

RURAL HISTORY TODAY

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The bleak midwinter of 1947

As white Christmases become a thing of the past, Dr John Martin of De Montfort University describes one of the worst winters on record and its affect on rural life.

Above – Illustration from 15th century Gaston de Foix; *Livre de Chasse* (see pages 6–7)



Road clearing 1947
(Museum of English Rural Life,
University of Reading).

In agricultural circles 1947 is remembered as the year when the Labour Government passed the Agriculture Act, whereby the private sector was sponsored, rather than directed, by the state, through a complex system of assured markets and guaranteed prices.

This iconic legislation formed the bedrock of the state's relationship with the agricultural sector until Britain's entry into the European Community in the 1970s. However, the year was also noted by contemporaries as the worst winter in living memory. During the first three months of that year, the country was first engulfed in an arctic spell, then by extensive flooding which brought the economy and the agricultural sector to a virtual standstill.

Following the first snow falls on 22 January, which lasted virtually unabated until the middle of March, the prolonged cold spell established a number of records which remain unsurpassed even today. One of the most depressing of these was the never ending dullness, when the vast majority of British inhabitants were denied the merest glimpse of sun for virtually all of February. The observatory at Kew, for example, recorded no sunshine at all from the 2nd to the 22nd of February, the longest period ever yet documented. The

mean monthly temperature for February 1947 was the lowest for that month ever recorded at -1.90°C , whereas for February 1963 it was -0.70°C . It was not until the middle of March that the snow finally began to thaw. However the ground was still frozen rock hard by the intense cold, leading to a massive run off of meltwater at a speed and volume which drainage systems failed to cope with. This was accompanied by prolonged heavy rain resulting in extensive flooding, particularly in the Thames Valley and the Fens.

By mid April official estimates suggested that nearly 1.5 million hill and lowland sheep, and more than 2.5 million lambs, had died largely as a result of the snow. This amounted to over 20 per cent of the national flock, a level of magnitude which dwarfed previous bad winters. But it was the sheep in the uplands hills and moors which bore the brunt of this decline, accounting for about 75 per cent of the total losses. In the cattle sector, although losses were severe, they were considerably less acute, with an estimated 50,000 stock, mainly beef cattle, losing their lives. The financial impact of the winter on the farming community was particularly marked, with farm incomes often falling

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British Agricultural
History Society

Putting the past into practice: Applying historical land use information

Humphrey Southall,
Director, GB Historical
GIS/University of
Portsmouth describes the
work of the Great Britain
Historical GIS team.

Since 2003, the Great Britain Historical GIS team based at Portsmouth University have done a series of projects analysing historical land use data funded by government agencies:

The Agricultural Change and Environment Observatory was established within the Department of the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs to monitor changes in agriculture, particularly those arising from the 2003 Common Agricultural Policy reforms. One issue is how changes in the structure of farm businesses affects farming practices, and so the landscape.

One of the Environment Agency's primary responsibilities is for implementing the European Union's Water Quality Directive. One aspect of this is reducing the amounts of nitrates, 'nitrate vulnerable zones' currently covering 20% of England. Given that reducing fertiliser use may make arable farming non-viable, identifying which areas were traditionally pastoral and converted to arable during or after World War II is one way of targeting action.

Natural England exists "to conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings." This includes the Environmental Stewardship scheme, funded by the European Union as part of the Common Agricultural Policy, Pillar 2. UK funding under this for 2007–13 is £4.5bn. According to Andrew Baker of NE, "Place based evidence of long term change will greatly aid in our interpretation of the evidence arising from landscape monitoring programmes such as Countryside Quality

Counts". One way this can happen is through better understanding of the landscapes associated with "low input farming", which we are maybe moving back towards.

The GBH GIS team became involved with historical land use surveys because of our unusual expertise in large scale digitisation projects based on historical geo-spatial data. Our most detailed work has focused on the Land Utilisation Survey of Great Britain, based at the London School of Economics and led by Professor L. Dudley Stamp. Most of the country was surveyed between 1931 and 1934, but lack of funds meant it took until 1949 to publish the resulting one inch to one mile maps; 56 sheets covering upland Scotland were never published, but carefully hand-coloured and deposited with the Royal Geographical Society (figure 1). In 2004, DEFRA and EA funding allowed us to scan all the published maps, and in 2005 funding from the Frederick Soddy Trust plus assistance from the RGS and Imperial Mapping Ltd added the unpublished Scottish sheets. These scans have been assembled into a single seamless electronic map which forms part of our open access web site, *A Vision of Britain through Time*, so the whole of the LUSGB has finally been published and can be viewed at www.visionofbritain.org.uk

The Second Land Utilisation Survey was directed by Professor Alice Coleman of King's College London and collected more detailed information than the LUSGB. The survey was completed relatively quickly between 1960 and 1963, but publishing the results was again more problematic. Only 15% of the mapping was ever published, but the whole survey is still held privately by Professor Coleman.

The Land Use UK survey was carried out in 1996–7, and largely limited itself to a stratified sample of 1,000 1km grid squares. It did however create a conventional map of the Brighton area. This is of immense interest as it uses the same methods as the earlier surveys for a date when satellite data are available. Our separate *Land of Britain* demonstration web site (www.landofbritain.org.uk) presents data from all the sources discussed here for the Brighton area.

Building on this work, DEFRA has funded research into the records of the agricultural census or 'June Survey', taken annually since 1866. The only published data are by county, and we have assembled all available transcriptions so that *Vision of Britain* includes data for at least every tenth year for English counties, and at least for 1871, 1901, 1931 and 1961 for Scotland and Wales. Parish-level statistics exist in

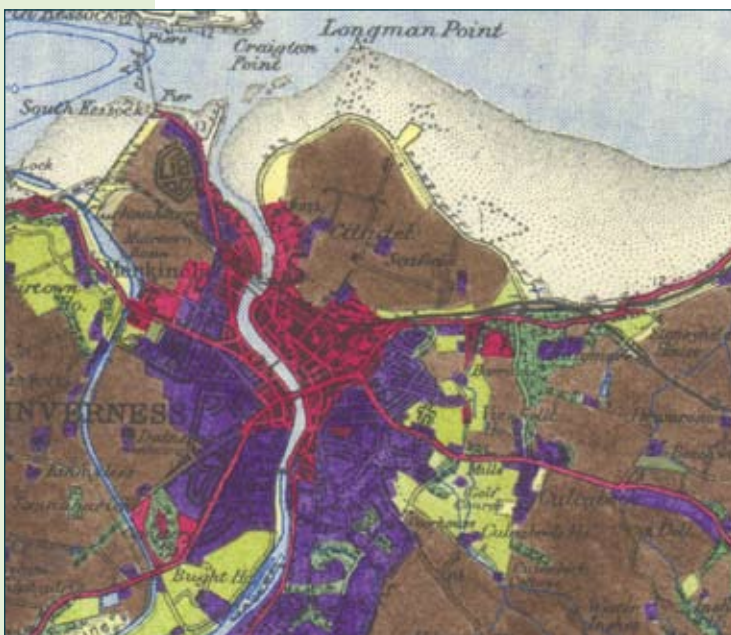


Figure 1 – Hand-coloured Land Utilisation Survey of Great Britain map of the Inverness area

manuscript form in the National Archives. We have located several transcriptions, usually limited to single counties or smaller groups of parishes, but analytic work has concentrated on transcriptions by Coppock covering south-east England in 1877 and 1931 (figure 2 & 3). We would be pleased to hear about additional transcriptions of county- or parish-level data.

Natural England funded an investigation of the 1941 National Farm Survey. This is of interest partly because this is the only year for which the original farm-level returns from the June Survey have been preserved. Maps in MAF.73 show the boundaries of every farm in England and Wales. However, in 1941 “surveyors” qualitatively assessed each farmer and farm: “bad” farmers occupying “good” land would be replaced by managers for the duration of the war. Records of the survey comprise about 1.1m. questionnaires and 36,000 maps. It would be possible albeit very expensive to create a conventional GIS from these data, but we concluded that they could be scanned and made accessible on-line for under £200,000.

Funding from government agencies has thus enabled extensive surveys of available data, and a series of feasibility studies for large scale computerisation. The latter has focused on automated methods for converting the existing scanned images of the LUSGB maps into sets of land use polygons represented by vectors, from which the creation of land use statistics by parish or district would be a small further step. We have shown that this is possible, at much lower cost than manually digitising the maps, but the necessary funding has so far been available from neither the agencies nor the research councils.

Our current work is funded by the Frederick Soddy Trust and is aimed at developing broad conclusions on trends in land use since the 1930s, comparing maps from the land utilisation surveys with modern Land Cover mapping. This work focuses on changes at the edges of towns and on conversion of moorland to improved grazing. Rather than trying to vectorise the published LUSGB maps, we are focusing on those areas covered by the original colour separations now held by the LSE archives: six separations were created by the LUSGB for each published sheet, each containing just one colour layer, so they are far easier to vectorise than the published maps (figure 4).

To learn more about how typical rural areas have changed, away from towns and moorland, we are seeking funding for a research student who would draw on all the sources listed here, plus various kinds of historical photography, to study the earlier landscape history of the seven lowland English parishes covered by Natural England’s *New Agricultural Landscapes* studies, begun in 1972 and repeated in 1983, 1994 and 2005.

The changing land of Britain has been recorded in remarkable detail over the last century, such that the sheer volume of material is the largest barrier to systematic analysis.

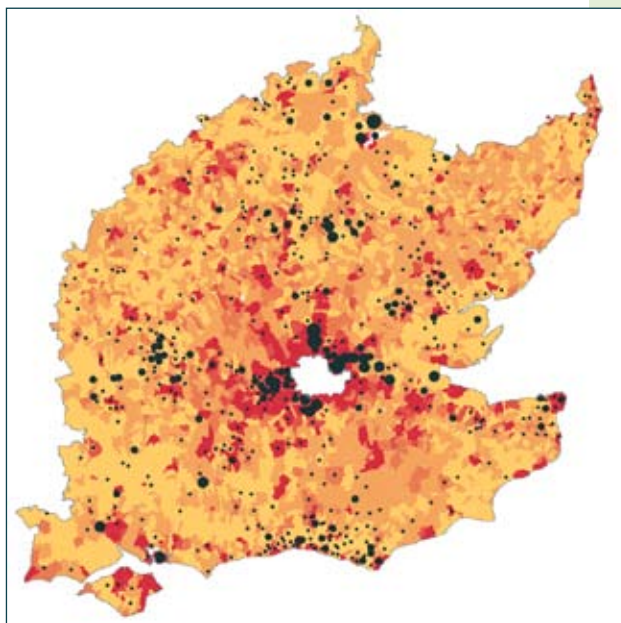


Figure 2 – Cabbage Acreages in 1877 (proportional circles) relative to 1881 population density (colours), from Coppock’s sample of parish-level agricultural census data

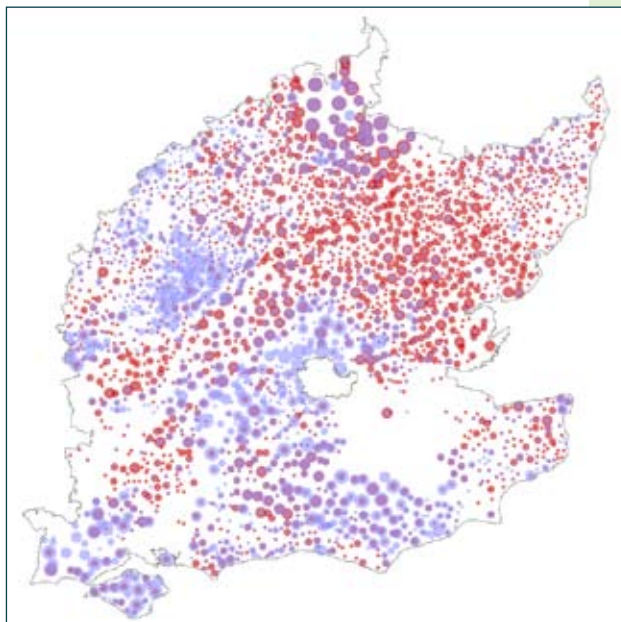


Figure 3 – Cows in milk relative to wheat acreages in 1877, from Coppock’s sample of parish-level agricultural census data



Figure 4 (below) – Comparing the green layer colour separation for part of the Salisbury and Bulford area with an adjacent area of the published LUSGB map. The solid areas on the separation are woodland and the striped areas are pasture.

The County School Movement

Susanna Wade Martins traces the short history of an educational experiment, and one of its schools in the heart of rural Norfolk. She would be interested to hear details of any other such establishments from other regions.

On the outskirts of the mid-Norfolk village of North Elmham is the small hamlet of County School up hill from a railway station of the same name. The name is almost all that remains as a reminder of an educational experiment conducted here in the late 19th century.

While efforts were being made to get the poor into compulsory elementary education there was also a growing demand for schooling from the middle classes. The public schools were developing as educational establishments for the gentry and aristocracy. However there was little provision for boarding school education for the sons of the middle class, and particularly of farmers who often lived at too great a distance from a market town to make the journey every day to existing private academies or grammar schools.

A solution, promoted by Joseph Lloyd Brereton (1822-1901) was the establishment of a network of 'County Schools'. While rector of West Buckland in Devon in 1856, he wrote an open letter to the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Fortescue, on the subject of 'County Education' which he then published as a pamphlet.¹ The problem as he saw it was two-fold; firstly there were not enough schools, but secondly there was no recognizable standard of excellence for those that did exist. He compared the existing educational system to that of railway carriages with their first, second and third class. It was as if the second class, between the leisured and labouring classes had been withdrawn. His suggestion was that there should be divisional schools established, perhaps one for every workhouse Union. These schools would be self-supporting as far as food and maintenance was concerned, fees being charged only to pay the teachers. As they would be mainly for the children of farmers, he suggested that they should be based on 100-acre farms which would be worked by 50 boys between the ages of 12 and 15 spending up to 5 hours a day on the land and 5 hours in the class room. 50 girls would also be educated and they would spend time in the dairy, laundry and kitchen as well as

in formal education. Above this, for every county there would be a County College for those who wished for a higher education or to be prepared for university.

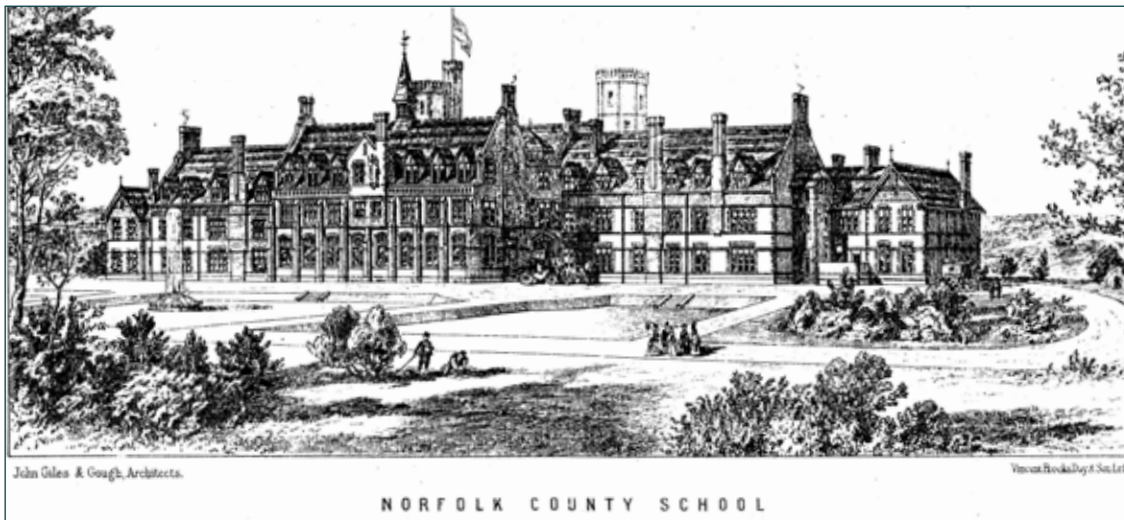
This ambitious scheme came to nothing, but instead, in 1861, a 'County School' was opened at West Buckland (now West Buckland School). By 1871 Joseph Brereton had moved to succeed his father as rector of Massingham in Norfolk and he set about founding the Norfolk County School Association with Lord Leicester as its president. Trustees included such men as the Bishop of Norwich with Brereton the chairman of the directors. In 1871 he opened a small school in Massingham with seven boys (later described in school magazines as 'The Massingham Seven'). It was this core of pupils who moved to a purpose-built County School at North Elmham in 1874. Funds were mainly provided in the form of shares by the farming community and indeed the *Norwich Mercury* described the school as being founded by 'the tenant farmers of the county'.² Gone was the idea of a self-sufficient community and instead an impressive building was to be erected on 40 acres of land provided by Lord Leicester. The foundation stone was laid by the Prince of Wales on Easter Monday (April 14th) 1873. It was a grand occasion with a temporary station being erected on the Dereham-Fakenham line to allow the many spectators who chose to spend their bank holiday at the event to travel there by rail. The event was accompanied by many speeches, and in his Brereton made it clear that the aim of the Norfolk County School Association was to 'raise the standard and to reduce the cost of education in the county' providing 'all classes and especially the farming class (with) an efficient and early preparation for an active life'. Lord Leicester who described the school as being founded by 'the tenant farmers of Norfolk'... '(a class) 'with whom I am intimately connected. All will admit that farmers need a high class education that will enable them to acquire the requisite knowledge- I may say of chemistry and mechanics- without which it is almost

impossible to farm prosperously.' While 'ample provision has been made for the education of the upper classes and ample provision, and more than ample provision in my opinion has been made for the lower classes, for the middle classes, at any rate in our agricultural districts it is very difficult to obtain at a moderate cost.'³

The immense and imposing school building was designed in 'old English domestic' style and cost about £8,000. Its position, described as being on a 'lofty eminence' would have assured prospective parents of the healthiness of its site. There was plenty of opportunity for sport and relaxation on the river below. Entries in the school magazine show that the school possessed several boats and that on one occasion boys sailed from the school down to Norwich.⁴ Fish were frequently caught and rabbits shot for the school kitchen. Built on three floors, there was a main hall or theatre open to the roof and with galleries around which was used for school plays and entertainments as well as lectures. The 'schoolroom' which could hold 500 boys opened off to one side at ground floor level with a library, reception room and board room to the south side presenting an imposing front. There was also a 'comfortably furnished' reading room. A wing containing six small class rooms extended to the east. Boarding places were provided for 300 pupils. An adjoining wing contained the headmaster's house.⁵

The school finally opened in September 1874 with a luncheon attended by 200 people including Lord Fortescue, patron of the Devon School and Lord Sondes of North Elmham.⁶ The swimming pool, taking water from the river, was opened in 1876, the chapel was added in 1883 and a permanent station at County School was opened in 1884.

The first prize day of the school was given a great deal of publicity in the local press. It was attended by the high sheriff who distributed the prizes as well as the Rev Brereton and several directors of the school. These included representatives of several well-known local farming families, such as



the Overmans, Becks, Englands and Hudsons. In his address, the headmaster claimed that the school was in a 'most flourishing condition' with number of pupils increasing rapidly. In the speeches that followed the subsequent dinner, the fact that it was a 'middle-class school' was frequently expressed. Henry Overman, said that he knew 'as a middle-class man, how great was the need for such a school, where they could feel sure their sons would receive such an education as would fit them for entering any calling in life which their tastes or abilities might point out to them'.⁷ The school magazines show that there were Overman boys in the school throughout its short existence.

It is difficult to be sure of the background of most of the pupils. By 1881 the census shows that most came from outside Norfolk. The railway line made it possible for boys to travel from all parts of the United Kingdom. Only 22 of the 102 pupils listed were from Norfolk. Some names that occur in the school magazines, such as recognizable as those of some of county's the well-known farmers. One of the star pupils mentioned amongst the prize winners was the son of a Norwich surgeon.

Although the school syllabus was heavily weighted towards the classics, a full range of subjects was taught and university – set examinations were taken while in 1881 the 'South Kensington authorities' were conducting examinations in the school in drawing and chemistry. In 1881 a carpenter's shop was established.

The final phase of Brereton's scheme was to include tertiary colleges which could prepare pupils for university. The only one founded was Cavendish College (now the Leys School) in Cambridge. Again designed on a grand scale, it was built in 1878 and the County School magazine contained regular reports of boys who had gone on there.

Boys frequently went on to university and the school magazine contains news of old boys who were engineers, doctors and teachers. Others wrote back from Trinidad where one was managing cocoa plantations, from Marseilles, where another was

banking, and Texas where one was running a cattle ranch. Others had moved to Canada, India, Chile and Australia.

In 1893 the school was forced to close and little is known about its final years. Copies of the school magazine survive for the years 1875-1887 which suggest, like all school magazines, a lively school life dominated by sport.⁸ Articles from old boys working and travelling across the Empire are also included. Numbers did not reach the aimed-for totals, which meant that the school was not financially viable. Brereton had calculated that with 200 boys, fees of £42 a year would be enough to support the school. This compared with £80 to £100 at the public schools. The 1881 census lists 102 scholars. They were supported by 19 'servants,' a matron and assistant matron. There were seven teachers including the headmaster, a second and third master, a music and a language teacher as well as one nineteen-year-old assistant teacher. By 1891 there were only 16 boys and only one master listed. For all the talk of a 'middle-class' demand for such a school, this appears to have been unfounded. The timing of the school's foundation was unfortunate. With agriculture, and thus many of the service industries that supported it, in depression the potential market had less disposable income to pay for a boarding school education. A rural area simply could not generate enough prospective parents. The school building which was obviously far too ambitious and expensive can never have been full. It seems that the much smaller and less ostentatious privately run academies to be found in most of the market towns were in fact adequate in providing for the local middle-class demand.

It was six years before a buyer for the school buildings was found, but in 1899 it was bought by a wealthy ship Liverpool-owner, Edmund Watt to be used by Dr Barnardo's homes to train boys for the Navy. Watt's Naval School lasted until 1954 when it was finally closed and the buildings pulled down. Only the school chapel remains from the County School days and there is a small museum at County School Station.

1 J.L.Brereton, 'County Education. A letter addressed to the Right Hon.Earl Fortescue' 1856
 2 *Norwich Mercury* 16 April 1873
 3 *Norwich Mercury* 16 April 1873
 4 *The Elmham School Times* 6 February 1877
 5 *Norwich Mercury* 16 April 1873
 6 Armstrong 1949 183
 7 *Norwich Mercury* 2 October 1875
 8 *Elmham School Times* 1-9 1875-1878; *The Norfolkian* 10-1878-1887

Parks in Medieval England

S.A. Mileson; Oxford University Press; £60 from <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com>

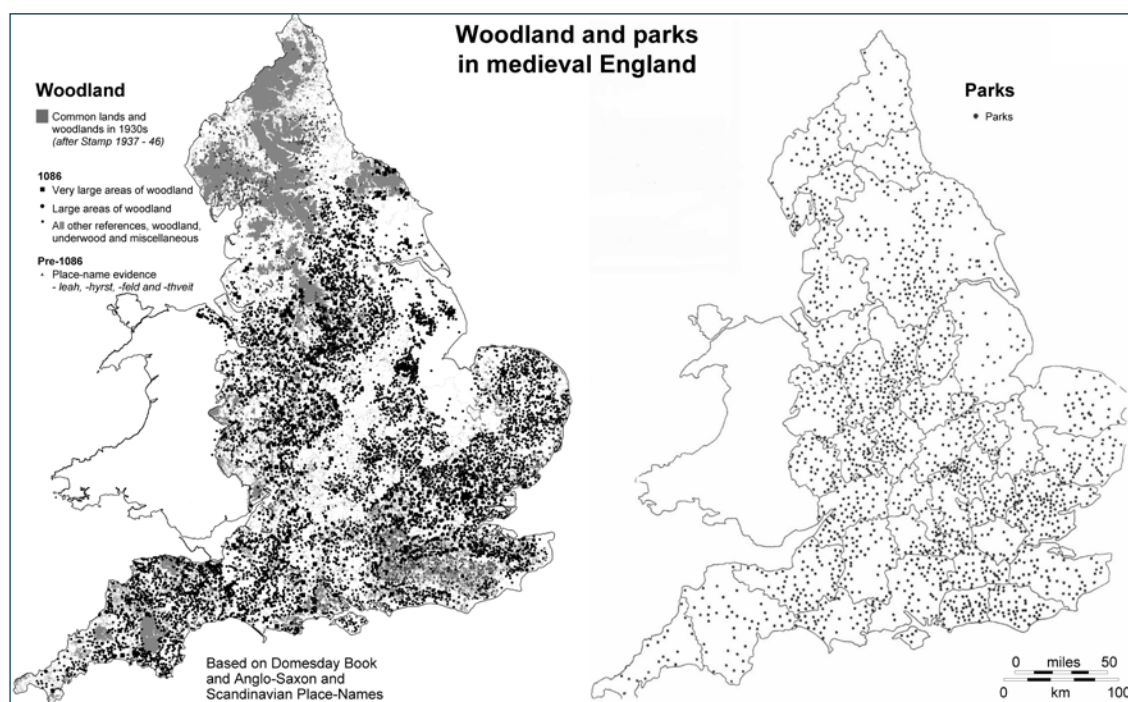
The concern of medieval kings and lords to create and maintain hunting grounds across great tracts of the countryside has long intrigued historians.

The investment of time and resources in creating jurisdictional and physical control over deer and other game in forests, parks and warrens seems to offer a window into the mentality and self-perception of the aristocracy, and into social organization more generally. Deer parks in particular have become an increasingly popular subject in the last few years. Recent work has opened up new avenues of research and posed important questions about the function of these reserves and contemporary attitudes towards them, but much about the nature and significance of these thousands of big private enclosures remains uncertain or disputed. Were parks primarily hunting grounds? Or were they deer larders, providing venison to be taken by servants for the feasting table rather than quarry for the aristocratic hunt? How important was the use of parks as stock grazing grounds and wood reserves? Did these expensive enclosures play a role in the landscaping of castles and other residences, as some landscape historians have suggested? Were they regarded as status-symbols? And, just as importantly, what impact did their creation have on local people and farming landscapes? These are precisely the kinds of questions addressed in this book, which is the first full-length treatment of the subject and looks at the parks of kings, nobles, gentry and ecclesiastics across the

country and throughout the middle ages.

The first half of the book deals with the crucial question of the purpose of parks, with chapters on hunting, economic exploitation, the landscaping of residences, and the role of parks as status-symbols. An emphasis on the aristocratic passion for the chase as the key motivation for park creation provides an important corrective to many more recent views and allows for a deeper appreciation of the close relationship between park-making and the expression of power and lordship. The second part of the book provides an innovative study of the impact of park creation on wider society, from the king and aristocracy to peasants and townsmen. Instead of the traditional focus on the importance of royal regulation (the stringency and effectiveness of which is questioned), greater attention is paid to the effects of lordly park-making on other members of the landed elite and ordinary people. These widespread enclosures were mainly created in wood-pasture landscapes, which were often less densely populated than open field areas, but they nevertheless had an important, and often negative, social impact. Parks are shown to have interfered with customary uses of woodland and waste, hunting practices, roads and farming, in lowlands and uplands alike. Not surprisingly, they could become a focus for aristocratic feud, popular protest and furtive resistance. The negotiations and confrontations that surrounded parks are shown to have been an important part of the early history of enclosure, a process that involved the shaping of social norms as well as of agrarian practices.

Rural History Today readers should find this a rich and thought-provoking book, providing fresh insight into contemporary values and how they helped to





shape the medieval landscape. It presents a coherent picture of the function and impact of parks themselves, but at the same time uses a study of park-making and hunting as a way of exploring larger issues in medieval social and economic history, including the influence of culture on the economy; the creation, expression and regulation of an increasingly complex and differentiated social hierarchy; and, in particular, the importance of the medieval phase of enclosure in the development of

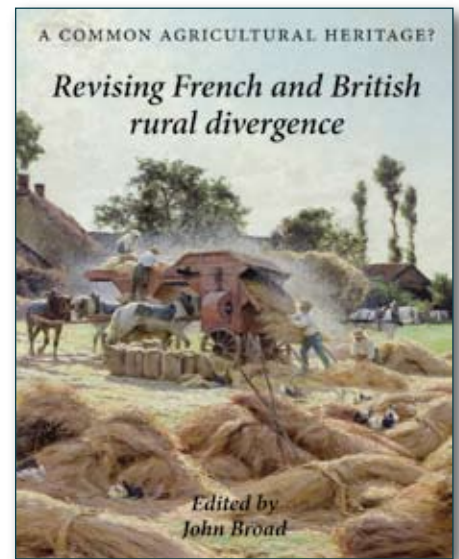
ideas about property and in changing the organisation and distribution of resources within society. Historical, archaeological, and literary evidence is combined with the landscape itself, and the text is illustrated by a range of maps and plans. These include detailed reconstructions of particular parks, as well as maps showing larger geographical relationships, including the distribution of parks compared to medieval woodland cover, and the location of royal houses and hunting lodges.

A Common Agricultural Heritage Revising French and British rural divergence

Agricultural History Review Supplement Series 5. Edited by John Broad, Price £25

Reading this latest *AHR* supplement brings back memories of the conference at Canterbury which produced the papers published here. It was a conference where some of us found our school French seriously challenged in our efforts to communicate with our far more bi-lingual French counterparts. Over an *alfresco* supper on a warm autumn evening, the basic premise of this volume became apparent. The old

idea that English and French agriculture were both quantitatively and qualitatively different were seriously challenged. The differences were not nearly as great as had previously been believed. This volume includes thirteen chapters based on the papers given by speakers from both sides of the Channel. They question the myths surrounding peasantries, sharecropping, the degree of specialization and the uptake of technical innovation. Britain was not in fact as capitalist as is often supposed and France was far from backward. These essays strengthen our understanding of each nation's agriculture by showing how they responded in similar ways to the same challenges and opportunities.



FUTURE CONFERENCES

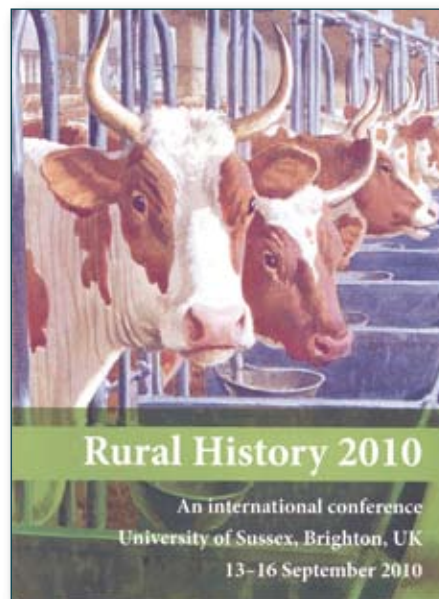
British Agricultural History Society Spring Conference

**29–31 March 2010 at St Mary's College,
University of Durham.**

Speakers will include Dr Angus Winchester (University of Lancaster) on Contested Commons; Professor Carsten Rasmussen (University of Aarhus, Denmark) on manors in Denmark 1500–1800; Dr John Healey (University of Oxford) on early modern communal farming; Dr Carl Griffen (Queen's University, University of Belfast) on Captain Swing; Dr Hilary Crowe (University of Cambridge) on interwar upland farming. There will also be a new researchers' session and the annual field trip will be to visit the farming and rural life museum at Beamish Museum with Seb Littlewood, the Keeper of Rural Life. The booking form will be available on the Society's website shortly.

Rural History 2010

**An International conference at the
University of Sussex, Brighton
13–16 September 2010**



The BAHS has taken the initiative to convene the first international open conference on rural history. **Rural History 2010** is open to all interested in the subject, however defined as well as those working in related disciplines such as archaeology, environmental history or contemporary rural development. The conference will be equally concerned with the countryside as the locale where food is produced as with it as a place of consumption of leisure and the location of heritage and national memory. It also hopes to receive contributions from those primarily interested in viewing contemporary conditions and future developments with a knowledge of the past. Proposals for three or four-paper sessions as well as individual papers are welcome and academic enquiries should be directed to Professor Richard Hoyle (r.w.hoyle@reading.ac.uk). There is a conference website www.ruralhistory2010.org where further details can be downloaded.

Weald and Downland Open Air Museum celebrates a Ruby Anniversary

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 May 2010 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 Nicola Verdon, Department of History, Arts A, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN2 88H
Tel: 01273 67844
n.j.verdon@sussex.ac.uk

It is now 40 years since the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum was founded under its inspirational first director, Chris Zeuner.

From these beginnings it has grown to include not only a wide range of buildings, but also a working farm and a museum of objects associated with rural life. Its School service was awarded a 'Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge' this year and the Museum has hosted a Leverhulme Writer in Residence (Jane Borodale). It runs a full programme of courses in building conservation and the use of traditional materials, historic home life and drawing and painting workshops. There is a very active group of Friends who will no doubt continue to support the Museum through the next 40 years. For further details see the Museum's website (www.wealddown.co.uk).



The Weald and Downland Open Air Museum opens in 1970

Royal Agricultural Society of England's Library

Joan Grundy reports the good news that the RASE's library at Stoneleigh is not after all to be sold.

Dr John Wilson is the new librarian and he wishes to encourage its use by interested people and groups, but visits have to be pre-booked. Details can be accessed through the RASE web site.

Continued from page 1.

below the depressed levels prevailing during the depressed conditions of the 1930s.

The 1947 winter is commonly regarded as a major watershed, or 'annus horribilis' in the career of the post-war Labour government. As the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Dalton, lamented in his diary on 24th February 1947: 'The frosts, snows and fogs... continue unabated, and whoever is trying to be funny in arranging all this is rather over doing the joke... The most satisfactory place these days is in bed.' A more penetrating critique of its importance was provided by the Minister of Agriculture, Tom Williams, who described it as 'as a disaster of the first magnitude.'

The crisis prompted the government to implement a five year plan to increase agricultural output by raising commodity prices above those already granted by the Agriculture Act 1947. The flooding

Professor Bruce Campbell FBA

It is with very great pleasure that we can report that Bruce Campbell, a long-term supporter of the BAHS and for many years up to 1992, a member of the Executive Committee, has been elected a Fellow of the British Academy. This prestigious appointment is well deserved and we send him hearty congratulations.

was also instrumental in encouraging the Great Ouse Catchment Board to divert upland water from a large part of the fens in an effort to prevent a repetition of the flooding. It controlled the main drainage over 3,200 square miles including nearly all the black or peaty fens, and proposed the construction of a new thirty mile channel to the eastern side of the fens.

Whilst it is evident that the abnormally bad winter weather was only one of a number of factors which contributed to the political tribulations and eventual electoral defeat of the Labour government, the significance of the impact of the weather should not be ignored. In an age of impending climatic change and widely predicted volatile weather patterns, it is worthwhile for policy makers to reflect upon the lessons which can be learnt from the challenges posed during previous periods of unusual weather.