

Book Reviews

MARIE CLOUGH (ed.), *The Book of Bartholomew Bolney*. Sussex Record Society, Vol. LXIII, 1964.

This is the estate book of an interesting Sussex family whose landed fortunes appear to have been at their apogee in the middle years of the fifteenth century. Bartholomew Bolney (1405?-77) was a typical member of the county gentry. Trained as a lawyer, he acted as steward to the abbot of Battle, kept a court in Sussex for the archbishop of Canterbury, was a J.P. and on innumerable government commissions in his county. Like other Kent and Sussex gentry he supported Jack Cade and seems to have suffered no set-back in his career for having done so. Although a gentleman in 1450, his ancestors may have been yeomen, but this is uncertain.

This book is essentially a collection of proofs of title, but it contains more than records of deeds. Under the heading of each place where Bolney had property are entered detailed rentals and a sort of narrative of the various acquisitions and titles. As a layman's cartulary the book is a comparative rarity, reminiscent of the Boarstall Cartulary. Much of the legal and tenurial detail is of minor interest to the agrarian historian, whose real need is for matter which reveals agricultural practice. But there are nevertheless items of considerable interest. In spite of attempts at consolidation, it is clear that there was very great fragmentation of holdings, both arable and meadow. And in spite of the still low level of population, there is much evidence of the shortage of pasture and of its careful regulation, suggesting an increase in livestock.

Bolney's inheritance, mainly built up during his lifetime, began to be dissipated immediately after his death and was all gone from the family less than a century afterwards. Is this an illustration of the same instability of landed fortunes among the gentry as was characteristic of the richer peasants at this period?

The book is translated from the Latin and

edited with competence and discretion. Dr Clough's introduction is admirable as far as it goes. One wishes she had been allowed to write at greater length about the agrarian background. A map or maps would have increased the interest and utility of the edition.

R. H. HILTON

MARY LOBEL (ed.), *A Victoria History of the County of Oxford. Vol. VIII, Lewknor and Pyrton Hundreds*. Published for the Institute of Historical Research by Oxford University Press, 1964. xxx + 298 pp. £7 7s.

This volume is the fourth of the topographical volumes prepared by the present editor since 1957, and like its predecessors it is mainly concerned with the flat country between Oxford and the Chiltern hills. The hundreds of Lewknor and Pyrton lie adjacent to one another at the eastern edge of the plain with their southern tips extending over part of the Chilterns. They are just south of the town of Thame and a few miles to the north-west of the Thames at Wallingford. For agricultural historians this is an area of great interest because it was one of the last strongholds of open-field farming in England; no fewer than eleven of the fourteen parishes included in this volume retained their open fields into the nineteenth century, and one of them, Crowell, was not enclosed until 1882, being one of the last in the country.

Thus this detailed study of the region presents an excellent opportunity to examine the complex forces involved in such a long survival of the ancient system, and a chance to assess their relative strength, parish by parish. It is not the policy of the Victoria History to draw general conclusions about the regions it includes in its topographical volumes, but from the abundance of hitherto little-used manuscript sources on which the editors have been able to draw, unusually full sections on agrarian history have been provided, and these are of real value to specialists in agricultural history. They are conveniently aug-

mented by some maps of the field systems before enclosure. Five maps covering complete parishes and two covering parts of parishes are provided. These maps are so helpful that one wishes it had been possible to provide maps for all the parishes. Expense is no doubt a limiting factor, but there is no substitute for a map; and even a post-enclosure map based on the enclosure, or the tithe, award is better than nothing.

In the survival of the open fields many complex influences, some of them purely personal or eccentric, played their part, but three basic factors continually recur—the nature of the soil, the structure of land-ownership, and improvements in the practices of open-field farming. Nearly all the parishes in Lewknor and Pyrton hundreds are what are known as strip parishes and they are common to much of the English limestone and chalk scarpland. They are parishes based on ancient settlement which have assumed a long narrow form in order to take advantage of the prevailing geological conditions. They are frequently several miles long (the ancient parish of Pyrton, which included the separate townships of Clare, Golder, and Standhill in the vale, and Assendon on the Chilterns, was twelve miles long) but seldom more than a mile wide, and sometimes much less. This shape enabled them to take maximum advantage of the differing soils. The villages themselves are usually situated on the narrow belt of fertile upper greensand which lies below the chalk of the Chilterns, near the spring line. The core of the old open fields was on the greensand, and they extended northwards to the edge of the heavy gault clay and southwards on to the lower slopes of the Chilterns. The gault clay was usually too wet and stiff for much arable farming and was used as common meadow or pasture, while the thin, stony soils on the Chilterns provided common grazing or timber in the extensive beechwoods. The hamlets on the Chilterns sometimes had a few open fields but the bulk of their land was enclosed and much of it had been so since it was first cleared for cultivation.

It is clear that the arable land on the green-

sand was very fertile and this must have enabled farmers there to continue to find farming profitable in the open fields when it was ceasing to be so in other parts of the country. This would apply particularly to the numerous small freeholders in the district. For instance, Arthur Young reported in 1809 that the yield of wheat in the common fields of Aston Rowant was five quarters per acre compared with an average of three quarters for south Oxfordshire as a whole (p. 31). At Chinnor in 1699 land in the common fields usually sold for twenty-five to thirty years' purchase and the best land at forty years' purchase (p. 69). In contrast the gault clay land was unsuitable for crops, but grew fair grass, and it is not surprising that the small townships (mostly containing 500–750 acres) which had grown up on it were the first to be enclosed. Some of them such as Clare, Standhill, and Golder (all in Pyrton parish) and Cop Court and Chalford (in Aston Rowant parish) are now only single farms; while the others, Emmington, Adwell, and Wheatfield, are hardly more than hamlets. All these townships were mainly enclosed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries or earlier.

Geographical position was also a factor favourable to the open fields, for most of the villages in Lewknor and Pyrton hundreds were within ten miles of the river port of Henley-on-Thames from which corn, malt, and other agricultural produce could be cheaply transported to the London market. This tended to encourage the continuance of arable cultivation and so to inhibit enclosure for pasture.

The importance of social structure is also clearly brought out, and this is linked to favourable economic conditions; for it is clear that in most cases the continuance of open-field farming was closely associated with a large group of freehold owners farming their own land; and the maintenance of small freehold farms of this type required favourable soil and market conditions. The influence of these small owners was particularly noticeable in Chinnor, which was not enclosed until 1854. In 1841 90 people owned

land in Chinnor, of whom only seven owned more than 50 acres. The majority of the freeholders (45) owned only cottages, orchards, or gardens, but there were 38 farmers owning under 25 acres. These freeholds were of several centuries' standing, most of them having originated when the manor was split up and sold in 1591. Freeholders with small holdings were also numerous in other parishes, and especially in Watlington, Lewknor, and Kingston Blount (a township of Aston Rowant parish). They usually had to be bought out before enclosure could occur. For instance, in Chinnor Samuel Turner, a Londoner who inherited an estate in the parish in 1830, and who never resided there, bought out 21 smallholders between 1830 and 1854, before he could obtain sufficient agreement for enclosure—which apparently interested him solely as a speculation in land values (p. 70). Again at Kingston Blount, where enclosure came slightly earlier (in the 1830's) it "was evidently the number of small landowners at Kingston Blount that delayed inclosure of the common fields of Aston and Kingston. It finally came in 1832-5, after the holdings ranging from $\frac{1}{4}$ -acre to 58 acres of some 23 farmers had been bought up" (p. 31). The same story could be repeated elsewhere in the region.

However, the question remains: did open-field farming survive in this area because it was a backwater inhabited by a multitude of conservative peasants—Arthur Young's "goths and vandals"—who were too stupid and narrow-minded to see the advantages of enclosure, or had some improvements taken place in open-field farming which made it tolerably convenient and profitable? No doubt there is some truth in both views. Inertia and dislike of change are usually strong forces, but there is enough evidence of improvements—necessarily scattered about in leases, court rolls, and accounts—to suggest that some of the more serious disadvantages commonly associated with open-field farming had been overcome. For instance, at Crowell in 1809 Arthur Young found that there was an agreement to sow about a third

of the land with clover and vetches. This was presumably on the fallow field as at South Weston, where a similar agreement had been made in 1763, to try an experiment of growing turnips, vetches, and clover on the fallow field to increase its fertility. Similar agreements probably existed in other parishes as well.

The variable use of arable strips by sowing them to grass as temporary leys had also been in existence for many years, as for instance in Aston Rowant, where as early as 1618 Combe furlong was described as consisting of 5 acres of arable land and 9 acres of pasture. The enclosure of part of a parish and its conversion to pasture could also help to strengthen the open fields by relieving the shortage of grassland. This was especially true of old enclosures which were 'Lammas land' (i.e. on which common grazing rights still existed at certain times of the year). Such enclosures were not uncommon.

The consolidation of strips into compact blocks of about twenty acres had occurred at Shirburn by 1730 (p. 191), no doubt accompanied by other minor improvements. It is not possible to give further examples here, but there is enough evidence to indicate that open-field farming was considerably modified during the eighteenth century, if not even earlier, and that this was an important influence in its survival.

Of course, the survival of the open fields is not the only subject of interest in the agricultural history of this area. There is much interesting material relating to earlier and later periods, and the editors are to be congratulated for giving the subject such detailed treatment. The volume is handsomely produced and contains excellent illustrations, including twenty-six photographs and thirteen reproductions of old prints and drawings.

M. A. HAVINDEN

H. MUNZ, *The Australian Wool Industry*. Angus and Robertson, 1964. 2nd edn. 237 pp. 50s. (Australian).

This book, first published in 1950, has been revised and new chapters added to bring it

up to date. It has a general approach aimed at the practical sheep man. Although there are several historical chapters of an introductory nature concerning the introduction of Merino sheep into Australia, and their subsequent evolution, the main appeal of the book to the agricultural historian will lie in its summary of the Australian wool-growing industry.

All aspects from geography and climate through structure of the industry and sheep types to life and work on a sheep station, and the classing and marketing of wool are dealt with. Chapters concerning research on sheep and on the structure of the wool fibre give useful and up-to-date summaries, but that concerning the growth of wool within the skin is weak, and readers needing to quote such details should seek more authoritative information elsewhere. There is a useful 13-page glossary of wool and textile terms, and an up-to-date bibliography.

M. L. RYDER

REX C. RUSSELL, *The Enclosures of East Halton, 1801-1804 and North Kelsey, 1813-1840*. Rex Russell, 11 Priestgate, Barton-on-Humber, Lincs., 1964. 78 pp. + 4 maps. 4s.; REX C. RUSSELL, *The Enclosures of Bottesford and Yaddethorpe, 1794-7, Mesingham, 1798-1804, and Ashby, 1801-1809*. Journal of the Scunthorpe Museum Society, 1, 1964. 40 pp. 5s.; V. H. T. SKIPP assisted by R. P. HASTINGS, *Discovering Bickenhill*. Department of Extra-Mural Studies, Birmingham University, 1963. 96 pp. 6s.

Adult-education tutors and their classes have produced some excellent local studies in the past few years, and have been showing considerable ingenuity in getting them published. The three books under review are the next in an honourable line, all well illustrated with maps (those furnished by Rex Russell are especially large and beautiful specimens of the mapmaker's art) and all moderately priced.

Mr Rex Russell, who has already completed some admirable studies of Parliamen-

tary enclosures in north Lincolnshire, here describes the course of five more. His maps, analyses of proprietors, their allotments, and the cost of enclosure, his use of enclosure commissioners' minute books and newspapers supply all the information that anyone could wish for. And for anyone seeking fruitful ideas for a novel, there are many embedded in the fantastic story of the North Kelsey enclosure. The commissioners set to work with alacrity as soon as the Act was passed in 1813. By 1817 things were slowing down noticeably and between 1822 and 1824 the commissioners were meeting only once a year. It was not until 1840 that the award was finally executed, and by that time 36 out of 61 proprietors were dead.

The explanation for the long delays lies, in Mr Russell's view, in the eagerness of the commissioners to take on every enclosure appointment that came their way; they were too lucrative to miss. One of the commissioners for North Kelsey, John Burcham, accepted at least twenty more appointments between 1813 and 1840 besides serving as steward to Lord Yarborough. He left a fortune of £600,000, and although it is not suggested that all this came from the luckless proprietors of Lincolnshire parishes, the documents show that he was a hard man who made sure of getting his own accounts paid while poorer men suffered. Contractors digging the new ditches and laying the new roads waited eight years and more for their bills to be settled, while one proprietor who had land awarded to him waited indefinitely for some means of access to it. The financial cost of the enclosure was only one aspect of the hardship and frustration which it occasioned.

Discovering Bickenhill is the outcome of team-work by adult-education students on the local history of a large parish in Warwickshire, seven miles from Birmingham. Geological information, manorial boundaries, and the present-day map are cleverly exploited for their information on the early history of settlement; deeds and manorial documents are used to trace the changes in field layout, land use, and landownership; parish docu-

ments shed light on population size and problems of local government up to the mid-nineteenth century. To the present reviewer the most impressive part of the story is that in which the complex field pattern at Church Bickenhill in the period 1290 to 1350 is constructed from medieval deeds and then compared with a survey of 1677 when a regular three-field system had emerged. It is a convincing example of the way in which fields were rationalized and tidied up into a system, contrary to the prevailing view which maintains that the system was in existence from the outset and that by hook or by crook we must fit the muddled medieval pattern of fields into it. Others may well find other gems in this account, for it touches on many facets of social and economic history. And most good local studies, such as this, lead to the modification of more than one old-established generalization.

JOAN THIRSK

DAVID SPRING, *The English Landed Estate in the Nineteenth Century: its Administration*.

Johns Hopkins Press: Oxford University Press, 1963. vi+216 pp. 40s.

David Spring's book appears as a timely contribution to the present discussion of the English landed estate and, in particular, to the controversy centring round the rôle of the nineteenth-century landlord. Indeed, in many ways the most interesting part of an interesting volume is found in the few pages of conclusion in which these matters are specifically considered. Here the author discusses only too briefly the advantages and disadvantages of the English landlord-tenant system and the capacity of landowners as estate managers. He shows that his sympathies lie with those who believe that agricultural progress was not unduly hampered by the legal restrictions imposed on settled land, or by the absence of leases, which he states was due more to economic causes than to a concern with game or votes. Professor Spring is thus in clear agreement with those other scholars who have taken the trouble to thumb tediously through the estate archives, and rejects the

argument of those who have not subjected themselves to this sobering experience. In short, he believes with Dr Thompson that the melodramatic view of nineteenth-century landlords adopted by Mr McGregor (the adjective is Professor Spring's) ignores the cold realities of agrarian history.

Professor Spring's evidence also tends to reinforce Dr Thompson's argument that, so far from neglecting agriculture, much of the heavy estate investment of landlords of the middle nineteenth-century was uneconomic. Their capital laid out in drainage, farm buildings, and cottages frequently produced a return of a mere 2½ per cent (as on the Duke of Bedford's estates), and to finance this investment landlords were in fact often borrowing at 4½ per cent over terms of twenty-five years or more—terms whose length took many of them beyond the 1879 limit of rising rentals and into the slough of the great depression. Why did landlords choose to invest in so uneconomical a manner, or, as Dr Thompson would put it, why did they subsidize farming at so great a cost to themselves? Professor Spring sees the answer in the imperatives of the system of administration of great estates, particularly in the control exercised by agents, enthusiastic for improved productivity, and fascinated by the techniques of the new scientific agriculture. In addition, many large owners of the golden age had buoyant incomes from mines or urban ground rents, and could afford to look with a degree of complacency on a high and unprofitable level of farm investment. And, of course, the undertaking of this kind of investment was a fulfilment of the traditional rôle of the landlord: in this way he asserted his leadership in agricultural affairs, and at no small cost to himself met the new standards of fixed capital required for the successful 'high' farming of his tenants.

Professor Spring believes that by the mid-nineteenth century the English aristocrat had undergone some transformation in character. On the defensive in the political sphere, he now extended and intensified his activities in agricultural and administrative affairs, and in consequence he often adopted a more busi-

nesslike and scientific attitude towards the running of his estate. Such a landlord found an appropriate chief executive in the barrister-auditor, who controlled the local land agents and undertook the detailed administration of the property. With considerable reliance on the history of the Bedford estates under the seventh Duke and his auditor and chief agent Christopher Haedy, but with a wealth also of other contemporary illustrations, Professor Spring examines in detail the efficiency, drive, technical knowledge, and the single-minded loyalty to the well-being of the estate which the best administrators showed. He has an intriguing chapter on the rôle of lawyers in estate management, and a series of case studies, from which one concludes that the Scots were strongly represented among the best agents. Some of these were men of considerable distinction. James Loch, for example, "was a Member of Parliament and a cultivated man. He was the friend of Huskisson, Peel, and Brougham. He was a director of the English Historical Society, and sprinkled his letters to Lord Francis with erudite bits of etymological lore. In cultivation he was his employer's equal; in business, his master and tutor. Such men demonstrated the power of professional excellence, and in time would cast doubt by their mere existence on the purported excellences of a hereditary aristocracy."

As in the eighteenth century, the competent estate agent was important in stimulating improved farming methods. Reluctantly respecting the traditional regard for old tenants of the family and the conventional security of tenure, he weeded out the inefficient. Sometimes he was obliged to concern himself with electoral matters, and not infrequently with the oversight of mines, quarries, and canals—and in one case, at least, an agent was prepared to do battle against striking miners, sending for troops and taking up station in the engine house in the hope that the miners might rashly attack, when "several must be killed which will more rapidly put an end to the matter."

For all these responsibilities the remunera-

tion was respectable, if not opulent: it generally amounted to from 3 to 5 per cent of the gross rental, or a sum of from £500 to £1,000 a year, with a house and certain other allowances. The social origins of the agents were various, but in the main their background was one of practical acquaintance with the expertise required for estate administration—they were very often farmers, builders, surveyors, or mining engineers, and frequently the sons of land agents themselves. Their formal training was usually slight, although some went as pupils to established land agents. Originating and remaining firmly within the middle classes, they knew their place and generally kept it: it was an unusually bold agent who would presume to upbraid his employer for extravagance harmful to the estate—although Lord Francis Egerton was once informed that his agent would let him know "when you may again increase your outlay."

A valuable chapter considers the state-provided drainage loans, the legislative measures designed to relax the financial rigidities of settled estates, and the work of the land-drainage companies and the Enclosure Commissioners in helping landlords to improve their estates. But it is in this aspect of the study that the reader feels especially the limitations imposed by Professor Spring's choice of a restricted period and a restricted treatment. Thus, while we have a useful discussion of the work of the enclosure commissioners we have nothing on tithe commutation or the tithe commissioners, and while the relatively unimportant legislation of the mid-nineteenth century is examined in some detail, the study of the changes in land law runs out with a brief statement on the Settled Land Act of 1882. One cannot but think that what the author has chosen to give us, interesting and useful as it is, should have constituted the central section of a much longer book. As it is, we are presented with only the middle act of a three-act drama, and are left wondering what happened before and what came after. How did estate administration develop before the 1830's—the French wars and the post-war depression period would be worth an ex-

tended examination—and what was the impact on estate administration of the great price fall of the last quarter of the century?

And even if it is accepted that the middle forty years of the century have a certain unity as the heyday and final flowering of the great landed estate, and thereby merit separate treatment, it must be said that this treatment still omits much of importance. For example, Professor Spring merely touches on the relationships between the great owners and the rising industrial and commercial classes, whose interests in the transport changes, urban expansion, and the growth of the coal and iron industries offered both challenge and opportunity to estate administrators; little reference is made also to the connected topic of the growing incomes from urban land; more might have been expected on relations between tenant farmers and estate administration—a matter of some importance in view of Mr McGregor's criticisms; and lastly, as Professor Spring states, he has not extended his study to the growth of land agency as a profession and the rise of London firms of agents.

While we must therefore be grateful for this interesting and stimulating study, we must also regret that it was not conceived on a broader and more valuable scale.

G. E. MINGAY

J. OXLEY PARKER, *The Oxley Parker Papers from the Letters and Diaries of an Essex Family of Land Agents in the Nineteenth Century*. Benham & Co., Colchester, 1964. ix+300 pp., illus. 21s.

This is the history of an Essex family from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century. It was originally prepared for family consumption, but through the good offices of Mr F. G. Emmison, county archivist of Essex, the author was persuaded to put it at the disposal of a wider audience. The family was at least well-to-do, even rich, and besides being landowners and farmers acted as land-agents for several owners, and arbitrated in disputes about land from about 1800 to 1880.

The constant fluctuations and crises in

farming that repeatedly happened in the nineteenth century are already well known to economic and agricultural historians. This volume emphasizes their incidence in a particular area of the country, where the family played a large part in trying to ameliorate the conditions for a good many people, and did their best to overcome the successive difficulties that followed in such rapid sequence. Both father and son had an intimate knowledge of the area they served—they lived there all their lives—and their experiences are well worth following, if only because they underline the troubles of farming in their time, troubles that we ought to hope will never recur. It should certainly be read by Essex historians, and indeed those of wider interests. It is one of those useful family records that illuminate the duller chronicles of government inquiries and private polemic writing. A disconcerting feature of the book is the author's habit of referring to his ancestors by their initials; while these must be well known in the family, the outside reader is occasionally baffled.

G. E. FUSSELL

MANCUR OLSON, JR. *The Economics of the Wartime Shortage: A History of British Food Supplies in the Napoleonic War and in World Wars I and II*. Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, 1963. viii + 152 pp. \$4.50.

It was a happy idea of Mr Olson to examine the British food situation during the struggle against Napoleon and in the wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45. As Great Britain was the only power continuously at war for the complete periods covered by these events, the relevant statistics (such as they are) for the British economy are naturally the most extensive available. As an economist Mr Olson is primarily concerned to discover similarities in the British experiences and seeks in a rather naïve and unsatisfactory introduction to apply economic theory to the analysis of the three situations. As an economic historian the present reviewer is inclined to keep in mind the dissimilarities and the uniqueness of each

set of historical events. Even where the general situation appears superficially very similar, e.g. in 1914-18 and 1939-45, there were extraordinary differences in the way the food problem was handled. An example is the reluctance to introduce food rationing until the First World War was nearly over, in contrast with its early application during the Second World War. Confidence in the power of economic analysis to enlighten the historian is not likely to be strengthened by statements such as "Agriculture is, needless to say, confined to rural areas, areas which for the most part support no other industry" (p. 20). To anyone familiar with the extent of the domestic system of industry in the countryside during the early nineteenth century, and the proliferation of industries into rural areas in the early twentieth century, this generalization appears to bear little relation to the facts of British economic life.

When Mr Olson gets away from his introduction he has many interesting and valuable things to say, in particular about the food situation during the First World War, which is not well remembered and about which little seems to have been written recently. It will be most useful for students of economic history at all levels to have so many references to the extensive literature on the subject assembled and subjected to a preliminary analysis by someone who is versed in the strategic as well as the historical and economic implications of the subject. In particular British readers will be made aware of François Crouzet's monumental *L'Economie Britannique et le Blocus Continental, 1806-1813* (2 vols.), Paris, 1958, which was unaccountably ignored in the appropriate volume of the *Oxford History of England*.

W. H. CHALONER

MICHEL DEVÈZE, *La Vie de la Forêt Française au XVI^e Siècle*. Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Sixième Section, Centre de Recherches Historiques, Paris, 1961. 2 vols. 326 pp., 474 pp.

The French have shown great interest in the history of their forests and can produce as

impressive a bibliography on the subject as the Germans, yet no general history has been published since Alfred Maury's *Histoire des Forêts de la Gaule et de l'Ancienne France* (1867). In the meantime much additional documentary evidence has come to light. Michel Devèze, therefore, builds this new study of the French forests in the sixteenth century upon the solid foundation laid by others (his bibliography at the beginning of Volume I is of great value), and adds much new material culled from hitherto unused administrative and legal records. It is an instructive and interesting story in many ways, not least because the crisis in the forests overtook the French at least fifty years before it afflicted the English forests, and judging by some remarkable similarities in their policies, the English Crown took some lessons from the French.

The story is not mainly one of parallels, however, but of significant differences. Royal forest law did not cut across the rights of owners of the soil as it did in England. The French king's rights were restricted to his own estates, and extensive though his forests were, they were no greater in many districts than those belonging to lay lords, ecclesiastics, and villages. However, as the century wore on, the Crown began to intervene more and more in the management of private forests on the ground that their preservation, particularly as sources of timber, was a matter of public interest. The only forests which escaped attention were the communal forests belonging to villages, but these did not as yet invite commercial exploitation. They lay for the most part in the thinly settled and poor-soiled mountainous areas of the south and east, in the Pyrenees and the Alps, and in any case were fairly carefully administered by the communities owning them. They remained a piece of communal property run on medieval lines throughout the period.

The problems of royal and private forests all sprang from the same cause. The increasing population was making heavier demands on all forest resources, demanding more pasture for an increasing number of animals,

more arable for cultivation, more fuel for more fires, fuel for expanding industrial uses, and fuel for the towns. The old forest laws were totally inadequate: they did not effectively control the use of wood for commercial purposes or restrict the growth of workshops and forges; they paid no heed to rising numbers, but conceded common rights to all comers; they almost encouraged offenders by their lenient fines.

Owners began to fret at the restraints imposed by commoners upon the commercial development of their forests. But it was the Crown which took the first steps towards breaking this stranglehold, initiating reforms which lesser landowners then copied. Francis I ordered a survey of his forests and instituted a court of judges, sitting at the *Tables de Marbre* to administer speedy justice. Other landowners recognized in these measures a solution to their problems and availed themselves of the services of royal surveyors, forest advisers, and courts to rescue their forests from ruin.

Reforms were introduced with remarkably little opposition from the commoners. They accepted various curtailments of their rights: often they were given free use of one-third of the forest while the remaining two-thirds became the exclusive preserve of the owner; in other cases they accepted larger or smaller allotments according to their estimated needs. Occupants of houses built less than forty years before forfeited their common rights; industrial workers had to buy the wood they needed for their furnaces and forges. The crisis of the forests was averted to the satisfaction of the owners and at the expense of the commoners.

Much of this study is based upon administrative documents, and so is especially concerned with administrative problems. There is still room for another study which uses local records to uncover something more about the agricultural communities of the forest. For while the structure of forest industries emerges fairly clearly—more clearly from French documents than from English ones—the details of the agriculture elude the

author of this book. He describes the commoners' rights to pasture and gives examples of the horse-rearing, cattle-keeping, and pig-fattening, which were staple activities in most forests, but he views the crisis of the sixteenth century from the standpoint of the proprietors and the industrial and urban users of timber, and does not have much to say about the agricultural problems which must undoubtedly have beset the forest inhabitants when their common rights were drastically reduced. In England the absence of forest reforms encouraged a swarm of immigrants to move into the forests, which in the seventeenth century acquired a reputation for being the refuge of a wild and ungovernable people and the home of religious dissent. In France it is difficult to believe that economic conditions after the reforms attracted outsiders into the forests, yet they still became the centres of opposition to established authority, inhabited by supporters of the *ancien régime* and enemies of the revolution. In short, a host of important questions are bound up with the effect of forest reforms in the sixteenth century upon the subsequent agricultural and social development of the forest communities of France.

JOAN THIRSK

WILHELM ABEL, *Geschichte der deutschen Landwirtschaft vom frühen Mittelalter bis zum 19. Jahrhundert*. 1962. 336 pp. DM. 43.80; FRIEDRICH LÜTGE, *Geschichte der deutschen Agrarverfassung vom frühen Mittelalter bis zum 19. Jahrhundert*. 1963. 270 pp. DM. 37.80; HEINZ HAUSHOFER, *Die deutsche Landwirtschaft im technischen Zeitalter*. 1963. 290 pp. DM. 39.80. Vols. II, III, & V of *Deutsche Agrargeschichte*, ed. Prof. Dr Günther Franz. Verlag Eugen Ulmer, Stuttgart.

These three volumes are the first to appear in a series of five which will cover the agrarian history of Germany from prehistoric times to the present day. This large theme is being skilfully compressed into some relatively slim volumes, each the work of one hand. Professor Wilhelm Abel writes on the agrarian

economy from the early Middle Ages up to the nineteenth century, seeking to relate the economic fortunes of landlords and farmers to changing population levels and changing techniques. Professor Lütge concentrates on the structure of society during the same period, while Dr Haushofer describes the course of the agricultural revolution from 1815 to the present day. Two volumes are yet to come: Professor Jankuhn will deal with prehistoric and early settlement history; Professor Franz is preparing a volume on the peasantry as a class. The complete series affords an interesting comparison with the *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, now in preparation.

English readers will know Professor Abel already through his work on the desertion of villages in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages. The same style and approach is evident here: in a closely woven narrative he examines and, where possible, co-ordinates every aspect of technical and social development, offering at the same time a framework of generalizations that will pull the many tangled threads of the story into order. He sees the beginnings of village life in the settlements of two or three families with ring-fence farms, cultivating their land on an extensive rotation of corn and grass. As numbers increased—and he postulates something of a population explosion during or immediately after the seventh century—these small groups of farms grew into nucleated villages and land was more intensively cultivated. All improvements thereafter until the fourteenth century, and with some interruptions virtually until the eighteenth, were directed towards increasing the productivity of the arable. They included the introduction of the three-course rotation, the development of the common-field system, and the use of many new arable crops. Simultaneously, the forest and grassland diminished and stock-keeping declined. Animals were considered a necessary nuisance only, providing manure, but not to be fed on crops that might feed men. Sheep were fed on stubble; swine were still kept in the remaining forests; but cattle withdrew to the

areas which lent themselves naturally to cattle-keeping, namely, the marshlands and the mountains. Not until the plagues of the fourteenth century, when the proportion of men to cattle was temporarily changed, did the peasant begin to enjoy beef.

The losses of population through plague were not made good until about 1560 when pressure on the land encouraged a fresh wave of colonization and increasing agricultural specialization. East Germany and Poland concentrated on corn production, west and central Germany on stock-keeping, and a lively traffic in cattle, which had begun on a small scale in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, brought stores and oxen by the thousand from parts of Poland, Russia, and Hungary to the great marts of Posen, Frankfurt an der Oder, and Büttstadt, Vienna, Breslau, and Brieg. Professor Abel draws attention to new methods employed at this time to intensify production, but concludes that more was done to meet the needs of the growing population by enlarging the area under cultivation than by economies in the use of land. A spate of farming manuals poured from the printing presses, but, as before, arable farming received the lion's share of attention and stock was comparatively neglected.

The history of agriculture during the Thirty Years' War is evidently no better documented than that during the English Civil War and Professor Abel has little to say of this period. But the losses of population were so large that the peace was followed by a period of extraordinary enthusiasm for innovation and improvement, unparalleled in Europe, which lasted from 1670 to 1750, and which affords abundant written evidence for the first time on the types of grain varieties in use, techniques of farming, and breeds of stock.

One of the most striking features of Professor Abel's account is his pessimistic judgement on the standard of farming before the nineteenth century. Observing the close parallels between German and English agricultural development up to the end of the sixteenth century, the English reader may

well wonder whether the picture is not unduly gloomy. Clearly, the majority of the rural population in Germany, as in England, consisted of subsistence farmers. But the rôle of the improving farmer should not be underrated. His routine may be impossible to guess at, but his influence can be detected in the amount of specialization on farms in the Middle Ages, the scale of activity at the markets, and in isolated scraps of information about technical innovations. Professor Abel himself writes of specialized milk and butter production in the mountains and cattle-fattening in the marshes at the end of the Middle Ages. Friesian cattle were sold as such on German markets. A Cologne market ordinance of 1492 speaks of the sale of Hungarian, Polish, Danish, and Russian cattle. Fruit-, vine-, and hop-growing are said to have expanded greatly in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, despite the fact that labour was in short supply. From all this specialized activity, we must infer the existence of sizeable markets or other channels for the exchange of agricultural produce, and hence plenty of incentives to further improvement. Did no one respond? Surely, when we find that Dutch bulls and Friesian cows were being imported into Germany in the 1580's, and that the watering of meadows was being practised in the seventeenth century, we may suspect the existence of some improving farmers, even some who did not regard stock as a tiresome necessity. In short, Professor Abel's generalizations are stimulating but not always convincing.

Professor Lütge's volume on the structure of rural society is particularly valuable for its account of regional differentiation, especially in the later pages where the evidence is more abundant. Some regions of Germany became and have remained the strongholds of a prosperous peasantry, others of a poor peasantry dependent on handicrafts for supplementary employment, yet others of large landlord farmers. There is much to be learned here about the relative influence of different institutions upon each kind of society.

On the thorny problem of the origins of

society, Lütge offers an opinion that steers a middle course between the two extreme views now current in Germany. Early society, he argues, consisted of free men as well as lords and their underlings, but as lords took possession of large tracts of territory and population increased, the descendants of freemen in search of land were forced to rent it from a lord on his terms. The class of free tenants did not expand until the post-Carolingian period when a fresh wave of colonization began, and settlers had to be attracted with freer tenures.

Uncertainties about the unfree peasant's right to pass on his land to his descendants were brought to an end by the hardening of custom, and in some areas this led to much partitioning of holdings. Eventually, many tiny holdings and an impoverished peasantry emerged, but at first, Lütge argues, partible inheritance was economically advantageous for it led to more intensive cultivation of the land. It is no coincidence, he writes, that the partitioning of holdings increased in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as towns expanded. But perhaps Lütge has missed the more important social causes for the prevalence of the custom at this time. Land was in short supply and heirs were driven to stand upon their rights to inherit family property. We find the custom in vogue in parts of England in the sixteenth century, and for the same reason. On the other hand, when land was plentiful, young men did not set such store by their inheritance, and the custom seems to have fallen into abeyance. In Bavaria and in north-west Germany where peasants insisted on the indivisibility of holdings throughout the period of land shortage, the social effects were different again, and a wide gulf developed between the landed peasant and the landless labourers.

The colonization of the east introduced a new factor for landless men from other parts of Germany moved eastwards and in various ways helped to alleviate the conditions of the rest. But from the sixteenth century the history of landlordism in east and west diverged: in the west and south the great farms shrank

in size or broke up altogether; in the east the lords of large estates expanded their own farm enterprises and laid increasingly heavy labour services on their tenants. The balance of power was not much altered until the mid-eighteenth century when princes, politicians, and men of letters developed a policy towards the land and attempted to arrest the decline of the peasant class. Thus the "liberation of the peasantry" took place, without any prodding from the victims themselves. It is a strange story.

Dr Haushofer's account of the agricultural revolution between 1815 and the present day is the work of a historian rather than an economist, and a historian, moreover, who favours the now unfashionable biographical approach. But the result is a most refreshing and readable book. The lives of the great men of the agricultural revolution like Albrecht Thaer, Justus von Liebig, and Johann Mendel are sympathetically described and related to those of their contemporaries in the world of literature and politics. These studies of a few outstanding individuals together with some incisive comments from contemporary newspapers and treatises enable the author in a few pages to re-create the climate of opinion of each generation.

It is instructive to observe the influence of England on German agriculture. It was of paramount importance until 1846, when the

French became the model. One of Germany's most influential agricultural textbooks was a comparative study of English and German agriculture by Thaer, for which he received a congratulatory letter from the Board of Agriculture; English breeds of cattle, horses, and pigs were introduced into Germany, and, of course, tile drains and agricultural, particularly harvesting, machinery; Max Eyth spent many years with the agricultural engineering firm of John Fowler of Leeds, and returned home to form a German association modelled on the Royal Agricultural Society. Where German agriculturalists scored over the English was in appreciating at an early stage the value of schools, rural institutes, and universities for promoting and disseminating knowledge. Dr Haushofer's biographies reveal the influence of the Swiss pedagogues and the German doctors of medicine who turned to the study of plant life. Through them agricultural science quickly became a subject which ranked high among academic disciplines.

In one review it is difficult to do justice to three substantial volumes of German agricultural history. But perhaps enough has been said to show their interest for the English reader, and to underline how much they deserve to be translated into English and so to reach a wider public.

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