

RURAL HISTORY TODAY

Rural History Today is published by the British Agricultural History Society



Issue 7 • July 2004

Letter from the (new) President

It was a great honour to be elected president of the British Agricultural History Society at the Edinburgh conference in April of this year. When I began to join learned societies as a research student the Agricultural History Society was one of the first, and I always looked forward to the appearance of the *Agricultural History Review*, and found something of interest in each issue. The Society gave me my first opportunity to talk to a national society, at Hereford in 1970, though it has to be admitted that this was a rather uncomfortable experience. The annual conferences are now friendly occasions, and the lectures are followed by tolerant and constructive discussion!

It seems especially appropriate that the Society through my election should renew its connections with Leicester's Centre for English Local History. The founder of the Department of English Local History, W. G. Hoskins, also helped to establish the discipline of agrarian history, as a pioneer of the use of probate inventories to reconstruct early modern farming practices, and as the inventor of landscape history. His successor, H.P.R. Finberg, and Joan Thirsk, who was for a considerable time a research fellow at Leicester, each in turn edited the *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, and served as editors of the *Agricultural History Review*, and presidents of the Society. Alan Everitt joined with Joan Thirsk to write substantial chapters for volume 4 of the *Agrarian History* which established an agenda in various branches of agrarian and rural history for the following four decades. Now, although we occasionally venture into urban history, Harold Fox, Keith Snell and I maintain the Centre's concern for the history of farming, rural society and landscape. The Centre will be playing host to the Society in April 2005, when the annual conference will be held at the University of Leicester.

For those who do not know me, I come from a rural background in south Warwickshire, where my maternal grandfather was a market gardener, and my paternal grandfather estate carpenter to the marquis of Hertford. I am a relatively recent arrival at Leicester, having previously taught at the Universities of Edinburgh and

Birmingham. My PhD thesis on the estates of the bishopric of Worcester, was supervised by Rodney Hilton. It appeared as a book in 1980, and I have subsequently researched and published on a variety of subjects, both rural and urban. My *Making a Living in the Middle Ages* was published by Penguin in 1993. I am active in various societies and organizations, and I confess to having served already as president of three other societies!

Societies elect Presidents primarily for decoration, but I will use what little influence is attached to this position to encourage features of the Society, and trends in its development, which are already in existence. The membership should increase if possible, and in particular we should continue in our efforts to attract younger members, to encourage their contributions, and make them welcome at meetings and conferences. We should maintain and develop our international links, which is already done by inviting an overseas speaker to the annual conference, and holding joint meetings with our parallel societies. I am on the editorial board of the Spanish equivalent of the *Agricultural History Review*, and write occasionally for it, and hope to develop this connection. One of the attractive features of the Society has been that people who are not academics, but who have an interest in farming and rural life have joined and contributed to conferences and to the journal. Their interest and participation should be maintained and encouraged. Finally, our core activity is the editing and production of publications, and especially the *Agricultural History Review*, which is widely read and respected. The present editor (who happens to be a former student of mine) is doing an excellent job, and this is reflected in both the quality of its contents, and the attractive appearance of the issues. The adoption of *Rural History Today* is another valuable asset in spreading the message that our subject is an exciting and important field of study, and in keeping its readers informed about new developments. We are all very grateful for Susanna Wade-Martins in taking on the editing of this important venture.

Christopher Dyer, Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester.

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AGRICULTURAL HISTORY IN THE NETHERLANDS – STATE OF THE ART

By Jan Bieleman

Jan Bieleman (born 1949) studied Rural Planning and Agricultural History at the (then) Agricultural University in Wageningen. He obtained his doctorate in 1987 with a thesis on the history of farming in the Dutch province of Drenthe during the period 1600–1910. Since 1985 he has been working at the Rural History Group of the Department of Social Sciences of the Wageningen University, teaching and doing research in the field of Dutch agricultural history. One of his main publications is a textbook on the agricultural history of the Netherlands, entitled: *Geschiedenis van de landbouw in Nederland 1500–1950. Veranderingen en verscheidenheid* (Amsterdam/Meppel, 1992). Recently he published a study on the technological changes in Dutch agriculture in the 20th century.

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Ever since H.J. Koenen published his *De Nederlandsche Boerenstand – Historisch beschreven* in 1858, the ideas on the history of the Dutch countryside and Dutch agriculture have changed profoundly. Knowledge in this field has increased significantly, especially during the last three or four decades, and striking results have been achieved. At the same time, agricultural history has gained recognition as a full sub-discipline within the field of the historical sciences; as a full specialism, with its own questions and its own methods. In this paper I want to try to give a survey of the results of this discipline in the Netherlands over the last five decades. In doing so I will concentrate on the Early Modern and Modern Periods, that is the period 1500–1950. Starting with a sketch of the institutional framework, I then move on to give an idea of the state of the art by mentioning the most important studies published since World War II.

Institutional framework

The oldest institution to study agricultural history in the Netherlands is, in fact, a private society, called *Studiekring voor de Geschiedenis van den Landbouw*, renamed in 1967 the *Vereniging voor Landbouwwgeschiedenis*: the Society for Agricultural History. It was founded in March 1939 by a soil scientist from the Agricultural University in Wageningen, Dr. Oosting, and a gentleman-farmer from Groningen, Addens. Initially, most of its members were either academics from Wageningen or practising farmers. However, historians, historical geographers, archaeologists, sociologists and anthropologists soon followed.

One important activity of the Society of Agricultural History is its biannual meetings. Before 1965, subjects discussed there dealt mainly with the prehistoric and medieval period, according to the then prevailing legal-historical approach in research. Since 1965, however, there has been a clear shift in subjects discussed, with the industrial era coming more to the fore, a development typical for the discipline as a whole. Another important activity of the Society of Agricultural History is the publishing of studies in the field of agricultural history. The Society has its own series called, *Agronomisch-Historische Bijdragen*. The first volume was published in 1948, and since then 15 volumes have appeared.

Just after the end of World War II, Addens

and the historian Van Winter, of the University of Groningen established in 1950 the *Nederlands Agronomisch-historisch Instituut*, (NAHI) linked to Groningen. Participants were a foundation with the same name, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Board of Agriculture and the Farmers Associations. For years its main activities were the setting up of a documentary system and the collecting of all kinds of sources. It also maintained an international bibliography in the field of agricultural history, an activity which unfortunately stopped in 1975, although the work on a Dutch bibliography still continued for some years. Soon after the NAHI had been established, it began its own series called *Historia Agriculturae*. In its first years, this series contained mainly printed agro-historical sources, but since the 1980s, more and more monographies have been included, though the series has still kept its prevailing agro-historical character. In 1983 the institute was incorporated into the Faculty of Arts of the Groningen University and was also made responsible for educational tasks. Recently the institute, which is partly financed by the Ministry of Agriculture has been revitalized.

Shortly after the foundation of the NAHI, B.H. Slicher van Bath was appointed associate professor in Agro-Economic and Social History at the Agricultural University in Wageningen, after being appointed a full professor at the University of Groningen. His appointment in Wageningen was mainly meant to support the then sprouting education of rural sociologists. To stress the continuity and the presence of the discipline in Wageningen, a young agricultural engineer, Roessingh, was appointed lecturer. An agricultural museum was also to be established in Wageningen, with Dr. Van der Poel, then director of the NAHI in Groningen, being appointed founding director. (For the short histories of both institutions, see: Van der Woude, 'Dertig afdeling Agrarische Geschiedenis' and Hille de Vries, 'Vijftig jaar Vereniging voor Landbouwwgeschiedenis').

When, in 1956, Slicher van Bath was appointed as full professor in Wageningen, the *Afdeling*, later on *Vakgroep Agrarische Geschiedenis*, and nowadays the *Sectie Agrarische Geschiedenis*, or the Rural History Group came into being. Within a few years its staff had been greatly expanded and an ambitious programme in research was begun focussing on the *Ancien Regime* period, 1500–1800. It was obvious that this was the period about which the least was known.

As they started, they realized how important it was to tackle the subject in a broad sense. They

felt the need to widen their field of research to a comprehensive social and economic history of the pre-industrial society as a whole. As major successes were achieved, the history of farmers and farming as a specialism on its own also begun to take shape. Here too, it became clear that superficially formulated questions no longer sufficed. It was realized that to achieve a good understanding of rural developments in a broader sense, it was necessary to study traditional farming systems also in their technical aspects. And so, alongside social and economic determinants, gradually more attention was given to the technical and ecological aspects of traditional farming.

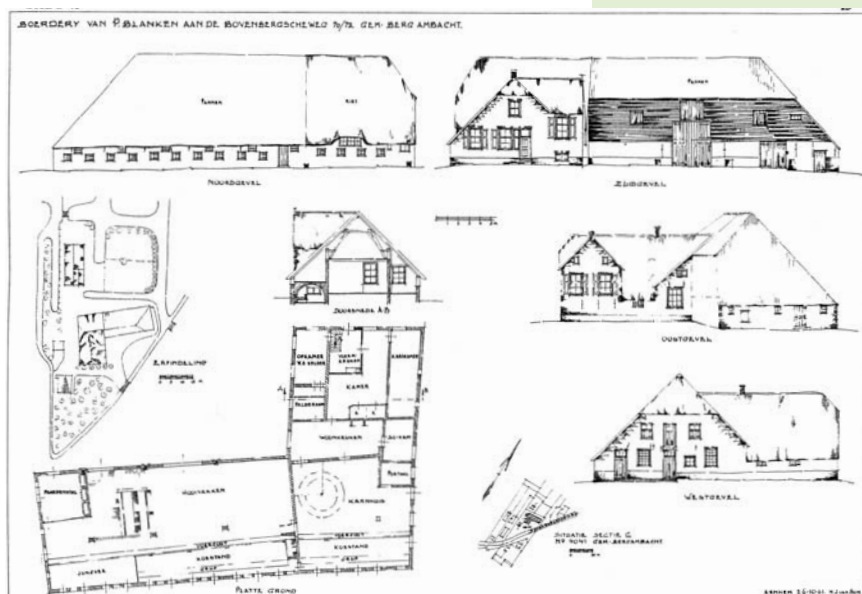
To create a medium for the quite lengthy articles the staff produced, the department's own series came into being – the *A.A.G. Bijdragen*. The first volumes of this series were published in the early 1960s. It is no exaggeration to state that the series has had a major impact on Dutch historiography, although a closer look shows that only a limited number of volumes contain studies in the field of agricultural history in the strictest sense.

Since the 1970s, research in rural history has also been introduced at other Dutch universities and para-academic institutes, for example the Fryske Akademie in Leeuwarden, the Departments of History in the Universities of Amsterdam, Leiden, Utrecht, Nijmegen and Tilburg and the Social-History Centre for the Province of Limburg in Maastricht. Mention must also be made of the Institute for Documentation and Research of Historic Farmsteads in the Netherlands (S.H.B.O.). This institute, which was founded in 1960 and linked to the Open Air Museum in Arnhem, aims at building up a documentary system and carrying out research in the field of the history of rural architecture – especially farmsteads – in all its diversity. This research has become much deeper, especially over the last two decades. The conviction has gained ground that farm buildings and their developments are an important expression of the farming business itself and its developments.

A short review of the historiography for the period after 1500

The book on the history of Dutch farming that Koenen published in 1858 may be seen as the first study in the field. A next important step was the assignment given by the Royal Dutch Agricultural Congress in the 1860s to draw up a first 'list of materials for the history and statistics of Dutch agriculture'. This was published in 1874 by Sloet tot Oldhuis and Iterson. Then, in 1902 and 1904, the two volumes of Blink's study '*Geschiedenis van den Boerenstand en den Landbouw in Nederland*' appeared, a publication which in parts still had important legal-historical components.

To give added lustre to the centenary of the



Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1913, the then Ministerial Department for Agriculture produced a volume called *De Nederlandse landbouw in het tijdvak 1813-1913*. The knowledge brought together by 17 different authors in this volume was already more distinctly agronomic, though it still had some legal-historical elements. Strikingly agronomic in its approach was the handbook that was published in 1943 by a team of authors led by Z.W. Sneller, called *Geschiedenis van den Nederlandschen Landbouw* from 1795 to 1940. A considerable number of the contributors to this book, which had a second edition in 1951, came from the Agricultural University at Wageningen.

This institutional framework has contributed greatly to the progress that has been made in the field of agricultural history, particularly in the regional approach. Look, for instance, at the two-volume bibliography which Brouwer published in 1974, containing almost 5,000 titles and meant as a supplement to Sloet and Van Iterson's list of 1874. It is primarily set up on the basis of the eleven provinces that our country then had. This approach was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that the Dutch system of public archives is regionally organized and also, of course, by a certain kind of regional chauvinism. But most important is the nature of Dutch agriculture itself. Even for outsiders, the great variety in farming systems is one of the most striking characteristics of the country. Therefore studies with a more sectorial or thematical approach, like Van der Poel's *100 Jaar Landbouwmeechanisatie in Nederland*, published in 1967 and Trienekens 1985 study on the role of the national agricultural production in food supply during World War II are relatively scarce. More significant have been the many regional studies covering much of the country and these will be considered in the second part of this paper.

The plans and elevations from an SHBO publication of a farmstead from South Holland (SHBO)

CONFERENCE REPORTS

The Interwar Rural History Research Group conference at Gregynog

In the stimulating environment provided by Gregynog in Powys, the Interwar Rural History Research Group (IRHRG) held its second two-day conference around the theme 'Constructing Communities: place and people in the countryside, 1918–1939'. It was principally organized by Clare Griffiths, with help from Lynne Thompson, and brought together scholars from all over Great Britain, and as far away as Australia.

Jeremy Burchardt began the conference by pointing out that the whole idea of a rural community was an invention of the interwar period. Although the term was occasionally used in the nineteenth century, mainly as a stick to beat industrialism, it was members of the professional middle class, after the First World War, that were stimulated by a range of ideas, from the co-operative movement, American rural sociology, late-nineteenth-century idealist philosophy, and their interests in education, to promote the idea of rural communities as places in which people of different classes could be brought together. The view from the left of the political spectrum, according to Clare Griffiths, was not so sure. Although Labour was not against support for agriculture, it was far from convinced that the traditional rural community was worth maintaining, believing that a sugar beet factory was more effective at producing jobs than a craft revival. That such initiatives might be needed was clear from both Richard Moore-Colyer's portrait of rural Wales as a land of low farm incomes and high TB rates in rural areas, and Abigail Woods's survey of the impact of Foot and

Mouth disease in Cheshire in 1920–23, when the county lost one third of its dairy herd. Similarly, Charles Rawding's account of Binbrook, on the Lincolnshire Wolds, revealed a village in which the population was stagnant and the decline of rural trades and services, begun before the First World War, continued to the Second. On the other hand, Binbrook also experienced a major reduction in infant mortality and the beginnings of modern infrastructure and service provision, with the arrival, for example, of an electricity supply in 1935.

To balance the problems, there were also possibilities. This was the period in which the countryside was seen as a site for new activities and initiatives. For some this meant the construction of their own communities, sometimes on a very small scale. David Matless produced a minutely detailed account of the activities of the artist and ecologist Marietta Pallis in Norfolk, arguing that she was creating a self-defining utopian community. There were numerous purposes for such communities in this period, from the wide range (Peacehaven to industrial villages) of therapeutic communities discussed by Keith Grieves, or the market gardeners near Bristol identified by Richard Spalding, to the moving community of caravanners in search of their own rural idyll described by Nina Morris. There were also numerous ways of representing the meanings of rurality and the changes it was undergoing. David Hilton's paper on the use of film at Dartington suggested a community consciously creating its own foundation myth, and Ruth Ford explained how the letters of rural women in Australia could be used to show their exploration of the differences between the fantasy and reality of rural life. In Britain, as Mick Wallis argued, this representation was felt to be important enough for the Ministry of Reconstruction to begin the process that resulted in the state provision of drama for rural areas. The state was also active in promoting education and scientific research, as John Martin, Lynne Thompson, and Sarah Wilmot's papers demonstrated.

What emerged from all these papers (to which the foregoing superficial account does little justice) was a picture of a world in which people were increasingly aware of their role as members of a variety of groups in rural society. It was not so much a matter of class divisions breaking down as of parallel systems developing within and between classes. It was also a period in which the origins of the recreation and conservation functions of the later twentieth century countryside could clearly be seen.

Anyone with an interest in the 1918–1939 period, both in Britain and abroad, is welcome to join the IRHRG. For further details, please contact the secretary, Lynne Thompson (lthompson@exeter.ac.uk).

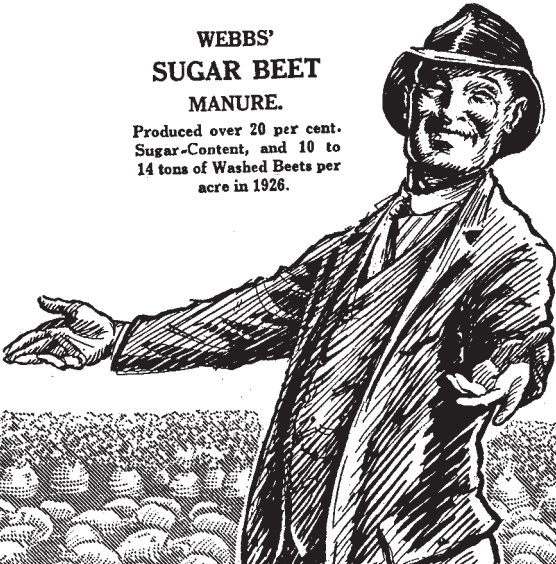
Paul Brassley, University of Plymouth

The inter-war period was the time in which the origins of the recreation and conservation functions of the later twentieth century countryside could clearly be seen.

A full report of the BAHS spring conference in Edinburgh will appear in the next issue of the Review

Sugar beet, saviour of many arable inter-war farms in the east of England. Advertisement from JRASE 1926

WEBBS' SUGAR BEET MANURE.
Produced over 20 per cent. Sugar-Content, and 10 to 14 tons of Washed Beets per acre in 1926.



WEBB & SONS LTD., The King's Seedsmen & Manure Manufacturers, STOURBRIDGE

NEWS FROM KINDRED BODIES

European Society for Environmental History

In a recent issue (no. 4) of *Rural History Today* John Sheail rightly observed that the interests of historians of the countryside tie increasingly with those of ecologists. This is not only a feature that can be observed in Britain but is also very strong on the continent. In the Netherlands agricultural history combined with historical ecology has been at the forefront of historical research in that country since the 1970s. That is no wonder considering the long history of land reclamation partly undertaken to satisfy the increasing demands of export markets for agricultural produce. Other European countries have also developed strong traditions of rural history but with a different emphasis. In Italy for example land use and landscape history are used to conserve historically important landscapes such as in Tuscany and the Italian Alps. In neighbouring Austria stimulating research conducted at the IFF Social Ecology institute at the University of Vienna into the management of the energy balance of the countryside has led to a better understanding of how sustainable the rural economies were in the past. These Austrian researchers have expanded their research beyond Austria and are now accessing the same question for other European countries including Britain.

This indicates that rural history is increasingly becoming an international enterprise of comparative study. Agriculture and other rural activities do obviously not develop in splendid isolation but are influenced by developments in other European countries. This does not only apply to rural history but also to the whole range of human activities that impact on the environment we live in.

In order to stimulate international research into the history of the environment in the broadest sense the European Society for Environmental History was established in 1999. The Society aims to stimulate dialogue between humanistic scholarship, environmental science, ecology and other disciplines in a European context. It welcomes members from all disciplines and professions who share an interest in past relationships between human culture and the environment. The Society publishes a quarterly newsletter in the British-based journal *Environment and History* and organises every two years an international conference. The Scottish Centre for Environmental History hosted the first conference in St. Andrews in September 2001. The second meeting took place last September in Prague. Both conference attracted a substantial number

of papers related to rural history, including a number of sessions devoted to rural change in the Czech Republic during the 20th century and the history of forestry and land use in different parts of Europe. The third conference of ESEH will take place in Florence and the theme of the meeting is 'sustainability and history'. **The conference will be hosted by the University of Florence and take place from 16-19 February 2005.** *The ESEH invites historians interested in any aspect of the history of the environment, landscape and the countryside to attend this meeting. For information about the conference visit the conference website at www.eseh2005.unifi.it*

For more information about the European Society for Environmental History and to access the environmental history bibliography and other resources visit the Societies website at www.eseh.org. Alternatively you can write to the Secretary of ESEH Dr Jan Oosthoek, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, School of Historical Studies, Newcastle, NE8 4NX, email: k.j.w.oosthoek@ncl.ac.uk

Medieval Settlement Research Group

This influential and active Group has not figured in previous issues of *Rural History Today*, and it may therefore need a brief introduction. Its prehistory lies in the Deserted Medieval Village Research Group which was founded by Maurice Beresford and John Hurst in the early 1950s. It compiled lists of deserted villages and gathered information about them, and one of the fruits of that labour was the book entitled *Deserted Medieval Villages* which was published in 1971. The Group also conducted the excavations at Wharram Percy in Yorkshire. In 1986 it was refounded as the Medieval Settlement Research Group. It brings together archaeologists, geographers and historians in the study of all types of medieval settlement, and especially rural settlements. It holds two or three seminars and conferences each year, and its *Annual Report* publishes articles, conference reports, reports on research and discoveries, together with a bibliography.

The current president is Paul Everson of English Heritage, the treasurer is Robin Glasscock, a Cambridge geographer, the secretary is Neil Christie of the archaeology department of Leicester University, and the editor Carenza Lewis of Cambridge and 'Time Team'. To indicate the variety of its activities, in the last year a winter seminar was held in December 2003 in Leicester on pottery in rural settlement studies. This was in honour of the late John Hurst, who was a leader in both medieval ceramics and the archaeology of rural settlements. Subjects under discussion included the dating of sites through pottery, the distribution of pottery in the countryside in the

Continued on page 8

CONFERENCE NOTICEBOARD

Historic Farm Buildings Group

2-5 September 2004, University of Milan

This year's annual conference is run jointly with RURALIA and hosted by the Agriculture Institute at the University of Milan. As well as lectures on the historic farm buildings of Italy and more specifically those associated with rice farming and viticulture, there will be farm visits (including the wine cellar in Retorbido) and discussion on the questions of restoration and conservation.

Details and application form from Jeremy Lake, 32 College Road, Cheltenham GL53 7HX or e-mail: jeremy.lake@english-heritage.org.uk

Field sports & rural society since 1850

13-14th September 2004 School of History,
University of Reading

Field sports – the hunting of wild or semi-domesticated animals primarily for pleasure rather than food – has been a live political issue over the past century or more. It has a rich history with a colourful range of characters: from Masters of Fox Hounds and plutocratic landowners (and a monarch or several) through farmers, gamekeepers and poachers, to hunt followers and saboteurs. Foxhunting, pheasant and partridge shooting have all been viewed at some moments as the recreations of the rich in the countryside, at others as a device to bind the countryside together in shared pursuits or merely as a necessary means of clearing vermin from the land.

Yet, should we not be surprised that field sports have survived the dissolution of the estates system, agricultural depression and mechanisation as well as the hostility of an increasingly urban population? Although contested, hunting in England and Wales remains legal- though perhaps for not much longer- despite the attention of several generations of politicised pressure groups. It retains the support of a large proportion of country people with, apparently no shortage of people, from both town and country, wishing to partake in its activities. Foxhunting in particular is bound up with questions of Englishness.

Given the importance of field sports to the countryside, far too little attention has been paid to these activities by rural historians. This conference hopes to start redressing the balance with a panel of speakers looking at the history of field sports through a variety of foci, all aware of the contested nature of these activities, all equally non-political in their approach.

Speakers include Dr Michael Winstanley and Dr Harvey Osborne (University of Lancaster)

Gamekeepers and poachers in late Victorian England; Dr Ed Bujak (University of Evansville, Harlaxton) *Sport and survival of landed society in late Victorian Suffolk;* Dr Nick Mansfield (People's History Museum, Manchester) *Foxhunting and the yeomanry: county identity and military culture;* Daniel Allen (University of Nottingham) *A delightful sport with peculiar charms: cultures of otter hunting, 1880-1939;* Dr David Matlass, Dr Paul Merchant, Prof. Charles Watkins (University of Nottingham) *Science, sport and the otter 1945-1978;* Dr Ian Roberts (University of Durham) *Starting a hare: exploring the history and influence of coursing since the mid-nineteenth century;* Dr John Martin (De Montfort University, Leicester) *Wildfowling: professionals and amateurs;* Dr Michael Tichelar (University of the West of England) *Attempts to ban hunting in 1949;* Prof. Richard Hoyle (University of Reading) *Foxhunting in the twentieth century: the fortunes of the Oakley Hunt.*

The cost of the conference including overnight accommodation and meals £85, non-residential but with meals £60

Bookings by the 6th September. Booking form available from Mrs E. Berry tel no 0118 3788148 or e-mail e.l.berry@reading.ac.uk.

Society for Folk Life Studies

Annual Conference 16-19 September 2004 at
Manoir de Kernault at Mellac, Finistere

Shaping the Future:
constructive interpretations of heritage

Further details from the Society Secretary, Dr Eddie Cass, 548 Wilbraham Road, Manchester, M21 9LB

British Agricultural History Society

Winter Conference - Saturday 4 December 2004
Institute of Historical Research, Senate House,
Malet St. London WC1

Farming in Upland Britain

Livestock farming and the systems of upland Britain are often overlooked by agricultural historians who are mesmerised by grain prices and wheat yields. This conference is therefore a welcome corrective.

Papers include Althea Davies (University of Stirling) *Farming systems and communities in the highlands over the last 1000 years;* Angus Winchester (University of Lancaster) *Manor courts and common land in upland northern England 1450-1700;* Diccon Cooper (University of Cambridge) *Upland farming in south west Wales 1650-1850;* Mark Riley (University of Exeter) *Farming in post-war Peak District.*

The cost of the conference including lunch £20, without lunch £10. Booking form available from Dr Jane Whittle, History Dept, University of Exeter, Amory Building, Rennes Drive, Exeter EX4 4RJ or e-mail: j.c.whittle@exeter.ac.uk



A Game-keeper's doodles:
details from end-page
T.Windham Cremer's game
book kept during the 1850s.
(Norfolk Record Office
WKC 5/349 401x2)

CALL FOR ACADEMIC PAPERS

Economic History Society Annual Conference

8 - 10 April 2005 University of Leicester

The 2005 annual conference of the Economic History Society will be hosted by the University of Leicester from 8 to 10 April in the Halls of Residence and Conference Centre located at Oadby, approximately two miles from the main university campus.

The Conference Programme Committee invites proposals for entire sessions (of 1.75 hours duration) as well as for individual papers. The former should include proposals and synopses for each paper in the session, although the committee reserves the right to determine which papers will be presented in the session if it is accepted. If a session is not accepted, the committee may incorporate one or more of the proposed papers into other panels.

The committee welcomes proposals in all aspects of economic and social history covering a wide range of periods and countries, and particularly welcomes papers of an interdisciplinary nature.

For full consideration, proposals must be received by Monday, 20 September 2004. Notices of acceptance will be sent to individual paper givers by 19 November 2004.

Call for New Researchers' Papers

The conference opens with papers presented by new researchers. They offer those completing doctorates the opportunity to present their work before professional colleagues and to benefit from informed comment.

The session will be held on the afternoon of Friday, 8 April 2005. Those wishing to be considered for inclusion in the programme at Leicester must submit a synopsis by Monday, 6 September 2004. This should provide a firm title, a succinct summary of the principal themes and methodology of the paper, and an outline of probable conclusions.

The synopsis should be of not more than 500 words. It must be accompanied by a clear statement of the progress of research, intended date for submission of thesis, and a statement of support from the supervisor. Please note that proposals from researchers at an early stage of their work will not normally be accepted.

Those selected for inclusion in the programme will be asked to submit a paper, not exceeding 2500 words, by 3 January 2005 for circulation in the Conference booklet. Each new researcher will

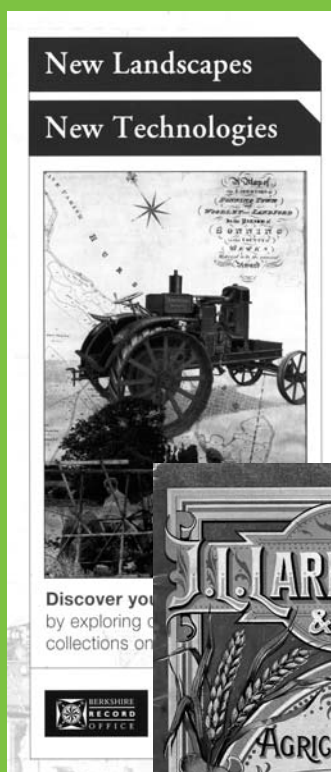
have the opportunity to speak for twenty minutes, followed by ten minutes of discussion. The student's supervisor will normally be expected to chair the session. A prize of £250 will be awarded for the best paper presented at the Conference by a new researcher.

The Economic History Society is able to offer limited financial support to enable new researchers to attend the Conference when this is not available from their institution.

For each proposed Academic and New Researcher's paper, please send (preferably by e-mail, in MSWord format) a short c.v. and a short abstract of 400-500 words to: Maureen Galbraith, Economic History Society, Department of Economic & Social History, University of Glasgow, 4 University Gardens, Glasgow G12 8QQ, Scotland, UK. E-mail: ehsocsec@arts.gla.ac.uk

Call for academic papers - continues on next page

New landscapes, new technologies

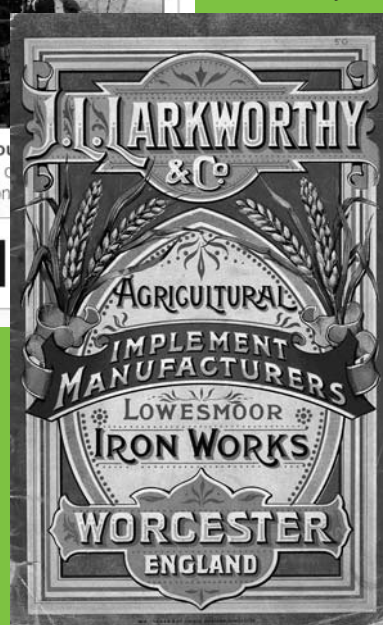


In a ground-breaking partnership project between the University of Reading's Museum of English Rural Life and Berkshire Record Office, *New Landscapes, New Technologies* has created two special websites that use the latest in digital technology for the exploration of the rural heritage through collections of unique importance.

Nearly 200 huge enclosure maps – the largest runs to nearly 50 square feet – that were drawn up as part of this process, have been expertly digitised by the County Record Office and placed

online at www.berkshireenclosure.org.uk. Now they can be publicly accessed as a source of local information and interest in a way never before possible.

More than 50,000 illustrated pages of farm equipment from the catalogues of Victorian manufacturers are now accessible in digital form at www.victorianfarming.org.



Victorian catalogue cover for J.L. Larkworthy of Worcester

A note from the new editor

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. She would particularly like articles on European projects, kindred societies and news from museums, all of which she hopes will become regular features. Articles for the next issue should be sent by 30 November to Susanna Wade Martins, The Longhouse, Eastgate Street, North Elmham, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 5HD or preferably by email scwmartins@hotmail.com

W.G. Hoskins and the making of the British landscape

7–10 July, 2005 University of Leicester,

W.G. Hoskins' book, *The Making of the English Landscape*, was published in 1955, and this conference marks the fiftieth anniversary of that event. It is designed to honour Hoskins by celebrating the achievements of the discipline of landscape history which he inspired. The conference includes themes of enduring importance which he included in his book (such as rural settlements, towns and buildings), and adds others which have emerged subsequently (for example perceptions, ritual and spiritual dimensions, and scientific analysis of the environment). Proper attention will be given to the twentieth century, and the period before 500AD, which he did not regard as very significant. The scope of the conference will include Britain, and comparison will be made with the continent.

The conference takes Hoskins' contribution as a starting point, but is not intended mainly to praise nor to criticise his work. Its focus is on recent developments and the future outlook in a dynamic interdisciplinary subject. Participants will include both established and younger scholars. It is to be

held at Leicester, where Hoskins taught in three episodes of his life.

Themes are: Rural settlement; Towns and hinterlands; Industry and communications; Buildings in the landscape; Britain before the English; Status/ designed landscapes; Perceptions of landscape; Ritual and spiritual landscapes; Environments and the landscape; Mapping the landscape.

The conference is sponsored by the Historical Geography Research Group, the Royal Historical Society and the Society for Landscape Studies.

The publication of the conference proceedings is planned. Anyone interested in contributing should contact: Christopher Dyer, Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester, Marc Fitch House, 5 Salisbury Road, Leicester, LE1 7QR. e-mail: cd50@le.ac.uk or tel: 0116 252 2765

Paper proposals should take the form of a title (maximum 12 words) and summary of contents (maximum 50 words). The slot allocated for papers will be 25 minutes maximum. Proposals should arrive by 1 September, 2004.

Please note that paper presenters will need to register for the conference and pay the registration fee and accommodation charges. There will be bursaries for research students.

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pre-Conquest period, and the domestic use of pottery. In February 2004 the Group sponsored a conference at Oxford entitled 'Villages and landscapes in the middle ages: recent surveys and explorations' which gathered together a variety of scholars who are conducting surveys, often interdisciplinary in character, of landscapes and settlements. The cases stretched from Somerset to Durham, and those attending were able to compare a great variety of methods and approaches, ranging from high technology soil analysis and computerized mapping, to the more conventional methods of documentary research, field walking, and survey of earthworks. In May 2004 the Group arranged in cooperation with its Irish counterpart, a meeting in County Carlow to explore Irish settlement history.

The group's future events include a seminar at Leicester on 4 December 2004, in which evidence from human and animal bones will be used as evidence for rural diet. The next spring meeting will be at Cambridge on 16-17 April 2005, which will include consideration of the nucleated villages of Cambridgeshire. A conference in Northumberland is planned in April 2006.

At the centre of the Group's agenda of research is the investigation of the villages, hamlets, farmsteads, moated sites and other settlements of the middle ages, with the aim of explaining how they came into existence, how they worked, and how they grew, changed and decayed

during and after the middle ages. A research programme which addresses these problems is the Whittlewood project, which the Group sponsors. It is focussed on a dozen parishes on the Buckinghamshire – Northamptonshire border; those wishing to learn more about the project and experience some attractive villages and rural landscapes, should come to the Open Day (in fact an afternoon) on Wednesday 21 July 2004. To find out where and when to assemble for the tour contact Christopher Dyer at the Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester.

Rural Museums Network

A two-day conference of the Rural Museums Network was held at the Museum of English Rural Life in March. The packed programme included an address from Sir John Marsh on the future of the countryside and discussions on the further development of the Network's initiative with the Distributed National Collection of agricultural material. Membership of the Network has been widened to include many of the smaller museums in the sector and now runs to 52 member museums around the UK (for more details see www.ruralmuseumsnetwork.org.uk). A Steering Group, under the chairmanship of MERL's Roy Brigden, has been set up to develop a strategy for the ongoing development of the Network.