

# RURAL HISTORY TODAY

Rural History Today is published by the British Agricultural History Society



Issue 22 | January 2012

## Farming in miniature

*In all the toy-boxes which are in current use or have been relegated to the attic to be brought out when grandchildren or visitors come, there is likely to be a battered tractor or horse-drawn farm implement.*



Box lid from the Corgi No.22 Massey-Ferguson Agricultural Equipment Gift Set issued in three slightly different versions between 1962 and 1966. The Corgi range was the first to produce a combine harvester, launched in August 1959.

Yet these intricate and often beautifully made toys are for many children their first insight to the farming world. For the adult who bought them they are part of that nostalgic pull to the countryside which, since the time when the majority of Britons came to live in towns, has been part of our national psyche.

How far do the types of farm toys produced reflect the development of farming techniques and how far do they lag behind to foster that nostalgia for a past rural life? As interest in collecting the farming toys of the twentieth century has increased, it is becoming possible not only to appreciate the wide variety of models which were produced by a huge number of sometimes short-

lived firms, but also to show that there is no simple answer to these questions.

A group of collectors with a passion for farming toys, are well on the way to completing a comprehensive study of British-made tractors and farm implements. The survey starts with the first tumbrel made by Britains in 1921 as a part of their **Home Farm Series** and comes to an end in about 1980, by which time British manufacturing had largely ceased with the closure of many companies while the others moved their production to the Far East. In addition to the models themselves, the main sources of information are contemporary catalogues produced by the larger manufacturers. For the less well known companies,

*Continued on back, page 8*

*One of the first tractors made by Britains: a Fordson with spade lug wheels launched in 1948.*

*Peter Wade-Martins provides a brief introduction to the history of farm toys. He is one of the authors of a forthcoming book, *Farming in Miniature: A Review of British-made toy farm vehicles up to 1980*, by Robert Newson, Peter Wade-Martins and Adrian Little to be published by Old Pond.*

### Also in this issue

The end of the Agricultural Wages Board – 2

Downton Abbey and game shooting: flying high – 4

The world of Alice Le Strange – 6

Societies and publications news – 7

Conferences – 7



British Agricultural  
History Society

# The end of the agricultural wages board?

*Alun Howkins remembers the important work of the Agricultural Wages Board and laments its abolition.*

*Alun Howkins is co-author of 'The State and the Farm worker; the evolution of the minimum wage in agriculture in England and Wales, 1909–24', Agricultural History Review Vol. 57, Part II (2009)*

**On 25 October this year the Public Bodies Bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons. It had already been through the Lords and now only needs royal assent. The Bill is largely enabling legislation and it is the main legislative vehicle for taking forward the Government's review of public bodies. It allows Ministers, by order, to abolish, merge or transfer the functions listed in the appropriate schedules to the Act. One of those listed for abolition is the Agricultural Wages Board.**

The Agricultural Wages Board has a long history. It came into being, after a campaign by the farm workers' unions in the Spring of 1917 as part of the Corn Production Act. Like the guaranteed prices in that Act it was renewed by the Agriculture Act in 1920 only to be disbanded when that Act was repealed suddenly in the Summer of 1921 in what a generation of farmers and farm workers called the 'Great Betrayal'.

The first wages boards were made up of representatives of the farmers and farm labourers with 'independent' members appointed by government. They met once a year and fixed minimum wages, hours, holidays and conditions at county level. In some areas, especially in the north they also laid down living conditions, including food, for living-in farm workers. These county agreements then went to the Central Wages Board in London where, if confirmed, they were fixed as the statutory minimum conditions for that county. In the years during and immediately after the Great War, at least in most southern and eastern counties, the board increased wages year on year although it has to be remembered in these areas they started from a very low base and it was a period of severe price inflation. With the Repeal of the Act and the end of the Board wages fell dramatically. In Norfolk, for example, they fell from 45s a week in the Summer of 1921 to 22s 6d in February 1923 leading to the bitter 1923 strike in that county.

In 1924 the first Labour government reinstated parts of the Act. A crucial difference was that the Central Board had no real powers and all wages were set by local bargaining. The Union believed this weakened the workers' position as the men and women who sat on the local committees were not only less skilled negotiators than the full time officials who sat on the main boards but were more easily cowed by farmers they often knew. Nevertheless they did a good job. The economic

historians Robin Gowers and Timothy Hatton have shown that the Boards raised wages by about 15% in the late 1920s and 20% in the 1930s despite widespread unemployment in rural areas

In the aftermath of the Second World War another Labour government looked at the whole of agriculture. The farmers were given subsidies which guaranteed farm incomes and the farm worker got a 'proper' wages board back. The board was composed of eight members appointed by the NFU, eight members nominated by the trades unions and five independent members nominated by the Ministry of Agriculture. Since that date the Board has met annually and determined in considerable detail the hours wages and conditions applying to all full and part-time farm workers. It seems likely that the wages order which came into effect on 1st of October this year will be the last.

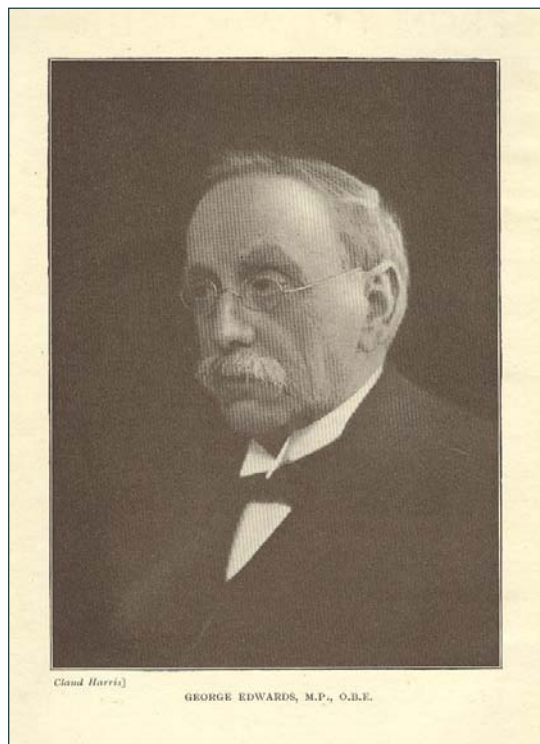
What lies behind abolition is the coalition government's belief, supported by the National Farmers Union that the AWB has become antiquated and unnecessary, with the minimum wage and modern employment law now doing the very things it was created to do. Further, by fixing wages for all grades up to Grade 6 'Farm Management Grade' the Board presents, according to the NFU an unfair hindrance to farmers on the matter of pay bargaining 'who only seek to be allowed to operate on the same terms as other employers'. Government also points to what they see as unnecessary bureaucracy in administering the annual settlements, coupled with the fact that the AWB is the last of a large number of boards which once operated in the public and indeed private sectors. Its abolition will remove outdated and unnecessary machinery and save public money.

Opposition to abolition has been led by Unite, the union which incorporates the old NUAAW, and represents the worker on the Wages Board. A key element in their defence is that removal of the Board will depress wages across the industry. In this the minimum wages argument simply doesn't work since 80% of farm workers are on Grades 2–6, the skilled grades, and therefore well outside the minimum wages provision. For them, the Union argues, of more significance are the TUC findings that in the past in all industries where an existing wages board was abolished wages fell. For the 20% of workers on Grade 1 who could be protected by Minimum Wage legislation the protection given by

the Board on overtime, cottage rents, sickness and other areas would vanish.

This issue is a difficult one and no doubt readers will have their own views. As an historian of the farm worker and someone who worked on the land when young my own views are clear. First, the Wages Board did a lot more than simply fix wages. Farm work has always been a bit odd and while the Board's rulings on sickness, overtime and cottage rents may seem anomalous to those who do not know the trade I, like many farm workers regard them as central. The government and the NFU argue that nobody currently employed will have their conditions changed. But a move of job, or a change of grade could remove that protection. I also think there is little reason to believe that those employers (not all) seeking 'flexibility' in wages will continue with existing structures and conditions. Second, historically the end of wages board's protection in other trades, and indeed in agriculture in the past has seen wages fall and conditions worsen. Again it is difficult to see why this should be any different now.

Since abolition seems an almost forgone conclusion (none of the largely Conservative group of rural members have seen fit to oppose it) it is worth ending by underlining just how important the board has been to rural working men and women for nearly 100 years. In the period of the first two boards from 1917–1948 they gave protection (albeit of a most minimal kind) to a vulnerable and largely non-unionised work force. Since the Second World War the Board has ensured that in the period of unparalleled farming prosperity the farm worker has had a share. No matter how inadequate many have felt this to be, it was at least a statutory right to a living wage. The Board has never had many friends



*George Edwards, first secretary of the Agricultural Labourers' and Small Holders' Union, 1906–1913 and active on the Agricultural Wages Board during the 1920s.*

among the employers, and on occasions even the Union side felt that it did not work in their best interests. Frequently, the five independent members of the Board decided the outcome as the NFU and the workers unions simply could not agree. But to many farm workers, especially older men, the Board, and the power it gave the farm worker was vital. In 1974 I interviewed a Norfolk farm worker who had started work in 1913. 'They were afraid you know, that was understandable. But the union did alter that kind of thing, that was a good job, negotiated harvest wages, and your weekly wages and that'.

## *Agricultural History Review's* sixtieth anniversary essay competition

The Society and *Agricultural History Review* are delighted to announce the winners of its essay competition. The judges have awarded the first prize to Dr Johann P. Custodis (LSE) for his essay on 'Employing the enemy: the contribution of German and Italian POW workers to British agriculture during and after the Second World War'. The two second prizes have been awarded to Dr Jonathan Healey (St Catherine's College Oxford) for his essay on 'The political culture of the English Commons, c.1550–1650' and Rebecca Woods (MIT) for her essay on 'Breed, culture and economy: The Australasian frozen mutton trade, 1880–1910'.

The winning essays will appear in Volume 60, part two of the *Review*, to be published in November 2012. Dr Custodis will present his paper at the Spring Conference of the Society at Sparsholt, Winchester, in 2012.

We offer our thanks to all those who submitted essays. They reflected a great diversity of interests and approaches and give further evidence, should any be needed, of the vitality of our subject. We hope that a number of the essays not awarded prizes will, in time, also appear in the *Review*.

# Downton Abbey and game shooting: flying high

*The recent Christmas special episode of the very popular 'Downton Abbey' series, which illustrated the way male members of the Crawley family engaged in game shooting, provides an opportune time to reflect upon the changing fortunes of this field sport.*

*Dr John Martin of De Montfort University and one of the editors of The Front Line of Freedom looks at an aspect of 20th century rural life at the opposite end of the social scale to that considered in Alun Howkins' article on the previous pages.*

It is widely accepted that the high water mark for lowland game shooting occurred in the late Victorian and Edwardian period. During this period 'battue' shooting, where pheasants and partridges were driven by beaters to the waiting guns, constituted a quintessentially male activity confined to members of the leisured classes and plutocrats. There was almost universal endorsement of Queen Victoria's edict that, while it was permissible to be an observer, 'only fast women' participated in the actual sport. Its exclusivity was further underpinned by a raft of legislation which imposed draconian punishments on those found guilty of poaching.



During this iconic age, the privileged elite often shot thousands of birds in the course of a few days. This is clearly illustrated by the Highclere Shoot on the North Hampshire Downs, at the ancestral castle which is now used as the setting for the popular TV series 'Downton Abbey'. In 1895, over the space of a mere three days, the guns shot 10,807 pheasants, partridges, rabbits, wild duck, as well as a number of 'various'. Even this high number was overshadowed by the total achieved on other premier sporting estates. The all-time record for a single day's shooting is credited to a party of seven guns, which included King George V and the Prince of Wales, at Beaconsfield in 1913, when 3,937 pheasants, three partridges, four rabbits and one 'various' were shot.

Given the magnitude of these shooting forays on the premier estates, the subsequent history of game shooting is an enigma. On the one hand the breakup of the landed estates during the aftermath of the First World War, accompanied by the long-term decline in the number of gamekeepers, clearly heralded the



*A cartridge advertisement from the Shooting Times and British Sportsman, 1942. (Museum of English Rural Life, Reading)*

end of the iconic era of great shoots and great shots. Furthermore, the retrenchment and rationalisation of the sport, which was initiated by the two world wars, followed by a state induced agricultural revolution, created an environment which was less conducive to not only game birds but also a wide variety of other wildlife. On the other hand, in spite of these developments there has been an unprecedented increase in the popularity of shooting as a leisure activity. This is evident in terms of the number of participants, who are no longer exclusively men, and the number of game birds released into the countryside.

Britain's two most important lowland game birds, the partridge and pheasant, have experienced entirely different fortunes. The state directed post-war revolution in agricultural production was responsible for an unprecedented decline in the grey or English partridge population and, as Colin McKelvie notes, is 'one of the saddest tales in the history of all game species.' What was, in the nineteenth century, Britain's premier shooting quarry in the lowlands, had by the 1960s become an increasingly rare species.

In spite of declining partridge stocks, the size of the national game bag, or the number of pheasants

shot each season, has risen at an exponential rate, due to the increasing proportion of artificially reared birds. Following the Rearing of Pheasants (Revocation of Prohibition) legislation in 1949, which once more permitted the artificial rearing of game, the number of specialist game farms slowly began to rise. The 500,000 or so game birds reared each year in the mid 1950s increased rapidly during the prosperity of the 1960s, but fell once more during the downturn in economic activity in the mid 1970s, before increasing to over 5 million poults during the 'Thatcher boom' of the mid 1980s.

Following another downturn during the crisis of the early 1990s, rapid expansion continued until, by 2004, the number of released pheasants and French partridge poults had increased to 35 million, with an estimated 83 per cent of shooting estates purchasing chicks or poults. By this time the numbers of birds being released into the wild each year was virtually on a par with the size of the British poultry flock being retained for egg production.

The revolutionary changes in chicken production, and in particular the development of more sophisticated incubators which enabled large scale hatching to take place, has transformed game shooting. Increased supplies of game poults has enabled shooting to become rather like rainbow trout fishing, where the fish are regularly restocked for anglers to catch. The main difference between the two sectors is that, while the trout are restocked throughout the season, official guidelines require game birds to be released at least one month before the start of the shooting season in order to allow them to become acclimatised to their new environment.



*Intensive rearing of young pheasants, West Sussex (Museum of English Rural Life, Reading)*

Pheasant shooting has been on an upward trend in terms of popularity and its ability to develop a political consensus, in contrast to other field sports such as fox hunting. Strains of pheasant have been selected to produce higher flying birds in order to provide more challenging targets. Allied to this change has been the increased area of specialist game cover crops such as sunflowers, sorghum, quinoa, buckwheat and other exotic plants to provide a suitable habitat for the young birds, and to make it easier to drive the birds towards the waiting guns.

The provision of organised game shooting has increasingly provided an important source of revenue for estate owners and even farmers, particularly



*A mid-20th century West Sussex shooting party. (Museum of English Rural Life, Reading)*

those with larger holdings where the more expensive driven or 'battue' shooting could take place. Present-day driven shooting, organised on a commercial basis, charges the participants in the region of £30 per bird shot, encouraging many landowners to rent sporting rights to syndicates, or allow paying guests to participate in their own shoots.

The expansion of the sport has been accompanied by the development of a secondary market, where estate owners use sporting agents including websites such as [www.gunsonpegs.com](http://www.gunsonpegs.com) to advertise shooting opportunities. The shooting fraternity is no longer gender specific, nor confined to a particular social group; it encompasses an international clientele.

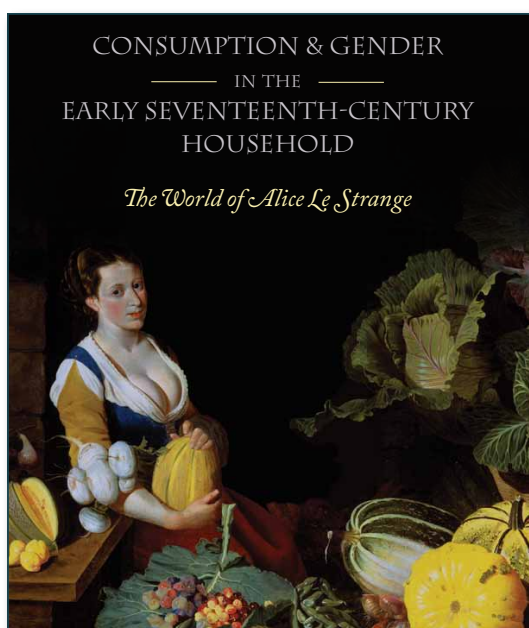
Quantifying the precise magnitude of the importance of shooting to the rural economy is problematic and controversial. The 1997 Cobham Report indicated that shooting pumped £600m into the economy and supported 40,000 jobs. The most detailed and industry-financed study into the economics of 'sport shooting' in the UK is the PACEC 2006 study, *The Economic and Environmental Impact of Sporting Shooting*. Based on the findings from two thousand completed questionnaires, the study concluded that shooting was worth £1.6 billion to the economy in terms of goods and services, and supported 70,000 jobs, 31,000 of them directly and 39,000 indirectly. The success of the 'Downton Abbey' series, and the popularity of game shooting, clearly suggests that there are a large number of people who, in some form or another, wish to relive the grandeurs of a past age. While critics might dispute the importance of shooting to the rural economy or its social significance, there is little doubt, as Richard Hoyle has astutely pointed out in his pioneering study *Our Hunting Fathers* (2007), that rural sporting activities of this kind merit considerably more detailed investigation than they have so far received.

# The world of Alice Le Strange

*Dr Elizabeth Griffiths is co-author of a forthcoming book entitled *The World of Alice Le Strange*. However, the focus of her work has now turned to Alice's achievements beyond the household and she is now editing and analysing a sample of her farming records for the Norfolk Record Society, and exploring the impact of their legacy on future generations of the family.*

**Next spring, *RHT* readers will be able to enter the world of Alice Le Strange, a seventeenth century Norfolk gentlewoman who left a remarkable series of accounts which has allowed us to re-construct the everyday life of an early seventeenth century household. While other gentlewomen left snapshots of their lives, Alice's archive, which stretches from 1610 to 1654, provides a continuous picture of a long and successful marriage conducted against the background of managing a large household and estate on the Norfolk coast at Hunstanton.**

The book, *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth Household*, focuses on consumption patterns in pre-industrial England with particular emphasis on the domestic sphere. Hitherto, the literature has concentrated on the dramatic transformation of consumption practices in the eighteenth century; the assumption being that it proceeded from a state of tradition and stability. What Jane Whittle and I have found was constant change and new developments with a single household providing insights into some of the most significant cultural and economic issues of early modern England: innovations in trade, retail and production, the basis of gentry power, social relations in the countryside and the gendering of family life.



With 25 years of Alice's household accounts fed into a database Jane was able to delve into the minutiae of people's lives. What did they eat and wear? How did they build and furnish their house? How much did things cost? In an era before shops were commonplace, how did a large, wealthy household in the English countryside acquire the goods and services it needed and wanted? The gentry drew their wealth from rents paid by their tenants, but what did they put back into the local community through purchases and the

employment of labour? All this is viewed through the prism of gender relations: was household consumption an exclusively female sphere as is often assumed, or did men play an important role too? The book looks in detail at who managed the provisioning, purchases and work within the household, how spending on sons and daughters differed, and whether men and women attached different cultural values to household goods.

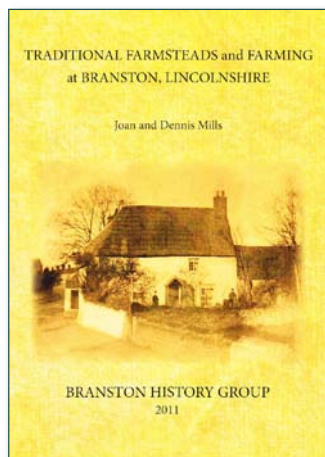
Consumption involves not just purchases, but home production and gifts; and not just the luxurious, but the everyday consumption of food and medical care. It is viewed not simply as a set of objects owned, but as a process involving household management, acquisition and appropriation, a process which created and reinforced social links with craftsmen, servants, labourers and the local community. We argue that the county gentry provide a missing link in histories of consumption: connecting the fashions of London and the royal court, with those of middling strata of rural England.

The book considers the process of consumption: planning and management, and the acquisition of goods. We examine Alice's accounting systems, how they evolved and fitted in with the tasks performed by her husband, Sir Hamon Le Strange and their eldest son, Sir Nicholas. Alice's activities are then placed in the context of early modern housewifery and compared with the experiences of other gentlewomen. The book also describes what was actually consumed: everyday items such as food, medicine, fuel and lighting, and the material culture of clothing, bed chambers and living rooms, and kitchen and dining ware. As the accounts run for almost all of Alice and Hamon Le Strange's long married life it is possible to view the different phases of their household and expenditure patterns: these were determined both by their family and by external events, particularly the Civil War. The treatment of the Le Strange children stretches from the provision of wetnurses to education and marriage, with comparisons made between sons and daughters. Finally, the spotlight is turned onto the hundreds of people who made the Le Stranges consumption patterns possible: the servants, labourers and craftsmen who worked for the household. It ends with an assessment of the Le Strange's impact on the social and economic structures of the local community.

Perhaps the most heartwarming feature of the book is the close relationship between Alice and Hamon. There is no doubt that Sir Hamon ruled the roost, but as a gentle patriach encouraging his wife with affectionate messages, educating and generously supporting his children and leaving carefully chosen items to his grandchildren in his will. A chapter on his role in their joint endeavour was recently published in Richard Hoyle's, *Custom, Improvement and the Landscape in Early Modern Britain* (Ashgate, 2011).

# SOCIETY NEWS & PUBLICATIONS

## Branston History Group



As part of our occasional series on local history societies we feature the Group in the Lincolnshire village of Branston.

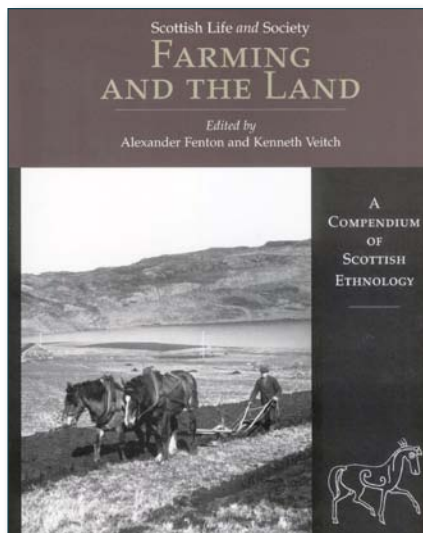
It is local history societies who often do the groundwork on which the generalizations of national history are

based and the work of the Branston History Group is no exception. It was founded twenty years ago, holding regular meetings with speakers. However it is also involved in projects within the village. It has produced two village walks leaflets as well as a village trail. Two days were spent copying old photographs of the village brought in by members of the public. The Group also organised an excavation of the village sheepwash and has provided displays on the village's history in the village hall. Two books have been published; *Branston Remembered*, and more recently *Farming in Branston* by Dennis and Joan Mills which is an exemplary study of how research into the history of individual farms could be undertaken.

► It is available from Mrs E. Johnson, 12 Silver Street, Branston, Lincoln LN4 1LR, price £7.50, plus £1 postage.

## Scottish Ethnology

A new volume (volume 2) of *Scottish Life and Society: A compendium of Scottish Ethnology* has recently been published, entitled *Farming and the Land*, edited by Alexander Fenton and Kenneth Veitch.



The entire project will include 14 volumes, 11 of which are already published. Like the previous volumes, *Farming and the Land* is the work of a variety of authors providing 43 chapters divided between ten sections covering all aspects of rural life including settlement and society, crops and livestock, buildings, farming techniques, the workforce and culture and community. At £60 this volume, running to over 1,000 pages is an essential research tool for anyone interested in Scottish farming and its countryside.

# CONFERENCES

## History of Rural Education

The School of Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of East Anglia, Norwich is organizing a day conference on the history of Rural Education to be held at the Assembly House, Norwich on 23rd June 2012.

It will present the findings of its English-Heritage sponsored Norfolk Rural School survey as well as include papers by Lois Loudon author of the bi-centenary book on the history of the National Society, and Elaine Harwood, author of English Heritage's book *England's Schools, History, Architecture and Adaptation*.

► Further details from [a.longcroft@uea.ac.uk](mailto:a.longcroft@uea.ac.uk)

## BAHS annual Spring Conference

The BAHS annual Spring Conference will take place at Sparsholt College, near Winchester from Monday 2nd to Wednesday 4th April 2012.

Speakers include Dr Nicola Whyte (Exeter) on early modern household memory and customary land use rights, Dr Susanna Wade Martins (Norfolk) on the battle over elementary education in Norfolk c.1820-1940 and Leen van Molle from the University of Leuven (Belgium). There will be a new researchers'session and a field trip to the nearby Chilbolton Down Farm. In addition the programme will feature a round-table discussion of agricultural history in the media with Peter Ginn (presenter), Stuart Elliott/Naomi Benson (directors) and David Upshal (executive producer) from Lion TV's Tales from the Green Valley, Victorian Farm, and Edwardian Farm.

► Further details and application form on the BAHS website [www.bahs.org.uk](http://www.bahs.org.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 31 May 2012 to Susanna Wade Martins, The Longhouse, Eastgate Street, North Elmham, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 5HD or preferably by email scwmartins@btinternet.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, Middle Blakebank, Underbarrow, Cumbria, LA8 8HP Email: taxcaddy@aol.com.

Enquiries about other aspects of the Society's work should be directed to the Secretary, Dr Nicola Verdon History Subject Group, Department of Humanities Sheffield Hallam University, City Campus Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WB Tel: 0114 225 3693 Email: n.verdon@shu.ac.uk

Continued from front, page 1



A Wend-al aluminium unbreakable hay cutter made probably in the late 1940s.

old telephone directories, which are now on-line, are particularly useful in locating their factories and identifying the years they were in production. For some, we still know nothing except the names on the models. Few company records survive; even the Britains factory was cleared with little retained unless it had sale value.

Many people will be familiar with the **Britains** farm toys which had a range of lead farm animals and figures and horse-drawn lead tumbrels, wagons, ploughs, hay rakes, rolls, timber wagons and farmer's gigs. Their diecast tumbrel was last produced in 1973, by which time the real-life vehicle had long been confined to farm museums. Britains knew how to play on nostalgia for the idyllic rural life felt by a largely urban toy-buying population.

Britains did not produce their first tractor until 1948. Ford then had 80% of the British tractor sales, so it is hardly surprising that the company modelled its first tractor on the Fordson. The changes to the Fordson were then closely followed and the range was kept remarkably up to date, with constant modifications as new full-size versions came out. The range increased to include Massey-Fergusons in 1968, the imported German Deutz in 1978 and the Italian Fiat in 1979.

So, while slow to mechanise their miniature farms, Britains kept right up to date with their tractors while still playing on deep-rooted nostalgia for the tumbrel.

A company which never tried to modernise was **Wend-al** which made aluminium 'unbreakable' horse-drawn items from about 1947 to 1956. During these ten years they apparently made no attempt to make a tractor and were very content to turn out horse-drawn harrows, hay cutters, hay rakes, ploughs and tumbrels. Their range would have been far more appropriate on pre-war farms.

Other companies were entirely different in their approach. **Meccano** was started in Liverpool and run by Frank Hornby (1863-1936) who built up the company with remarkable vigour, although this was sadly followed by a long period of slow decline from the mid-1950s to the 1970s. Frank Hornby was an engineer with no interest in nostalgia. The Dinky range never had a horse-drawn item. The company made their brand name 'Dinky' a household word and came out with their first lead Fordson tractor in 1933, followed by their diecast Massey-Harris in 1948. Surely almost every small boy in Britain in the 1950s had a Massey-Harris tractor, and with it came a range of implements, including a harvest trailer, a muck-spreader, a disc harrow, a gang mower and a hay rake. These implements were followed in 1961 by a tipping trailer. It was symptomatic of the company's slow decline that the Massey-Harris tractor survived with its original casting right up until 1971.

While combine harvesters were seen on British farms from the 1930s, the first toy example was made by Mettoy for their Corgi series in 1959. Britains, who were usually quite innovative, did not follow with theirs until 1978, when it was declared 'Toy of the Year' by the Association of Toy Retailers.

So, it is not easy to generalise or to find clear trends of how farming was represented during these years when the British toy industry was still able to compete with overseas competitors. What has surprised us is how many companies we have found which did produce farm implements and tractors for carpet farming. The current count is 64.