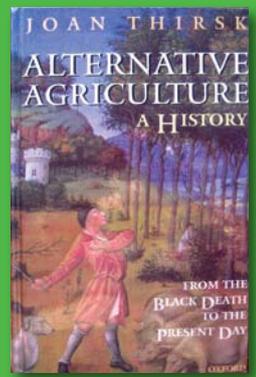




RURAL HISTORY TODAY

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Letters from Joan



Joan Thirsk, taken in 1993. Courtesy of Jane Robinson.

Joan Thirsk died on 3rd October, aged 91, after a fall at home in Hadlow Tower where she and her husband, Jimmy had lived since her retirement from Oxford. My first thought, after remembering the steep staircase leading up to her study, was thank goodness she had been spared the trials of a long and debilitating illness.

My first encounter with Joan was when she came to examine my PhD at the UEA in 1987. She was particularly interested in two things: my evidence of sharefarming in seventeenth century Norfolk and the fact that I had been a dairy farmer in New Zealand. She had a deep conviction that practical farmers, especially female ones, understood agriculture better than the theorists, so I had much to live up to.

But in those days, with Maggie Thatcher at the helm and little prospect of an academic career, post graduates often bit the bullet and went into school teaching. It was not until 1995 that I contacted Joan soon after Peter and I moved to Kent. Any thought that this would be afternoon tea with homemade cakes and a little old lady, was quickly dismissed as I was launched into another world of BAHS conferences, papers and articles and getting myself established in the academic community. By the following spring I had decided on a rest from teaching to concentrate on my new activities. Such is the effect Joan had on people. But I was not

left to get on with it; Joan supported me at every turn with the most generous encouragement and guidance delivered in long carefully typed letters, 42 of which survive, pinned to relevant topics and latterly collected into a file, 'Joan's letters'.

These letters date from 1996 to 2006 when we went over to emails and phone calls of which nothing survives, except the memory of her voice. The period covers the time she was finishing *Alternative Agriculture* and making a start on *Food in Early Modern England* which she wrote simultaneously with *Hadlow: Life, Land and People in a Wealden Parish, 1460–1600*. I can hear her laughing, 'I am an old woman in a hurry'. Both books were published in 2007.

Reading through her letters, I am struck not only by her kindness and the prescience of her advice, but her strongly held feminist views and steely determination. Wherever she could she promoted the interests of female historians. On choosing four speakers for a conference session, she wrote in May 2000, 'I shall be specially pleased if I can find three women and only one man! In a letter from 1998, that exemplifies her formidable work ethic and surely captures every aspect of her personality, she says,

'I have put the file of your Green Book on the seat that I occupy in the evening and I will treat it as my main evening occupation from tonight! I have just finished a tedious, yet very necessary (evening) job indexing all the names appearing in the Kent Feet of Fines, Henry VIII. It was holding up further publication and no one was willing to do it. I volunteered, without any prompting or pleading from anyone, and realized that I was conforming exactly to the female stereotype by so doing! But I also knew that I might uncover a whole host of unexpected things from concentrating in such detail on listing people who were buying and selling properties in Kent temp. Hen. 8. You really never know what will come out of such a tedious exercise. And it has been most instructive. So I am satisfied to have done it and can turn to other long-standing jobs'.

This must be music to the ears of those who have grappled with similar publications!

Beyond the letters, I'll cherish the memory of Joan's visit to Norfolk, to which we had returned in 2002,

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Above: cover of Joan Thirsk's *Alternative Agriculture*, published 1997.

Many readers will have seen the obituaries to Joan Thirsk (1922–2013) in the national press and the most recent volume of AHR and may have attended the conference in her honour in London in January. Liz Griffiths came to know her well when she lived in Kent and has written her personal reflections on this remarkable woman. With whom she enjoyed a close friendship.

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Walking and working sheep on the south central chalk uplands* in the late medieval and early modern periods

The practice of walking and working sheep (the moveable fold) is generally regarded as the vital element in common field sheep and corn farming on the south central chalks, but agricultural historians have given scant attention to how the system actually worked. However it is possible to establish what is likely to have happened, and what could not have happened, with regard to farming these chalk uplands during the review period.

A current idea, that the common flock was walked and worked all the year round on the south central chalks, is challenged here by

Gavin Bowie.



The current confusion about the practice of the moveable fold is understandable because the management system which came to replace it during the course of the eighteenth century was also described as ‘folding’ by contemporaries, and similarly involved moving hurdles around a field in order to control and confine the stock. The later system can be described as strip grazing where the sheep were no longer walked and ‘worked’ but instead lived more or less sedentary lives feeding off arable fodder crops in enclosed fields. Hence the system to be described here pre-dates the introduction of arable fodder crops for green feed in the late seventeenth century, but continued well into the eighteenth century where common field farming prevailed (Raine Morgan, *The Root Crop in English Agriculture, 1650–1870*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Reading, 1978).

The sheep flocks kept on these chalk hills could be large, sometimes over 2000 sheep, and were usually managed in three groups, which were also described as flocks. These were the ewe flock, lamb flock and wether flock and their characteristics will be described later. Separate and distinct wether flocks were also a feature of the system.

The movable fold system practised in the late medieval and early modern periods can be defined as pasturing the sheep on permanent downland, rough grazing and other pasture during the day and then, for the night, walking them to, and intensively folding them on, a portion of arable land that was being prepared for growing a crop. The movable fold itself was a temporary enclosure made of hurdles and, according to the few surviving references, was moved to a new location each night. However it is not known how these

movable folds/temporary enclosures were organised in the common arable fields. What is clear is that the system was about feeding off the pasture in one area and depositing the manure in another. It is also evident that the system as practised on the south central chalks depended on maintaining one-third to one-half of the total farmed land as permanent pasture.

In the late medieval and early modern periods the movable fold system was only practised in the spring and summer months. The system was based on the growth of natural herbage on permanent downland pasture, and started at the beginning of May each year and finished by the end of September. By the latter time a combination of the weather, diminishing daylight, and a slow-down in the growth of herbage meant that it was “not worthwhile to carry it on longer” (Joan Thirsk, ed, *Cambridge Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. 4, 1500–1640, 1967, p 188; William Ellis, *The Shepherd’s Sure Guide*, 1749, p 284).

It is probable that the movable fold was principally carried out on the full fallow which preceded the sowing of the winter wheat crop. This was managed as pasture during the autumn and winter, after which it was normally ploughed twice between the beginning of May and mid-August. The main purpose of such ploughing was weed control, and the reduction of the soil to a manageable tilth. Such attrition with the plough, combined with the movable fold, had the potential to provide a weed-free and manured soil by the time of the third ploughing. Here the furrows were made shallower and closer together than with the first two ploughings, so as to provide a seedbed. It will be appreciated that, because of the above cultivations, there would be very little green feed available for the sheep in the night fold in summer (D. Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley and other treatises in estate management and accounting*, 1971, pp 265, 315, 321; C.W. Chalklin, *Agriculture in Kent in the 17th Century*, 1965, pp 82–3).

A reasonably abundant supply of daytime feed was essential for the night fold to be worthwhile. In Master Fitzherbert’s *Book of Husbandry*, 1534, the shepherd is advised that “in the morning when he cometh to his fold, let not his sheep out anon, but raise them up and let them stand still awhile, that they may dung and piss”. William Ellis states in the mid-eighteenth century that without a ‘bellyful’ of feed a sheep’s “dung and stale will prove a poor dressing”. The fresh herbage required to provide the energy and protein necessary for an effective fold would normally be available on permanent downland pasture and rough grazing during spring and summer, and this is the key to the system.

Winter wheat is much more demanding than spring

** The south central chalk uplands are defined as the downlands of east Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire*

sown barley or oats in terms of the plant nutrients it removes from the soil. Nitrogenous fertiliser requirements are in the proportion of 10 for winter wheat, 5 for spring barley and 3 for spring oats. Hence the nitrogenous fertiliser requirements of the spring-sown crops are low compared with the autumn-sown crop, and these do not need the same specific fertiliser input that the wheat crop requires. The best way of providing the nutrients for the wheat crop was with the controlled application of sheep manure in the movable fold. Also, the nutrients in sheep manure are active from the moment they hit the ground and as such are instantly available to the following crop. The sheep manure provided a balanced organic fertiliser – the urine contains nitrogen and the dung contains potash and phosphates (N. E. Young, *The Forages and Protein Crops Directory*, nd, pp 6, 48, 72; Thomas Hale, *A Compleat Body of Husbandry*, 1756, p 23).

There is currently a perception that the movable fold system was practised “with the whole flock all the year round”. This theory was proposed by Eric Kerridge in the 1950s (*The Sheepfold in Wiltshire and the Floating of the Watermeadows*, *Economic History Review* (EcHR), 2nd ser, vol 6, 1954, p 285 and *The Agricultural Revolution*, 1967, p 45). Recent examples of where agricultural historians have adopted the idea as part of their interpretation include Edward Newman (*Medieval sheep-corn farming: how much grain yield could each sheep support?*, *Agricultural History Review* (AHR), vol 50, pt 2, 2002, pp 165, 172) and Joseph Bettey (*Wiltshire Farming in the 17th Century*, Wiltshire Record Office, 2005, p 158). However the primary documentary source evidence that Kerridge gives for the theory does not stand up to scrutiny.

In reality the idea of walking and working the whole of a sheep flock throughout the year is impractical given the demands and limitations of the farming system on the south central chalk uplands at the time. In essence the practice was not viable between the end of October and the beginning of May because there was insufficient herbage available on the downland pasture to provide the energy for the sheep to walk to and from the movable fold. Also, once in the fold the sheep would have provided only a poor quality manure and may well have starved.

Far from walking and working these sheep, the emphasis was simply on keeping them alive during the winter months. During the autumn and winter in the late medieval and early modern periods sheep were expected to survive on what scant herbage was available on this chalk hill country, supplemented by rations that just kept them alive. These rations consisted of meadow hay (most of which had to be brought or bought in from lowland pasture off the chalks), chopped straw (wheat, barley, oats), and hay made from grain legumes. These were autumn sown vetches and spring sown peas which were made into hay in late June – early July; the hay provided a high protein feed supplement for use during the following winter and early spring.

Secondly there was no question of the ‘whole’ of a flock being folded throughout the year in the late



The open, or gate hurdle has been used for many hundreds of years. Its hazel construction makes it light to carry and easy to erect. (Courtesy of Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading)

medieval and early modern periods. The breeding ewes (15 months to 5–7 years old) had a time-limited role in the system in that they could only be folded between about 24 June and 8 September. They were not folded in spring whilst they were suckling their lambs and were only available for folding after weaning (when their lambs were sorted out and either retained or sold), and before they had to be drawn out of the fold to be prepared for being put to the rams in October.

The members of the lamb flock were described as hogasters or hoggs on the south central chalks. These were ewe and wether lambs from between weaning (at about 4 months old) to the time they joined their respective adult flocks (at about 15 months old). These hoggs were not strong or mature enough to withstand the rigours of the close-fold. Also, because of the shortage of winter fodder on these chalk hill farms, the normal practice from at least the late 14th century was to agist (move and graze) them on lowland pasture, off the chalks, between early November and the end of March. The practice of agisting hoggs in this way was to continue until the 1840s (J.S.Drew, manor of Silkstead compotus roll, unpublished typescript, vol. 2, nd, Hampshire Record Office (HRO) – Silkstead’s lambs were agisted off the chalks, on other St. Swithun’s Priory manors, from 1384; J. Wilkinson, *The Farming of Hampshire*, *Journal of the Royal Society of Agriculture of England* (JRASE), XX11, 1861, p 286).

Finally it is important to recognise that the wether sheep (castrated males, 15 months to 5–7 years old) of the flock were the mainstay of the folding system described above. Such wethers were tough and hardy and could survive on the scantiest of feed. They provided an annual wool crop at minimum cost and mutton at the end of their working lives. Perhaps more importantly, these wethers were the only sheep available for folding throughout the spring and summer months. Firstly wethers alone provided the spring fold, when the necessary fresh forage became available for the daytime feed, and secondly they were the only part of the flock available for the late summer fold for the winter wheat crop.

Helpful advice has been given by Joan Thirsk, Chris Dyer, John Hare, John Martin, John Coutts, Ted Collins and Henry Edmunds of Cholderton.

Rural History 2013 – A European Success Story

In mid August, while others may have been sunning themselves on the beach their thoughts far away from academic endeavour, 286 participants from all corners of the globe made their way to Bern to attend the first conference of the newly formed European Rural History Organisation (EURHO).

Liz Griffiths describes the 2013 first conference of the newly-formed European Rural History Organisation



An ornate farmhouse at the Ballenburg Open Air Museum

We were the guests of the equally youthful Swiss Rural History Society and its partner organisation Archives of Rural History. There was a real sense of a new beginning. For those of us who witnessed the birth of EURHO at Rural History 2010, organised by the British Agricultural History Society in Brighton, such a huge gathering so soon seemed improbable, but we did not appreciate the skill and determination of the committee set up at that time.

The officers appointed (President: Richard Hoyle, UK; Vice Presidents: Rosa Congost, Spain and Leen Van Molle, Belgium; Secretary: Ernst Langhaller, Austria; Treasurer: Peter Moser, Switzerland) reflect the rich development of European Rural History over the last few years. A distinct identity has emerged through comparative research, publications and the creation of networks promoting a European perspective, so much so that a fully fledged independent organisation was thought necessary. EURHO is the result of all this good work, and it is clearly here to stay. As Richard Hoyle announced in his address, not only have the committee agreed the next venue at Girona in 2015, but the one after at Leuven in 2017. We can safely report that rare occurrence, a European success story with the UK

playing an enthusiastic and leading role.

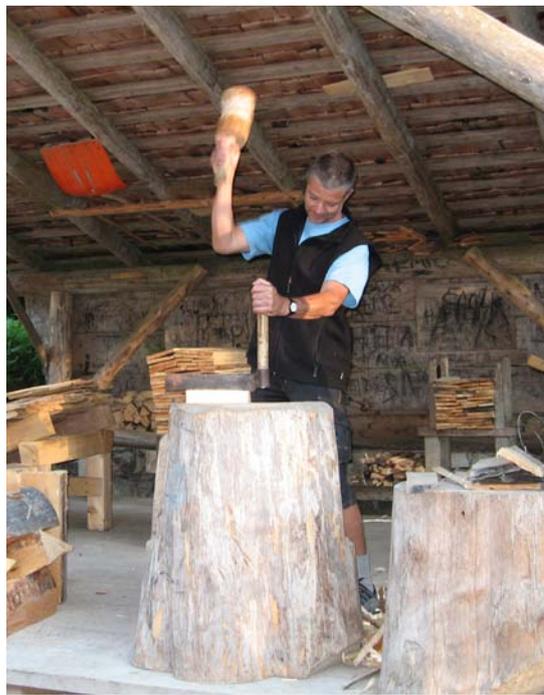
For the success of the conference, we owe much to the director, Peter Moser and the efforts of his scientific committee who were responsible for selecting 77 panels and fitting them into 11 sessions organised across 4 days. Each panel organiser selected the papers he or she wanted to include in their panel, a process which generated a total of 267 papers, an average of 3.5 per panel. Making a selection amongst these 7–8 parallel panels was no easy task, although we were assisted by the beautiful conference book which provided abstracts of the panels and papers. We also knew that if we missed a panel it was not disastrous as the vast majority of papers had been uploaded on to the website www.ruralhistory2013.org. This strategy facilitated the giving of short punchy papers and allowed ample time for questions and discussion.

My choice fell on colonial women, children in the countryside, rural elites, coastal marshes and wetland reclamation, negotiating conflict in rural society and anything to do with the creation and dissemination of knowledge but I missed enticing panels on agrarian technology, village culture, rural health, tourism and every aspect of alpiculture. Two panels on the open

fields of Europe also drew large audiences, while a series of panels on women in rural history proved equally popular. Whole swathes of papers escaped my attention, which I ruefully noted on the train journey home, but these can still be accessed on the website.

Alongside the agonies of selecting panels, we had the choice of 3 Keynote Sessions. The first, *Lost In Translations?* addressed the controversial issue that EURHO had adopted English as its working language. The principal concern was that the practical benefits of standardization ironed out subtle differences in meaning which had particular relevance in areas of rural history, like the Alps, which had no parallel in English speaking countries. This point was developed further in Session 2, *Rural History in Europe – Rural History in Switzerland* which explored the advances made over the last two decades. Session 3, *Films – a new Source in Rural History*, at 8 am on Thursday, eluded me as I was recovering from the excursion to the Emmental Show Dairy at Affoltern the night before, where we were treated to a deliciously cheesy supper with ham, eggs and potatoes, washed down with some very acceptable beer.

The other excursion, on the Tuesday evening, was to the famous Open Air Museum at Ballenberg. It is the only one in Switzerland and represents all the regions. Imagine the Wealden and Downland Museum multiplied by 5 – at least. The reconstructed wooden buildings are extraordinary. We saw a fraction of these, but they can all be viewed on their website, www.ballenberg.ch. Despite the late hour, craftsmen and women were on hand to show us how to split wooden roof tiles, burn lime, saw wood and make homes for bees in slices of logs. The gardens of the



Ballenberg Open Air Museum showing the making of wooden tiles for roofing.

buildings were particularly well cared for with flowers at the windows and parterres in front. In their premier farmhouse, we experimented with spinning wool which is hideously difficult, and weaving which is easier than you think. After that we had another scrumptious supper in the reconstructed inn, The Bear, before returning happily to Bern; we all agreed we could have done with another hour for each trip, perhaps even a whole afternoon? Alas, the Swiss are victims of their own success.

CONFERENCES

BAHS Spring Conference 2014

7–9 April

Denman College, Oxfordshire

The 2014 BAHS Spring Conference will take place at the WI Denman College from 7–9 April. In recognition of the venue, the conference will include a round-table panel on gender and rural organizations in the 20th century featuring papers on the Girls' Friendly Society (Dr Rebecca Andrew), the Young Farmers' Clubs (Dr Sian Rdwards) and the WI (Dr Rachel Ritchie). Also speaking will be Dr John Broad (on the history of social housing in the early modern and modern periods), Dr Chris Briggs (on Mortgages and the English Peasantry), Dr Briony McDonagh (on women's estate management in the 18th century) and Dr Jeremy Burchardt and Nicholas Haigh on country childhood in the 20th century. We will be joined by Dr David Stead from University College, Dublin, who will speak on the agricultural

policy lessons for Ireland of the hot dry summer of 1976 and by Dr Kate Tiller who will explore the history of 'White Horse' country. The conference will include a new researchers' session featuring papers on medieval peasant economies, land agency in the mid-19th century and rural migration in late Victorian England.

► Further details and booking forms from: Nicola Verdon n.verdon@shu.ac.uk

Rural History 2015

7–10 September, Girona, Spain

► Organised by the European Rural History Organisation

Weald and Downland Open Air Museum

7–8 June, Chichester, West Sussex

► Horses at War – Remembering World War One and World War Two.

Wartime farm revisited

John Martin explains the importance of the series to academic historians.

BBC's 2012 successful 'Wartime Farm' series and the Christmas edition which was repeated on the 18 December 2013 provided an unprecedented opportunity to not only reassess the achievements of farming and the countryside during the Second World War, but also to make this crucially important period accessible to a much wider audience. Produced by Lion TV, in association with the Open University, the series complements previous research into the issue of wartime control such as the 'The Frontline of Freedom' which was generously funded by the British Agricultural History Society.

Feeding the country at a time of rapidly diminishing imports posed one of the biggest challenges in the history of the countryside, what Prime Minister Churchill called the 'Frontline of Freedom.' It illustrates not only a structural realignment of agricultural production with the state-directed switch from livestock to arable farming, but also an unprecedented degree of improvisation, epitomised by a make do and mend philosophy as well as a 'Keep Calm and Carry On' approach on the part of the population, in dealing with a multitude of everyday challenges.

The series provided a fresh insight into the state-directed food production of the Second World War which according to the official history, *Agriculture*, was an 'unqualified success story.' Despite Britain's pre-war dependence on imported food, it is widely asserted that the efforts of the farming community ensured that the British population was neither starved into submission nor even forced to endure the food shortages and malnutrition which undermined the morale of many other combatants engulfed in the world's largest-ever military conflict. The depersonalised official history, which has for the most part eulogised the wartime achievement, does not however dovetail neatly with subsequent academic studies and this in turn does not always fit neatly with the myriad of nostalgic recollections of traditional farming.

The BBC's highly acclaimed, eight-part 'Wartime Farm' series (and its sequel 'Wartime Farm Christmas') provided an opportunity to bridge this gap and in so doing make historical research more accessible to the general public. This paper explores the technical and logistical challenges encountered in producing the Wartime Farm series, the reasons for its popularity, and its effectiveness in enhancing the general public's appreciation and understanding of these crucially important issues.

The series challenged many of the commonly held perceptions about the war, for example the prevailing

wisdom about the 'unqualified success of wartime controls'. As Brian Short ably demonstrated in his role as the Wartime Official, this was often delivered by an iron hand in a velvet glove. The eviction of Ray Walden from his farm bore witness to this when he lost his life in the process. Fear was instilled in many farmers by the assessment of their farms. In a similar way, Nicola Verdun's explored the vitally important role played by the Women's Land Army in the food production campaign. In addition, Karen Sayer provided a detailed insight into the contribution of social history of this period.

'Wartime Farm' is a sequel to the BBC's equally successful series 'Victorian Farm' and 'Edwardian Farm'. Its impact will be largely in the field of public discourse where it will enhance understanding of a major issue of contemporary importance. At the same time it makes a distinctive contribution to cultural capital in the form of a television series for an international market. Knowledge Network in Canada, which encompasses a consortium of seventy-five of the country's top universities, part funded by the provincial government and 35,000 individual donors, has already signed up for the 'Wartime Farm' series. The organisation works in conjunction with independent producers on the creation of original content. Viasat, a DBS distributor and TV broadcaster, owned by the Swedish media conglomerate Modern Times Group, has purchased the distribution rights for Eastern Europe and Russia.

Given the opportunity in the forthcoming REF to provide Case Impact Statements, coupled with the financial challenges and economy cuts which are engulfing the country, raising the profile of our subject constitutes an important defensive strategy which merits support. The 'Wartime Farm' series builds upon many of the initiatives including the *Frontline of*



Paddy Caldwell (landgirl) and Lily (horse); taken at Archie Kieth's farm at Egmere, Norfolk. From the collections at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, GRSRM: Cp.CP 1412

Freedom, articles and conference papers dealing the wartime period, which have been ably and generously supported by the British Agricultural History Society. Recognition has been forthcoming from the Open University in their booklet accompanying the series, and their interactive game ‘Beat the Ministry’, which enables participants to direct the food production

campaign. The renewed interest in the vitally important role which agriculture played in feeding the nation during the food crisis of the second world war provides the opportunity for the BAHS to raise its research profile in terms of the issue of food security which the RCUK has designated one of the ‘Grand Challenges’ for the international research community.



Museum volunteers preparing for a meal scene in Bayfield farmhouse for the Tudor Monastery Farm series

The latest in this *Living History* series, ‘The Tudor Monastery Farm’, was filmed this autumn at the Weald and Downland Museum, with the Christmas special shown as I was editing this newsletter. The museum was chosen because it has on one site ‘the greatest variety of 15th and 16th century buildings in the country’. In this the earliest point in history to be tackled yet, viewers were given a real insight into such activities as 16th-century sheep farming and harvesting, fashioning a printing press and building a Tudor clock. The editor of the museum’s newsletter, Diana Zeuner commented that it was ‘apart from one or two things a very good series’. It would be interesting to have comments from our early modernists.

Letters from Joan – continued from front page

for the launch of William Windham’s Green Book at Felbrigg Hall; she particularly enjoyed giving her talk in the kitchen although the pots and pans played havoc with the acoustics. Next day we went to Wolterton Hall where Lady Walpole, who remembered Joan from her museum days, generously took her round the house, but it was in the Walled Organic Garden that she was in her element talking to the gardeners, discussing their business model and plans for the future. My regret is that I didn’t take a photo of her in raptures over the autumn vegetables. In her final letter, after the BAHS Winter Conference of 2006, she reminded me of the long chats we used to enjoy on the train from Tonbridge and the cup of tea at Hadlow at the end of the day. Those were indeed extraordinary days with a most remarkable woman.

EDITOR’S NOTE



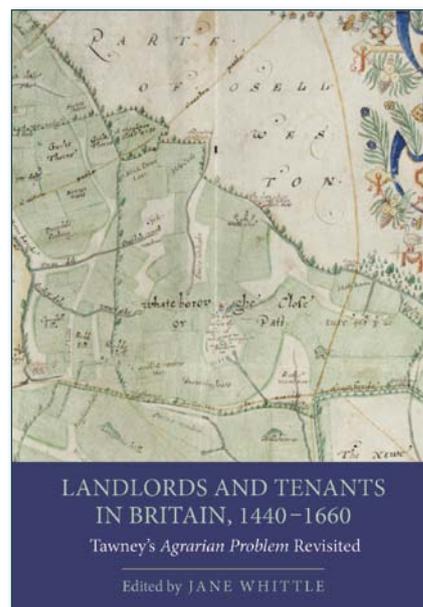
A reminder that the issue dates of *Rural History Today* have changed to February and August. Material for inclusion in *Rural History Today* for the February edition material should be with the editor by 30 December, and for the August edition by 30 June.

NEW BOOKS

A Classic Revisited

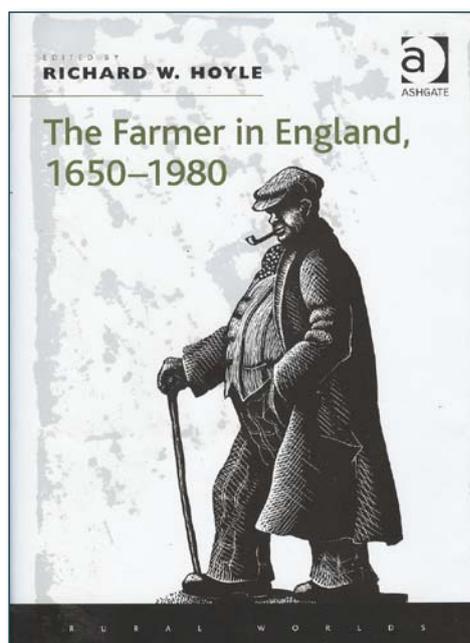
R.H. Tawney's, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, was published in 1912. Remarkably, it has remained a common feature of University reading lists on the history of rural England ever since.

To celebrate its centenary a group of historians has revisited Tawney's themes to create this new collection of essays: *Landlords and Tenants in Britain, 1440–1660: Tawney's Agrarian Problem Revisited*. Tawney's central argument, that enclosing landlords threw peasant tenants off their landholdings and condemned them to a life of vagrancy in the mid sixteenth century, has long been disproved. But other elements of the book, such as its vivid description of late medieval rural life, and its discussions of common rights, custom, and land tenure have withstood the test of time. In her introduction to *Landlords and Tenants* Jane Whittle examines how Tawney originally came to write his book, how its academic fortunes waxed and waned over the twentieth century, and how it is now regarded by historians. The following chapters cover themes such as social and economic change in the late medieval period (by Chris Dyer), legal disputes over customary tenure (by Harold Garrett-Goodyear, Jean Morrin, Jennifer Holt and Chris Brooks), enclosure disputes (by Briony McDonagh, Heather Falvey and Andy Wood), a comparison with Scotland (by Julian Goodare), landlords as improvers (by Elizabeth Griffiths and William Shannon), and Tawney's ideas about capitalism (by David Ormrod). It is concluded, as another famous historian, Lawrence Stone, once wrote, that '*The Agrarian Problem* remains a great book'.



► **SPECIAL OFFER:** Order direct from the publisher and save 25%. *Landlords and Tenants in Britain, 1440–1660*. 978 1 84383 850 0, August 2013, £17.99, Paperback. OFFER PRICE £13.49. Order online at www.boydellandbrewer.com or by mail or phone. Postage & packing: UK £3 per order; Europe £7.50 per book; RoW £13.50 per book. Boydell & Brewer Ltd, PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK. Tel. 01394 610 600. Please be sure to quote reference 13293 when prompted (online this will be at the checkout). Offer ends 30 June 2014.

The Farmer in England 1650–1980



'Of the three agricultural classes, landowners, farmers and labourers, it is surprising that we know least about the economic condition of the middle group'; so wrote E.L. Jones as long ago as 1968.

This book goes some way towards redressing the balance. Twelve chapters, written by members of the BAHS cover the stories of individual farmers, both male and female, from the seventeenth to the twentieth century and covering the regions of England and Scotland. The book also illustrates the range of sources available, from day books, labour accounts, journals and correspondence and from the nineteenth century, the range of sources increases enormously. By focussing attention on farmers, it is hoped that they will find their rightful position in the history of rural entrepreneurs.

► Richard Hoyle (ed.) *The Farmer in England 1650–1980* Ashgate 2013

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 June 2014 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