal Show. The peripatetic system was very costly and, in any case, it was increasingly difficult to find adequate provincial sites. After intense debate, a showground site near Twyford Abbey, west London, was acquired (later known as Park Royal) and three shows were held there between 1903 and 1905.



Illustration of the Royal Show meeting in Bristol, 1842

This experiment constituted the greatest misfortune ever experienced by the RASE, generating a cumulative loss of £23,978. Attendance in 1905 was only 25,978, the lowest figure recorded since the number of visitors started to be accurately monitored in the 1850s. Results at previous London shows had never quite come up to expectations and the non-agricultural public now found Royal Shows a less appealing attraction than they had some decades earlier. As the editor of the leading agricultural newspaper of the time observed:

*.....the man of today expects a great deal more for a shilling than did his father and grandfather before him. He is so accustomed to cheap excursions, both to seaside and country, that he is apt to laugh at the thought of paying for the privilege of walking about all day to inspect a lot of stock tied by their heads in sheds.*

The failure of Park Royal led to a wholesale reorganisation of the RASE's affairs and the system of peripatetic shows was reinstated and continued until 1963. Between the two World Wars the annual events were generally successful but low-key, and enjoyed a considerable upsurge in popularity in the late 1940s and 1950s. Such was the enthusiasm to attend the first post-war show at Lincoln (1947) that the Society investigated

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Above – cover of leaflet published by the John Innes Institute (see page 4)

Illustration of the Royal Show meeting in Bristol, 1842

## Also in this issue

Devon hedges – 3

The centenary of the John Innes Institute – 4

Making 'Mud, sweat and tractors' for BBC4 – 5

The Family and Community Historical Research Society – 6

New publications, Conferences – 7

Herringbone milking parlours – 8



British Agricultural  
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the 'Butlin hotel at Skegness' to accommodate visiting VIPs. Success, indeed, mirrored the upturn in the prosperity of farming and the economic situation more generally and the 1950s and 1960s in particular witnessed unprecedented advances in farming technology – the realisation (albeit flawed) of 'Practice with Science' which had been so fervently hoped for by the Society's founders.

It was the same financial and logistical considerations that had been previously encountered that led the RASE in the late 1950s to again reflect on the desirability of a permanent location which would offer more than a showground site alone – a National Agricultural Centre which would allow for a range of farm trials, a headquarters for a number of rural organisations and an opportunity to host various agricultural technical events. Stoneleigh, near Kenilworth in Warwickshire, which was chosen as the permanent showground had the advantage of a central location in England. In the 1970s and 1980s many of the Royal Shows were celebrations of agricultural success and drew a diverse audience to a showground which was so packed with events, exhibits and demonstrations

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Stanton, 'Decadence of Agricultural Shows', in *Agricultural Annual and Mark Lane Express Almanac*, 1902, p.82

that (from personal experience) it was impossible to do justice to the occasion on a one-day visit.

It has been increasingly the case that in England, specialist technical events have become more important than the Royal Show for the professional agriculturist and it has consequently lost much of its appeal as a social outing which could be combined with business. The days are also gone when the farm labour-force was given a day off to visit the 'Royal' – for the most part there is now no permanent farm labour-force in England

It remains to be seen what alternative events are proposed by the RASE management so that some of the most valued show elements – such as the equestrian events and the stock show – can continue in some form. It seems likely that the various English regional and county shows – which remain mostly buoyant despite the current economic downturn – will benefit from the loss of the Royal, especially when linked with such movements as local food advocacy.

*Nick Goddard was the author of the sesquicentennial history of the RASE, *Harvests of Change: the Royal Agricultural Society of England 1838–1988* (Quiller Press 1988).*

► Contact: [nick.goddard@anglia.ac.uk](mailto:nick.goddard@anglia.ac.uk)

## MUSEUM NEWS

### Collecting 20th Century Rural Culture A new project at the Museum of English Rural Life

**This four year project began in the autumn of 2008 supported by Lottery funding of £95,000. The purpose is to acquire material that builds, decade by decade, a picture of the countryside in the twentieth century. We are looking for signal items that speak powerfully of their day and illustrate the wider cultural influence of the countryside on English society.**



One of the first items to be acquired: a dinner plate from the Garden service designed by Eric Ravillious (1903–42) for Wedgwood in 1938. (Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading)

These items could range from works of art that somehow express a mood of the time down to everyday objects that instantly connect with a particular era in the countryside. Perhaps it might be an object with a special story to tell, and an association with an event or a person. For each one, we'll be developing an expert narrative to place it in context and construct an overall story.

All of this will culminate in a special exhibition at the end of the project where we will be using the assembled material to provide a new perspective on the place of the countryside in the English psyche.

The project is giving us the opportunity to develop a new methodology for the targeted collecting of recent and comparatively recent material. We welcome ideas and suggestions on all aspects and in turn we will be sharing our results and experience with other museums and interested parties.

Roy Brigden – Museum of English Rural Life

► For more information, and to contribute your comments, please go to the project blog: <http://collecting20thculturalculture.blogspot.com>

# They do different in Devon (and Cornwall)

West Country Historian Robin Stanes expands on one of the major themes of his recent book *The Husbandry of Devon and Cornwall*.

**An important landscape feature of Devon and Cornwall is the high banks surmounted by hedges which surround fields and line the narrow lanes.**

John Hooker, a sixteenth century Exeter historian described Devonshire hedgerows as 'mighty great hedges'. William Marshall, the Yorkshire agricultural writer, who had worked for some years in Devon, described them as Dumnonian, or as he preferred it, Danmonian hedges.<sup>1</sup> Hedgebank is the right word, as they are, essentially, a hedge planted on top of a bank of earth and stones, that may itself be five feet high.

They define, and now ornament, the character of the South West or what Marshall called and thought of as Dumnonia. For him, traveling westwards into the South West, 'Dumnonia' began around Chard, and ran north-west to the escarpment of the Blackdown Hills just west of Taunton, where the Highland Zone and the old rocks began and where he saw the first Dunmonian hedge; and ended, of course at Lands End. So Devon and Cornwall and the very west of Somerset and Dorset were for him Dunmonia.

Within those bounds he detected a common agrarian culture, 'on a different basis', which is markedly defined by the checkerboard pattern of fields and hedgebanks, but included farming practice; the use of leys and the absence of fallow in the rotations; a different method of preparing soil by 'beat burning' or Devonshiring; a different way of thatching, using prepared straw, known then and now, as 'reed'; a different way with dairy produce, separating cream by scalding milk rather than churning it, and a different rural society, where there were no hiring fairs, and 'surplus' children, boys and girls,

were commonly formally apprenticed to 'Husbandry' in the farmhouse and on the farm.

Marshall thought all these were 'different' – Dunmonian – still a living word to him, deriving from the name of the Roman province (Exeter is Isca Dumnoniorum) and therefore to the pre-Saxon inhabitants of the South Western peninsula. It was, too, a convenient, all-embracing word, for where he had noticed these differences in practice.

His words were emphatic! 'The husbandry of the two counties was a distinguishable from the rest of the island as if the peninsula they form had been recently attached to it!'<sup>2</sup>

Most noticeable were the hedgebanks. Some of these appear ancient, prehistoric; the Bronze Age 'reaves' on the open moor of Dartmoor, can be seen, here and there, to merge into such hedgebanks where enclosed fields begin. They continued to be made newly, three thousand years later. Two eighteenth century explicit descriptions of how to build a hedgebank exist from mid-Devon,<sup>3</sup> and in the nineteenth century the 'ironmaster' Knight family who 'enclosed' the Forest of Exmoor after 1830, marked this acquisition by building many miles of beech topped hedgebank around the Moor. All of these conform to the same design and pattern.

To make a hedgebank (once the required line had been decided) two parallel ditches were dug two feet or more deep and about nine feet apart and the earth from them piled between the ditches so that the edge of the pile is as upright as possible. On the upright face of this pile, turves, accumulated from the ditch digging, and taken from the sward, were firmly placed using the back of a long shovel tamped (or pressed down) to cover the whole surface, so that the grass of the turves starts to grow and makes a plain smooth grass face to the bank. This process is continued upwards, layer by layer, along the full length of the hedge until the required height is reached. The earth from the ditches may be added to for filling behind the grass



*A Devon hedge bank (Peter Child)*

face, by loose surface stone and boulders and may incorporate living trees and stone walling.

Small hedge plants, whitethorn, blackthorn, hazel, ash, oak, beech, were planted at close intervals on top of the earthen bank to take root. They were allowed to grow upward until they started to cast shade or overhang, when they were cut and laid and pegged down, nearly flat and anything good for firewood logs, or for brushwood faggots for the bread oven, or hearth, was saved and ricked. Enough long growth was left to make a stockproof hedge on the bank, which itself regularly required earthing and turving up. The original ditches filled in with time and ploughing, and seldom survive, except where the land lies wet.

Hedgebanks, if maintained, had three great virtues; good shelter in wet cold, windy weather, a good high barrier for stock, and essential firing, the means to cook and keep warm, but they occupied a lot of land and required a lot of maintenance.

They were cut and laid regularly – to avoid drip and shade – ideally in the first year of ploughing, as the fields they bordered were ploughed in accordance with 'ley' rotations (about three to four years arable and eight to ten years in grass ley).

Today they still provide shelter, and still divide stock, but they are commonly trimmed annually with a hedge trimmer, and there is minimal need for firewood.

► *'The Husbandry of Devon and Cornwall' is available from Deep End, Deepdene Park, Exeter EX2 4PH.*

1 W. Marshall *Rural economy of the West of England including Devonshire and parts of Somerset and Dorset and Cornwall* 1796. 1970 reprint

2 Ibid

3 *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries* vols 122 and 124

# John Innes celebrates its centenary with a 'History of Genetics Day'

*In 2010 the John Innes Centre will have been at the forefront of plant genetics for 100 years.*

*Sarah Wilmot, Outreach Curator, John Innes Centre, Norwich Research Park, Colney, Norwich NR4 7UA, outlines the history of the John Innes Centre as it approaches its centenary.*

**The Centre was originally founded by the bequest of London property developer John Innes (1829–1904) and opened its doors in January 1910 as the John Innes Horticultural Institution. What the focus of the new Institution was to be had occupied many years of discussion between the Trustees of the will, the Board of Agriculture, the Board of Education and the Director of Kew Gardens.**



*Fruit breeding house at Merton c.1930-47. (John Innes Foundation; historical collections)*

The founding scheme set out that the John Innes would be a training school for practical gardeners, a fruit-breeding research station, and an institution 'for the promotion of horticultural instruction, experiment and research'. William Bateson (1861–1926) was chosen as the first Director because he led the new science of genetics in Britain. He translated and promoted Gregor Mendel's papers on plant hybridisation and coined the word 'genetics' in 1905. Bateson gathered around him a group of enthusiastic young scientists and used Mendel's principles to attack problems of inheritance in plants. From 1910 to 1948 the Institution was based at Merton in Surrey, centred on the Manor House at Merton Park, the former home of John Innes. Two moves followed, first to Bayfordbury, a stately home south of Hertford in 1949, and in 1967 to Colney near Norwich (its present site) where it formed an association with the University of East Anglia.

For the first half of the twentieth century the John Innes was the only place in Britain where scientists could pursue research in

plant genetics, and the only place where students could train in the subject. During controversies over the role of genetics in biology, particularly with Russian science under Stalin, John Innes scientists acted as spokesmen for genetics in Britain. Although university expansion has greatly increased Britain's resources for genetics since then, the John Innes Centre continues to play a leading role in research and training in genetics today. From 1910 to 1946 the John Innes Horticultural Institution was an independent research centre funded by the John Innes Charity and much of its unique character was due to its valued independence. By 1946 the needs of the Institution had outgrown the resources of the Charity and JIHI became a grant-aided station of the Ministry of Agriculture, later administered by the Agricultural Research Council (which became the AFRC, then BBSRC).

During the first phase of the Institution's history the fruit industry was important in shaping the research agenda with representatives of the Fruiterers' Company and the National Fruit Growers' Federation on the managing body. Fruit breeding was one of the main lines of research until the 1970s. Although many of the early crosses were made to study inheritance and not to produce new varieties, the John Innes ultimately released 53 fruit varieties, 28 flower-varieties, and 15 vegetable varieties. One of the lasting contributions of the fruit work was the MM series of rootstocks for woolly-aphid resistance in apples, produced jointly with East Malling Research Station (Kent). During World War II John Innes research on fertility rules in fruit planting and on composts became better known through a series of leaflets that the Institution published as part of its contribution to the war effort. Later the horticultural trade in the composts made 'John Innes' a household name. Horticultural training was provided through the Institution's student gardener

scheme which ran from 1911 to 1939. Six student gardeners (prior to 1930 called 'exhibitioners') were taken on every year to receive specialist instruction in the gardens and glass houses.

In 1960 the Institution changed its name to the John Innes Institute, signalling the inclusion of microbial science in the research programme and a move towards more fundamental research in biology. Applied genetics work moved away from fruit and began to concentrate on peas and other horticultural crops. In 1994 the Institute was renamed again after the John Innes Institute merged with the Plant Breeding Institute, relocated from Cambridge, and the Nitrogen Fixation Unit which moved from Sussex. The modern day John Innes Centre operates on a scale that allows studies from the atomic level to crop field performance, and promotes the rapid transfer of knowledge from model organisms to target crops and industrial microbes.

A focal event to celebrate 100 years of John Innes science will take place at the John Innes Centre in Norwich, UK on Wednesday 9th September 2009. An international line-up of science historians will cover the history of John Innes from its origins to the present day with topics including the background behind the founding of the 'John Innes Horticultural Institution', the role of women in the John Innes workforce in the early years, Bateson's contributions to evolutionary theory, and JI's place in the history of genetics from the inter-war years to the atomic age. They will be joined by scientists Mike Gale and Keith Chater, and science philosopher Sabina Leonelli, who between them will cover JIC's contribution to the modern sciences of crop genetics, bacterial genetics and *Arabidopsis* research – history in the making! This event will be accompanied by a major historical exhibition drawing on the John Innes Foundation Historical Collections.

► To view the programme and register for this event see [www.jic.ac.uk/centenary](http://www.jic.ac.uk/centenary)

# Making – ‘Mud, sweat and tractors’ agricultural history on the small screen

By the series producer, David Parker

Of course, even with a programme consultant as adept as Alun Howkins, the four hours of television on BBC 4 entitled ‘The Story of Agriculture’, could only be a partial history of such a massive area of life. But the series did catch the eye of both critics and the viewing public. There was a feeling that unlike a good deal of factual programming on television at the moment, this series really did drill down into the detail, and resulted, somewhat surprisingly in good telly.

Tom Sutcliffe’s honest review of programme four, ‘Meat’ in the *Independent* captured the flavour. Having poured something close to verbal manure on programme one, ‘Milk’, ‘I found myself looking for my geography exercise book to make notes’. His view, by the end of the series, had shifted. He conceded that ‘there is something seductive about its account of the continuities and change in the British countryside’.

There is no doubt in my mind that there is a real hunger for content in documentaries on television; it has something to do with the lack of it in great swathes of programming these days. People talking to me say that they are getting very little reward for giving up large chunks of a scarce resource, their time. But it has also something to do with the times we live in, the feeling that we are out of control, economically and politically. The fact that we are pretty powerless to do much about our pension or our Parliament, has made us interested in programmes that go some way to explaining the world we are living in, and how we got here. In planning the programmes with the BBC we all felt that we really did want to explain how we got from ‘a’ to ‘b’. The ‘x’ factor in ‘Mud Sweat and Tractors’ was that the films’ central characters were rolling up their sleeves and doing something about the state they were in. They may not have been rich but they were in control, or at least more in control than the redundant hedge fund manager or constituent of an MP using public funding to clean his moat.

People liked the detail of the content in the programmes. I was worried that viewers



A still from one of the home movies featured in the BBC4 series

might not be interested in how we got from hay to silage, or the short-term impact of that Agriculture Act so derided by Tom Sutcliffe, I should not have lost sleep. Enough people watched for BBC Four to consider the ‘Story Of Agriculture’ to be a ratings hit.

But as well as being interested in the detail, viewers were also drawn to the series by its use of a source for the study of history that has been neglected for too long by social historians and television programme makers alike; the home movie.

The proposition behind the idea was that, whilst there had been a 20th century revolution in agriculture, what made this more fascinating was that the revolution had been filmed from within; by the very people who were central to the changes taking place. He may not have realised it, but when the dairy farmer from Dorset, David Hosford, was filming his sons destroying the old fixed milking bale and replacing it with one of the first herring bone milking parlours in the West country; he was filming a revolution (*see notes and queries on the back of this issue*).

A number of people wondered how I managed to find the range of film material for the series. There is no single answer. Some of it, I already knew. I have been using home movie archive in making films in my home patch, the West Country, for many years. The very first was a piece of wonderful super 8mm colour of the pony sales at Bampton Fair on Exmoor in the mid

1960’s. The film made a huge difference to the programme I was making and made me alert to the rich possibilities bequeathed to us by people who thought they were shooting a home movie of their holiday or day out.

Some home movies have found their way into the regional film archives, where they lie, mostly unseen and frequently unused. Some of it is serendipity or luck.

After a whole day, wondering around the Dairy Show at Stoneleigh in September, and perplexed about what bit of expensive looking technology to film, I stumbled across a dairy farmer on the Tesco ‘Sustainable Dairy Group’ stand. When I told him I was making a series about change in farming, but using the home movies farmers themselves filmed, he laughed and said that I should talk to his ‘old man’. He’d been filming since the 1930’s. I did and he’s in the programme, and so is his ‘old man’.

What next? Farming is only a small, and diminishing part of the rural story, and I’m hoping to tell that other story in a follow up series; any tips for uncovering more home movie archive would be most welcome.

David Parker, the producer of *A History of Agriculture* makes television documentaries specialising in history, landscape and working life. His production company, Available Light Productions is now working on the a three-part series for BCC about the way World War Two was filmed by home movie makers.

► Contact: [dparker@availablelight.tv](mailto:dparker@availablelight.tv)

## Family and Community Historical Research Society



*Angela Blaydon  
describes the work  
of The Family  
and Community  
Historical  
Research Group*

**The Family & Community Historical Research Society was born in 1998, partly out of the Open University course DA301 Studying Family & Community History. Many of the founder members are still actively involved with the Society, together with many other newer members, who are drawn from all walks of life. The main criterion to join the Society is a desire to find out more about local and social history within the community.**

The Society provides an environment for the family historian who wants to delve deeper into the social and local history, which shaped the lives of their ancestors, as well as providing a bridge between amateur and academic historians through research projects, which are open to all members wishing to take part.

The Society carries out joint research projects that relate to families and the community, organised across a network of members over all relevant regions of the country. These are co-ordinated by a member nominated by the Projects Sub-Committee, with the help and guidance of an academic adviser, who also analyses the resultant material. If the project discovers enough material, then those who took part in the research are invited to submit material that may be used in a publication relating to the project.

Previous subjects of research include:

**Arithmeticke Project**, which looked at the diffusion of hindu-arabic numerals to replace roman in 16/17th century inventories and other historical documents;

**Captain Swing Project**, which researched the character as well as the extent of the Swing protest riots of the 1830s, culminating in the production of a database of incidents and the Society's first publication, *Swing Unmasked*;

**Assisted Emigration**, which looked at the incidence of help, given by the parish or other bodies or individuals, to those wishing to emigrate;

**Allotments**, which has discovered many throughout the country, with a book of essays to be published in the near future;

**Almshouses Project**, in conjunction with the Local Population Studies Society, is an attempt to discover as many of these as possible across the UK, with the aim of producing an online gazetteer of all known almshouses that ever existed (whether still extant or not), something that as yet has not been done, leading to another publication; and

**Education**, our current project using school log books, which is currently in its pilot stage, and launched this May.

The Society also runs occasional mini-projects, the most recent being in 2008, to celebrate our 10th Anniversary, on Career Servants using census returns and other 19th century documentation.

A conference is held annually in May and is open to all. Every other year this is held in Aspley Guise, a small village close to Milton Keynes, with intervening years held somewhere else in the country. Previous venues have included, Birmingham, Leicester, Colchester, and York. This year's was held at the IHR in London.

The Society produces an academic Journal twice a year, which is recognised as a quality publication by institutions around the country. Members are also kept up-to-date with activities within and outside the Society by a Newsletter produced every four months, an occasional e-news newsletter, and on the Society website at [www.fachrs.com](http://www.fachrs.com), which also has a members-only section containing much resultant data from Society projects. Our webmaster has also developed an online shop for the sale of books and CDs via the Internet at [www.shop.fachrs.org.uk](http://www.shop.fachrs.org.uk). You can also join the Society online at the main website, [www.fachrs.com](http://www.fachrs.com).

There is a planned programme of continued learning, consisting of hands-on workshops and seminars. These are held at various locations, e.g. Warwick Record Office, with many in Aspley Guise. Some of the subjects covered include: Effective Presentations, a workshop on using PowerPoint for Historians; Researching Village Communities; and two sessions on Using A Database for Historians, which received high praise from Emeritus Professor Michael Drake of the Open University as being the only database course he had attended that had relevance to historians.

Other benefits for members include: *Ancestors Magazine* discount and access to the Local Population Studies History Book Club's special member prices for books;

The Society also travels round the country with its Road Show stall visiting various family history and local history fairs and open days.

► *Membership is available to any interested individuals at £21.00 for one year's membership, or £25 for a family membership, and application is through the website, [www.fachrs.com](http://www.fachrs.com), or by contacting the Membership Secretary, The Four Bees, Church Lane, Hellidon, N Daventry, Northants NN11 6GD, **Membership.secretary@fachrs.org.uk***

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

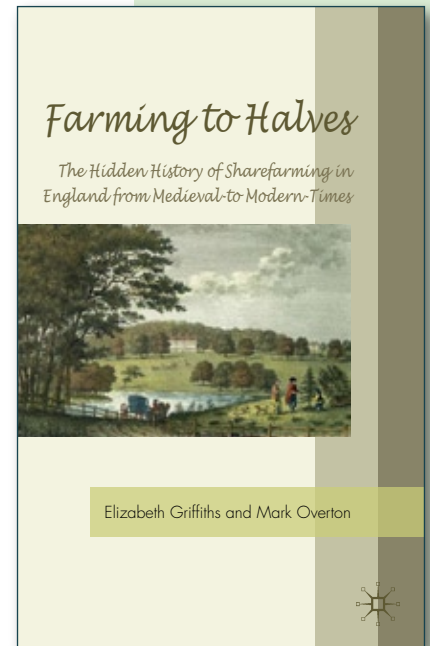
### Farming to Halves: The Hidden History of Sharefarming from Medieval to Modern Times

Elizabeth Griffiths and Mark Overton, (Harper Macmillan 2009) is available at a discounted price to BAHS members.

Readers of *Rural History Today* will be familiar with farming to halves through articles charting its progress from inception to update, and now to completion (Issue 6, Feb 2004, and Issue 12, 2007). The newsletter played a significant role, raising awareness and inviting readers to send in examples of this English form of sharefarming, hitherto unknown in academic circles. We would like to thank everyone who responded. Several of these references appear in this newly published book.

The book culminates in Prof. Mike Winter's 2007 survey of the extent and nature of sharefarming in England today. His findings and analysis confirm our own historical research in the most satisfying way, linking firmly the present to the past. The turning point of the research proved to be the reappearance

of sharefarming in the early twentieth century, after an absence of nearly two centuries, which prompted the call for further references in the 2007 update. The absence of sharefarming in England appears to be confined to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the landlord tenant system reigned supreme; its return in the 1900s coincides with the demise of that system. This raises the possibility, as Mark Overton points out, that the English landlord tenant system, famed for its role in the Agricultural Revolution, was an exception to the rule, a passing phase, associated with a dominant landed elite. In its ideas and conclusions, the book has proved most timely and relevant – in 2008, *The Archers* devoted an entire episode to the benefits of sharefarming, as Brian Aldridge concluded a profit sharing agreement with his step children, Debbie and Adam. But, remember, you heard it here first.



## FUTURE CONFERENCES

### Historic Farm Buildings Group Autumn Conference

11-13 September 2009

Ashburnham Place, Battle, East Sussex

The conference will look at the landscape of the Weald in Kent and East Sussex. It is an area rich in the survival of early farmsteads within landscapes formed by fourteenth century woodland clearance. An application form can be downloaded from the group's website: [www.hfbg.org](http://www.hfbg.org)

### Representing Rurality: Culture & the Countryside in the Twentieth Century

Wednesday 4 November 2009

One-day conference at the Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading

This conference is being organised in connection with MERL's Collecting Twentieth Century Rural Culture project (see separate notice) and in cooperation with the Inter War Rural History Research Group.

The keynote speaker will be David Matless, Professor of Cultural Geography at the University of Nottingham and the day will conclude with a panel

discussion chaired by Alun Howkins, Professor of Social History at the University of Sussex.

We have a number of short research papers lined up and others on the theme are invited. The cost of attending the conference is £10 (inclusive of lunch). For more information and booking details etc contact Roy Brigden at the Museum of English Rural Life: [r.d.brigden@reading.ac.uk](mailto:r.d.brigden@reading.ac.uk)

### British Agricultural History Society Winter Conference

Saturday 5 December 2009; 10.30-4.30

Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1

The History of Rural Housing  
New Approaches and Old Problems

Speakers include Dr Will Browne and Dr Margaret Yates (Houses, history and cybernetics: the challenges of an interdisciplinary project), Professor Matthew Johnson, (Traditional buildings, social lives: rural housing from the Reformation to the Georgian Order), Dr John Broad (The nineteenth century rural housing crisis: motives and perspectives), and Dr Barbara Linsley (Rural housing in recession: affordable housing in the twentieth and twenty-first century).

# NOTES AND QUERIES

## ‘Dairying Heritage Research’ out to recapture first hand accounts, and photos

*Alan Sharpe, a New Zealand cattle farmer and son of the inventor of the Herringbone Milking Parlour is seeking information on its early uptake in the 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 2009 to Susanna Wade Martins, The Longhouse, Eastgate Street, North Elmham, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 5HD or preferably by email [scwmartins@hotmail.com](mailto: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 Nicola Verdon, Department of History, Arts A, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN2 88H Tel: 01273 67844 [n.j.verdon@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:n.j.verdon@sussex.ac.uk)

**The history of the development of a milking system which would reduce the need for the milker to crouch beside the cow by the development of raised platform and so-called ‘stoop-less’ milking is a long one. The resulting economies facilitated huge advances in dairy farming, and the technology that supports it.**

The De-Laval - Alfa-Laval group of companies credit New Zealander Norman John DAYSH with their successful launch of a ‘reliable’ milking machine in 1917 and, ever since, have continued to be at the forefront of advances. In the U.S.A. by 1934, they were associated with Cyrus HAPGOOD, and the Walker-Gordon Laboratory was associated with Kraemer KLUKS in patenting large 48 bail rotary milking parlours. (US 1.968.564 & 1.863.603) In the U.K. Alfa-Laval and Neel CORDEROY were patenting a design that was to become known as a Tandem. (1934 UK 438.432). Later followed various patents with the Zig-Zag design bails.

While experimentation with milking equipment, and design, was ongoing, and numerous patents were successfully filed over the years, it took until the re-building after WWII before conditions availed the pioneers opportunities, to become innovative and adventurous, on a scale never seen before. Instead of the odd unique milking parlour appearing in a district, hundreds started appearing.

Down under interest stirred, big time, with the simultaneous introduction into the July 1952 – May 1953 milking season, of the: (MACARTHUR-ONSLOW) ‘Camden Park Estate Rotolactor’ at Menangle, New South Wales, Australia; the (PREVOST) NZ Department of Agriculture Tandem at Manurewa, Auckland NZ; and the (SHARP) ‘Angle Park/ Herringbone’ at Gordonton, Waikato, NZ.

The New Zealand designs came about because of the need for a simple, efficient milking system, suitable for, seasonal dairy cow herds (in excess of 40 cows, a milking labour unit), and being operated by owner-operator farmers. New Zealand had a large number of these, including the WWII service men, being settled on Government assisted, ‘Rehab’ (rehabilitation) farms. The prevalent ‘Walk-through’ (Abreast) individual bail design cowshed, was getting dated, plus the 1952 Dairy Industry Act had just replaced the Dairy Produce Regulations Act of 1908, and the Dairy Division of the

Department of Agriculture, was heavily promoting the upgrading of milking premises.

Local farmers were quick to adopt the NZ Tandem and Herringbone designs, and after Massey Agricultural College converted to a Herringbone cowshed, for the 1955-56 season, the international publicity so gained, saw these designs rapidly spread around the world, to some very unlikely places.

### Unprecedented global acceptance

Acceptance of, and experimentation, with the Herringbone system of milking, is unequalled. In 1957 Hoards Dairyman ran an article (Dunkley), and identified herringbones already built in the United States of America. (Engelbrecht's Munnsville, New York and Golay's Cambridge City, Indiana.) Articles by Hoglund, and by Lindsey, refer to American sheds built in 1957 – 1959, and by 1960 Lindsey estimated some 1,500 were in various stages of completion.

In Britain, four herringbones were installed during 1956 and at least two were in operation in the same year by 1958 there were about a dozen, and some 300 were in operation by October 1963.

By 1960 even in the far off USSR closed State of Siberia, large herds of up to 2,750 cows under one management, were being milked in groups of 500 cows through Tandem and Herringbone cowsheds. Years ahead of other countries, including New Zealand.

In 1962 J. D. J. Scott of New Zealand, reported on collated data from approximately 150 New Zealand Herringbone cowsheds, and by 1983 The England & Wales Milk Marketing Board reported over 67% of their milk was collected from Herringbone milking parlours. Figures got even higher in some regions, around the world, where they did not have to winter house, their cows.

But who were these pioneering farmers' saving on bending down 2,440 times per cow/season?

Too many of them are passing on before we can get their first hand accounts, as so few were named in the Agricultural papers and bulletins, and the Department Officers 'field note books' have often not been kept, eliminating another source of information.

► Email: [herringbone@hnpl.net](mailto:herringbone@hnpl.net) if you can help.