

Book Reviews

GEOFFREY DIMBLEBY, *Plants and Archaeology*.

John Baker, London, 1967. 188 pp. 50s. Professor Dimbleby states as his aim the provision of a book which will serve "as an introduction for both the botanist and the archaeologist into the possibilities and potentialities of joint investigation." To this end he has subdivided the text into three major sections, the first dealing with man's use of plants, the second with the nature of the evidence, and the third with its interpretation. Whilst the order might be open to criticism from some points of view the intention is clearly admirable. The first section attempts brief but comprehensive coverage. In so doing it leans towards the superficial where much is known, and to the speculative and anecdotal where little is known. The author justifies this in his preface as being "in the interest of a more general balance." Balance, that is, as between the many and varied possible uses of plants by man. Despite the variety of both the evidence and its treatment in this section, the text remains fluent, readable, and broadly informative, a serviceable carpet sewn together from oddly assorted remnants.

The second section deals first, with general questions of preservation, then with wood remains, pollen and spores, and finally with other miscellaneous plant materials such as seeds and phytoliths. Here the treatment achieves a pleasant compromise between system and narrative, with a strong bias towards practical hints and cautionary tales. The majority of the photographic plates refer to this part of the text and they are, almost without exception, extremely good.

The chapters in the final section are "The man-made landscape," "The damaged soil," and "Plants and chronology." Here again the order seems questionable and this section as a whole is perhaps the least satisfactory. Our specialisms both breed and feed on our biases and preoccupations. Some of Professor Dimbleby's are here revealed, inevitably shorn of the rigorous discussion and documentation which they require. Under the

same circumstances few if any of us could avoid doing our convictions a comparable disservice. The main aim—to encourage a more ecological frame of mind in the prehistorian—still emerges, despite the doubts and disagreements of a fellow palaeoecologist. Throughout the book Professor Dimbleby's aims are characteristically generous and archaeologists in particular will have further cause to be grateful for his interest and enthusiasm.

FRANK OLDFIELD

H. C. DARBY and R. WELLDON FINN, *The Domesday Geography of South-West England*. Cambridge University Press, 1967. xiv+470 pp., illus. £6 6s.

In this fifth volume, covering Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall, Professor Darby and his team complete their circuit of the Domesday shires. From the outset of their great undertaking it has been understood that a sixth and final volume will round off the work, but we now learn that two more will be forthcoming. It is much to be hoped that one of them will fulfil the promise implicit in the quotation from Maitland which has appeared after the title-page of every volume so far without noticeably influencing the contents: namely, that "A century hence . . . the substance of Domesday Book will have been rearranged. Those villages and hundreds which the Norman clerks tore into shreds will have been reconstituted and pictured in maps." The substance has indeed been pictured in maps, but for some reason which has not yet been explained it has been rearranged so as to conform with the boundaries of the 1960's, which may be out of date by 1970, and we are still without good maps of the hundreds and shires as the Conqueror's agents saw them. Lacking these, we have no means of checking the identifications of the place-names. (In this connection it may be noted that the lost *Evestia*, p. 144, was in Combe Hay, not Dunkerton.)

A fundamental weakness is that the authors,

wearing self-imposed blinkers, hardly ever look at earlier or later evidence. Thus on p. 8 we read: "There is no indication in the Domesday text that the East Overton and West Overton of today existed as separate villages; the Domesday information about them is entered under only one name (*Ovretone*) . . . In the same way it is impossible to distinguish between the three units of Manningford Abbots, Bohun, and Bruce." Yet the Domesday *Maneforde* belonged to the New Minster at Winchester, and if the name of that monastery were not enough to identify it with Manningford Abbots, it needs no deep research to find that the monastery acquired it under the will of a certain Æthelwold to whom it had been granted by Ethelred II in 987 with a charter giving its bounds.

Again, a Devonshire charter of 958 contains an unmistakable reference to outfield cultivation, and there is plenty of post-Domesday evidence for the practice in south-west England. All of this is ignored in the volume under review, and only on p. 350 do we find a glancing reference to the infield-outfield system.

Professor Hoskins, in his *Provincial England*, worked out a method of locating the unnamed farmsteads on some Domesday manors. He admitted that it was not universally applicable, and the authors, fastening on this admission (pp. 235, 356), make no attempt to apply the method, but content themselves with a monotonous repetition of the fact that "the constituent members of some large manors are not named."

In the Cornish chapter the reference to Oliver's *Monasticon* for the Bodmin manumissions is given as "*passim*" (p. 320 n.); it should be "pp. 431-6." On the next page the writer wonders how the 50 "serfs" at Trematon were employed, seeing that there were only three ploughteams on the demesne—as if there were nothing to do on the land but plough it! There are good grounds for equating the Cornish "acre" with 64 English acres, but this is nowhere stated.

Wrong extensions of contracted Latin are fewer than in some of the earlier volumes, but

there are some obvious cases. The authors habitually refer to their source as "the Domesday Book," though we have it on the authority of Richard fitz Nigel, treasurer of the Exchequer in 1177, that "the English call it Domesday Book."

These criticisms are offered, not in a captious spirit, but as a contribution to a possible list of corrigenda, and a plea for a fuller treatment of some topics, in the concluding volumes of this important work.

H. P. R. FINBERG

M. M. POSTAN (ed.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe. Vol. 1: The Agrarian Life of the Middle Ages*. Cambridge University Press, 1966. xvi+872 pp., illus. 75s.

This important volume, first published in 1941, now reappears in a wholly new edition, except that the chapters by R. Koebner (on The Settlement and Colonization of Europe), A. Dopsch (The Agrarian Institutions of the Germanic Kingdoms), Marc Bloch (The Rise of Dependent Cultivation and Seigneurial Institutions), J. Rutkowski (Poland, Lithuania, and Hungary), and S. Bolin (Scandinavia) are reprinted without modification, since the authors are no longer alive and the value of their contributions is recognized as exceptional. Mr C. E. Stevens, who has revised his chapter on Agriculture and Rural Life in the Later Roman Empire, is apparently prepared to entertain, in passing, the idea of an agrarian revolution effected in England by Anglo-Saxon invaders (p. 111), but the idea receives no support elsewhere in the volume. For us perhaps the most important new chapter is that into which Professor Postan has distilled many years of research by himself and others into the agrarian history of England from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries.

The plan of the series unfortunately precludes the giving of detailed references, but there is a comprehensive bibliography—in which, by the way, it is a little startling to come upon a book by Frances Davenport dated 1824 (p. 823).

H. P. R. FINBERG

HELEN E. BOULTON (ed.), *The Sherwood Forest Book*. Thoroton Society Record Series, XXIII, 1965. viii+214 pp. No price stated.

The Thoroton Society Record Series publication for 1964 is the earliest of a series of surviving Forest Books of Sherwood compiled between the late fourteenth or early fifteenth and the late eighteenth centuries. Like the others, all of which contain much of the same material and are briefly described by the editor in her introduction, it is a compilation of documents drawn up in the course of the administration of this royal forest from the twelfth century onwards and designed to act as a record of forest rights and privileges, a reference book for forest officers and justices or local interested persons. Several documents not specifically concerned with Sherwood and printed elsewhere, such as copies of statutes, have sensibly been omitted; those that remain provide a good, though incomplete, selection of the wide range of forest documents, including, for example, copies of assizes and ordinances of the forest, perambulations of forest bounds, inquisitions into the administration and custody of the forest, and several forest writs. The largest group deal with the two chief instruments of Forest Law in this period, the eyre and the more frequent regard. There are writs for the election of regarders and the holding of the regard; articles of both the regard and the eyre, which provide a very useful summary of the subjects of interest to the royal officials, especially the very full ones which Miss Boulton thinks date from 1263; and partial records of some eyres. The longest single item, even though it is not printed in full, is the record of the Forest Eyre of 1287. Together the documents comprising the Forest Book describe the administration of Sherwood, show Forest Law being put into practice, and reveal some of the problems of enforcement, made more difficult by corrupt officers.

The Book also shows that Sherwood, in spite of its inclusion in the Royal Forest, was of considerable importance in the economy of the region, its resources being exploited by the King and his officers, the local land-

owners, and peasants. The forest provided, first, essential timber, fuel, and pasture. The Abbot of Rufford alone was said to have cut down 383 oaks for building in the three years 1263-6, and the forest pastures fed the horses, cattle, sheep, and pigs of the local residents, as well as the fiercely protected deer. The latter, of course, were useful for meat as well as sport, and were frequently hunted both legally and illegally for both purposes. For example, regular distribution of deer from Sherwood, hunted on the king's orders, is recorded for the reigns of Henry III and Edward I. There is no mention of Robin Hood, but plenty of excitement nevertheless in the presentments for venison offences at the Eyre of 1287, where we read, for example, of the midnight rescue by an armed gang twenty strong of two men imprisoned by the Steward after being found in the forest in possession of bows and arrows, and of how the rectors of Epperstone and Boudon led a gang into the forest in 1277 on a hunting expedition which lasted over a week.

Sherwood was also valuable in a period of growing land hunger as potential arable and the Forest Book refers to assarting for this purpose in the twelfth, thirteenth, and early fourteenth centuries. Assarts, legal and illegal, were presented at regards and eyres, recognized, and rented out, and the Forest Book contains a series of rentals of such assarts. The renting out of assarts in royal forests was increasingly organized in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and there is a good example of this in the record of how, in 1301, as part of a general arrentation of land in the forests north of the Trent, nearly 500 acres in Sherwood were leased for annual cash rents of between 2d. and 8d. per acre. The assarters ranged from the peasants who took an acre or less to the Abbot of Newstead who took 180 acres. Strangely, there is no reference here to the high entry fines found on the occasion of similar arrentations of this period in other royal forests.

So there is plenty here to interest the economic historian, though better maps would have increased the usefulness of this volume. However, it should serve not only as material

for the study of Sherwood Forest, but as a demonstration of the value of the plentiful, but relatively little used, royal forest records to the study of the medieval English economy.

JEAN BIRRELL

K. J. ALLISON, M. W. BERESFORD, J. G. HURST, ET AL, *The Deserted Villages of Oxfordshire; The Deserted Villages of Northamptonshire*. Leicester University Press, Department of English Local History, Occasional Papers, nos 17 and 18, 1965, 1966. 48 pp. maps; 48 pp. maps; 10s. 6d. each.

The Deserted Medieval Village Research Group has subjected these two counties to what it calls a 'reconnaissance', and here are the results in companion studies planned on closely similar lines. Each 'Introductory Essay' sets out the methods of searching for lost villages, the discoveries of where they stood, when and why they ceased to exist. For each county there is an excellent site-by-site Gazetteer, in which all the collected information is summarized in a standard fashion for each place, including, for instance, a set of categories giving the quality of the visible remains. As to sources, most use is made of the chief classes of 'central' documentary evidence; local, county, and manorial material, on the other hand, is not explored to the same extent. It is hoped by the authors that besides making known the findings and conclusions as they stand, these publications will provide a general framework for fresh research by students of the subject who may have access to local sources and particular sites.

After Domesday Book, the most informative sources used here are the Hundred Rolls, the half-dozen taxation returns compiled by the Exchequer between 1316 and 1524, the Hearth Tax returns of 1665, and the 1841 Census. In Northamptonshire, however, the village surveys from the Hundred Rolls of 1279 are not extant, and instead of using these to trace the progress of settlement to a point in time near the peak of medieval population, there has to be a sequence from Domesday to the lay subsidy of 1301, and then to the taxation returns. On the other

hand, two major excavations give Northamptonshire a better archaeological record. Both the long-house at Wythemail and the farm-complex at Muscott were dated to the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and it is suggested (p. 29) that the medieval peasant house had three basic forms: (1) small single- or two-roomed cottages; (2) long-houses "which may have belonged to villeins"; (3) farms where the different buildings formed separate structures, "which may have belonged to the more prosperous peasants and to the emerging yeoman farmers."

Are these differences in source material and archaeological evidence, which we find even in adjoining counties, carried through to the record of deserted village sites in each of them? How similar are they in their respective shares of this phenomenon? Northamptonshire has fewer sites, both in absolute terms (82 : 101) and in terms of intensity (1.3 per 10,000 acres : 2.1). For Oxfordshire this means that nearly one-fifth of the settlements mentioned in the Domesday folios no longer exist; of these, the depopulations which can be firmly dated show a fairly even spread between Periods III (c. 1350-c. 1450) and IV (c. 1450-1700), with 30 and 45 per cent of the total respectively. In Northamptonshire, however, they were more typical of the later Period IV (60 per cent, as opposed to 17 per cent in Period III), the years after c. 1450 being referred to as "the classic period of the enclosing depopulator in Warwickshire, Leicestershire, and Northamptonshire" (this in the Oxfordshire survey, p. 27). In fact, if we include Leicestershire as a third county whose deserted villages have been carefully studied, we have a Midland bloc (Oxon., Northants., Leics.) that includes 250 of the rough total of 2,000 sites in the whole of England.

Northamptonshire also had more depopulations of the strictly 'emparked' type, caused by the making of parkland around great country houses after c. 1700 (11 as opposed to 3 in Oxfordshire). With regard to the chronological subdivisions followed in each county, however, one is tempted to ask if it would

not be more realistic to subdivide Period IV (c. 1450–c. 1700) into two parts, with c. 1520 as the point of division? After all, it is stated (p. 14) that depopulating enclosure in Northamptonshire, as in neighbouring counties, did not continue to any great extent after 1518.

In both studies there are distribution maps prepared by Dr R. E. Glasscock, one showing the location of sites in relation to relief and the drainage pattern, and the other including data on the 'Period of Desertion', whether definite or uncertain. It is irritating in the Oxfordshire survey to find the distribution of different densities of depopulation considered (pp. 22–4) in terms of the county's hundreds, which are not marked on the maps. In both counties there is a very uneven, localized pattern of sites.

Northamptonshire has concentrations of sites in relatively few clusters, separated by noticeable gaps in the fenland, in the Forests, and even over much of the Northamptonshire Heights. These puzzling features are outlined very briefly (pp. 20–2), and one would welcome a more complete discussion than that given on p. 5 of what may be termed the various 'natural land types' found within the county. John Morton did just that in his *Natural History of Northamptonshire*, published in 1712. He delineated and described in turn the rural economy of the Fen, Heath, Woodland, and Fielden tracts as he knew them c. 1700, paying particular attention to their soil characteristics. For example, "the Heathy part has indeed a soil very different from the rest," he wrote, "and therefore I make it one distinct branch of the natural division of the county." Morton also discussed enclosures and depopulation, at a point in time between the early and the Georgian phases: "of our Fielden a considerable part is now enclosed, and converted into pasture." He went so far as to list those lordships in "one of the largest, and I think the richest knot of pastures", which began "in that angle where the three counties of Leicester, Warwick, and Northampton meet." His remarks might be linked with any study of the distribution patterns.

In Oxfordshire, too, the maps show highly localized densities of desertions. The most noticeable cluster is on the expanse of Gault and Kimmeridge Clays between the lower Thames and the Chilterns, of which ten definite and seven uncertain datings point to Period IV. By contrast, in another large group packed into the angle of country between the lower Windrush and the Thames, all the sites fall into the uncertain chronological class. Some of them are touched on by J. A. Giles in his *History of the parish and town of Bampton*, published in 1848. He adds something to the bald figures of the 1841 Census when he described Chimney, which "consists of two farms only" (as at present); it formerly had a manor-house and chapel, "but it is now some years since they have been pulled down" (p. 87). The place was unapproachable in winter "owing to the inundation from the river", i.e. the Thames; visitors had to rely on a large horse kept by one of the Chimney farmers. Giles was in no doubt that Shifford "was once a more important place than it is now, and perhaps contained several houses and streets" (p. 86). It had its farmhouse and four or five cottages; a "very ancient" church had fallen down in 1772. Here too the river "for many weeks in every year overflows its banks and deluges a large quantity of land", much of it still in common field in 1848.

So small were some of the villages and hamlets described by Giles that he preferred to regard them as "localities rather than places where several families reside" (p. 18). Haddon, again, consisted of only one farmhouse and a few cottages; Rushey (not listed in the Oxfordshire survey), was a hamlet of Bampton but had just one house by the Thames, where a single lock-keeping family lived. What are the possible causes for the incidence of such high densities as this? In contradiction of one hypothesis advanced (*Oxfordshire*, p. 24), it is clear from Giles's account of the common fields as they survived in what he called "the primaeval villages of Aston and Cote" that there was no shortage of common meadow for hay or common pasture for feeding horses, cows, and sheep.

Each farmer with a thirty-acre yardland would have four or five acres of meadow, but it is true that the common meadow (with its thirteen "layings-out", each of them divided into four "sets"), gave rise in its management to what Giles called "a more perplexing system" than those of the arable and pasture. Clearly it is only too easy to fulfil one of the authors' purposes, viz. the prompting of study of the deserted village question in specific localities within the counties.

F. V. EMERY

PETER and MARGARET SPUFFORD, *Eccleshall. The Story of a Staffordshire Market Town and its Dependant Villages*. Department of Extra Mural Studies, Keele University, 1964. 68 pp. 4s. 6d.

This is a valuable study of a characteristic Staffordshire parish of very large acreage, which before Domesday already supported a central village and a considerable number of hamlets. In 1086 some of these possessed a larger population than in the early sixteenth century. Although Eccleshall was nominally one manor, new manors were subinfeudated in the Middle Ages in the surrounding hamlets, and each developed its own town field or fields. Two surveys of 1298 and 1320 suggest that assarting had reached a peak by the first date and virtually ceased by the second. One of a generous number of maps enables the reader to see how the inhabitants of different hamlets attacked the woodland from different sides and gradually cleared it. How, one wonders, did they settle the problem of boundaries? Some assarts were incorporated in the common fields, some were kept in severalty. But by the eighteenth century all common fields had silently disappeared.

Dairying, and particularly cheese-making, occupied many farmers in the seventeenth century, and although there is meagre evidence of changes in emphasis over the centuries, it is noticeable that some leases of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries permitted tenants to plough no more than one-third and at most one-half of their land in any year. It is possible, therefore, that the apparently large area of land under the plough

around 1801 in some hamlets represented only a passing phase in the agricultural economy of the parish which came to an end around 1870 when most land was put back to grass. Mr and Mrs Spufford have summarized the labours of their extra-mural class in a most useful contribution to the literature of local history, which illuminates some important phases in the development of a pasture-farming parish.

JOAN THIRSK

PATRICIA JAMES (ed.), *The Travel Diaries of Thomas Robert Malthus*. Cambridge University Press for the Royal Economic Society, 1966. xvi+316 pp. 45s.

Deprived on account of war of the opportunity of making the Grand Tour, a year after the publication of the *Essay on the Principle of Population*, Thomas Malthus set out, together with three companions, on a visit to Scandinavia. The two manuscript volumes of the Scandinavian journal, together with the contents of a smaller notebook containing some odd jottings on economic matters, a brief account of a continental tour in 1825, and the diary of a Scottish holiday in 1826, have now been splendidly edited by Mrs James. The major interest of this volume is in the light it casts on the development of Malthus's thoughts on population, for the section in the second edition of the *Essay* on the check to population in Norway, provided by the deferment of marriage, derives directly from the Scandinavian tour. But, as an assiduous chronicler, Malthus also made notes of other matters, including some of agricultural interest, particularly enclosures and the state of the pasture as well as inheritance customs, tenurial arrangements, and the fertility of soils. His account relies partly on his own observation and partly on what he was told by the people he met or with whom he stayed. Not himself a practising farmer or a skilled agriculturalist, his account is impressionistic rather than precise. For the agricultural historian, therefore, these travel diaries are a useful source for local detail rather than an indispensable record.

W. E. MINCHINTON

Shorter Notices

F. G. DAVENPORT, *The Economic Development of a Norfolk Manor*, 1086-1565. Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1967. x+106+cii pp. 50s.

First published in 1906, Frances Davenport's book on the manor of Fornsett was a pioneer work, the first really detailed study of an English manor, and as such precursor of what is now an extensive literature.

Fornsett, unlike the subjects of some more recent studies, was a lay manor; it belonged to the earls of Norfolk. After the execution of Lord Thomas Howard in 1572 it escheated to Queen Elizabeth I, who three years later granted to Sir Henry Lee all the fines he could get for the manumission of her bondmen. Thereupon Sir Henry compelled the last remaining serfs at Fornsett to purchase their freedom.

The book is austere factuality, thick with footnotes, tables, and documentary appendices. It has long been out of print, but it retains all its value for students of the older English rural economy; so this photographic reprint is very welcome.

H. P. R. F.

C. S. and C. S. ORWIN, *The Open Fields*. Third edition, Clarendon Press, 1967. xxvi+196 pp. Maps and plates. 35s.

A new edition of the Orwins' classic work on English agricultural history, first published in 1938, makes a timely contribution to the currently active debate on the nature and origins of English field systems. This third edition is a copy of its predecessor, the second edition published in 1954, but it also includes an enlarged bibliography of almost one-hundred additional entries covering the period 1954-65. In a preface especially written for this edition, Dr Joan Thirsk provides

a thoughtful evaluation of the present standing of the Orwins' study and, although one of the principals in the current debate, she has also written a balanced and extremely useful assessment of the present position in the study of the distribution and origins of the common-field systems in England.

A. R. H. B.

G. H. TUPLING, *The Economic History of Rossendale*. Reprint by the Johnson Reprint Corporation for the Chetham Society. 1965. xxii+274 pp. £4 5s.

Dr Tupling's book is a model of what a regional study should be. Because of the range of its subject matter and the detail of its findings, it has preserved its youthful look, despite the fact that it was first published forty years ago. Readers will find in it valuable evidence on the development of rural communities which combined pasture farming with industry. The reprint of this work by the Johnson Reprint Corporation is most welcome.

G. E. FUSSELL, *A Bibliography of His Writings on Agricultural History*. University of Reading, 1967. viii+34 pp. 7s. 6d.

Mr Fussell has an impressive list of books and articles on agricultural history to his credit, and, as Nigel Harvey points out in his introduction to this work, he "made agricultural history available to the general and academic public at a time when few were prepared to acknowledge its importance or fascination." This bibliography brings together all Mr Fussell's writings, the articles being arranged under an alphabetical list of journals, with a name and subject index at the end.