

Book Reviews

A. R. H. BAKER, J. D. HAMSHERE, and JOHN LANGTON (eds.) *Geographical Interpretations of Historical Sources*. David and Charles, 1970. 458 pp. £4.20.

J. T. COPPOCK, *An Agricultural Geography of Great Britain*. Bell, 1971. xiv + 345 pp. £2.75.

The volume of essays edited by Dr Baker and others is most welcome. There are twenty-one essays culled from a wide range of journals. Historical geographers tend to publish articles rather than books—like most of us perhaps—but since they have no journal of their own their work tends to be scattered and often rather inaccessible. The essays brought together here are not, however, a random collection nor are they necessarily representative of the subject in general. They are organized around the central theme of source materials and their interpretation. They illustrate a very wide range of historical sources and an equally wide range of problems, and the varied methods employed in tackling them. We have first an excellent critical introduction by the three editors with a useful list of references mostly to very recent work.

Of the twenty-one essays no fewer than fourteen are upon agrarian subjects so that the book is good value for readers of this REVIEW. The agrarian essays range in time from Darby's classic essay on Domesday Woodland published twenty or so years ago to Coppock's 'Agricultural Changes in the Chilterns, 1875-1900', first published in this REVIEW some ten years ago. Several of the essays have a supplementary note bringing the subject up to date where necessary. The medieval period is represented by four essays ranging around such major sources as Domesday Book, the Hundred Rolls, the *Inquisitiones Nonarum*, and the tax assessments of the early fourteenth century. In addition Frank Emery's paper on Moated Settlements is of course medieval in scope, and is based largely upon the interpretation of the Ordnance map and of aerial photographs. The seminal period of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is represented by two local studies,

three if we count Wrigley's Family Limitation in Pre-Industrial England, which is concerned with a large and fertile rural parish in east Devon. The 'agricultural revolution', if one may still use the term, is well represented also. Altogether this is a valuable book to possess, not only because of the information it contains but even more so for the impetus it must surely give to similar studies in other parts of Britain. It succeeds well in its stated objective.

Professor Coppock's book deals exclusively with the agricultural geography of our own times, though it harks back in places to the year 1867 in order to demonstrate the incidence of change over the past hundred years. It covers the whole picture of modern farming, beginning with a discussion of such general factors as climate, soils, size of land-holdings, labour supply, markets, machinery, and land use; and then proceeds to a geographical analysis of the major types of farming—dairying, beef cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, cropping, and horticulture. It is an excellent survey of the pattern of modern farming, as up to date as it can be, crammed with useful statistics on every conceivable aspect of farming and yet readable throughout. Professor Coppock gives us a plentiful supply of maps, but since most of them are printed four to a page they are occasionally difficult to read. An example of this is the map on p. 317 which tries to show types of farming "by number of mandays" in 1965 over the whole of Britain, or one of the maps in Fig. 2 showing Day-degrees Fahrenheit, also too full of detail for this tiny scale. On the whole, though, the maps come off despite their limitations of size, and are a valuable feature of the book. This is a first-class survey of the whole subject, both for the specialist and the intelligent general reader.

W. G. HOSKINS

A. N. WEBB (ed.), *An Edition of the Cartulary of Burscough Priory*, Chetham Society Publications, 3rd ser., XVIII, 1970, vii+297 pp. £4 to non-members.

Lancashire is one of those counties of England for which there is little evidence for its econo-

mic and social life during the early Middle Ages. The Domesday Book account is sparse and there are fewer records from this part of the county than from most other places. For this reason, this edition of the Cartulary of Burscough Priory is welcome. It shows a late twelfth-century Augustinian priory building up its estates, mainly in the early thirteenth century, in the immediate neighbourhood of the convent; the few outlying estates were regularly leased (sometimes on a hereditary basis), reserving to the canons a right of accommodation, but the main estates of the priory lay no more than seven or so miles away. In the nature of the records, there are few signs here of how the estates were managed or of the type of farming employed, but frequent references to wood, marsh, and rough grazing clearly reveal the continuing process of colonization in an area regarded generally as very backward during the first medieval centuries. There are many references to mills, of wind, water, and horse variety.

The main value of this book must be local rather than general. Detailed boundaries (marked by crosses) reveal much of topographical interest, and the growth of Ormskirk as a small medieval town is very clear. The only reference outside the immediate area is to the church of Ratcliffe on Soar (Notts.). Each charter is transcribed in full, preceded by a brief note of its content and followed by notes on persons mentioned in it. Almost all the texts are Latin, a few late medieval English ones appearing at the end of the book. Appendices of further charters and pedigrees, a map and two full indexes complete a careful work of scholarship.

ALAN ROGERS

W. HARWOOD LONG, *A Survey of the Agriculture of Yorkshire*. County Agricultural Surveys, no. 6. Royal Agricultural Society of England, 1969. x + 256 pp., maps, illus. £1.50.

There can be very few English counties with such a varied farming pattern as Yorkshire. Moreover, as Mr Harwood Long shows, intriguing local and regional differences are nothing new. They are older by far than the twentieth

century, which provides the main terms of reference for this study, older than William Marshall's "island in miniature" of the 1780's and older too, one suspects, than the probate inventories of the late seventeenth century which yield some of the author's earliest detailed information.

A Survey of the Agriculture of Yorkshire, however, in common with its predecessors in the same series, is concerned less with distant antecedents than with the situation as it existed at about the time of writing. The result is a volume which, whilst recognizing the contribution of the past, and more particularly the recent past, to the shaping of the present structure, nevertheless has for its main theme the state of Yorkshire agriculture in the early 1960's.

The first chapter, which sets the scene by discussing the county's agriculture in a national context, is followed by a brief account of physical features. This is succeeded in turn by a substantial chapter on the farming districts of Yorkshire. Some readers may find this the most interesting part of the book, especially if used in association with chapter 7, which describes farm enterprises during the 1960's. Here, clearly and concisely, are portrayed those similarities and differences, between arable husbandry on the Wolds and in the Vale of York and between farming practice in the western Dales and the Moorlands of the north-east for example, which are fundamental to an understanding of the agricultural scene. The remainder of the book deals systematically with livestock husbandry, crops, and grass and such topics as marketing, land ownership, and agricultural education.

The text is related throughout to a statistical appendix of some forty pages and, more generally, to a number of maps. Whilst it is good to have the maps (not all the Royal Agricultural Society's authors are as helpful as Mr Harwood Long in this respect), their potential is only partly realized in this volume. And surely it would be possible for the Society to insist that all photographs included in their *Surveys* should carry both a date and a precise indication of where they were taken? Future historians may regret not being told when the horse-drawn sledges in Wharfedale shown opposite

p. 54 were photographed, or the precise whereabouts of the field patterns illustrated on the following page.

These criticisms apart, this is an admirable book, written with a light touch (the bulls of Whenby Lodge on pp. 83-4 should not be missed), and at its published price of £1.50 exceptionally good value.

A. HARRIS

JOHN SHEAIL, *Rabbits and their History*. David & Charles, 1971. 226 pp., illus. £2.75.

Surprisingly little attention has been devoted to the detailed history of the rabbit in Britain although, as Miss Elspeth Veale has shown, its story is a long and fascinating one. Dr Sheail, a geographer attached to the Nature Conservancy, has now written a valuable and attractive monograph on the subject.

The agricultural historian will find much of interest in this book, from the account of the warren as a method of land management to the sections which deal with the habitat and control of the rabbit. We are told about the geographical distribution of the warren, what it looked like, how it was organized, and, more briefly, how it came into prominence and at last disappeared. There are references to the rabbit as a sporting animal and farm pest, to traffic in skins and fur, and to myxomatosis. The discussion, which covers broadly the period between 1500 and the 1950's, is highly readable.

A pioneering work such as this perhaps inevitably prompts questions. Until more is known about the comparative costs and profits of warrening at different periods, the rise and decline of the warren itself must necessarily demand further attention. And if, as Dr Sheail says, some warrens "were found on good farmland," one wonders what local circumstances conspired to tip the balance of advantages in favour of the rabbit and against some other form of land use. Perhaps, as Dr Sheail himself hints, the warren can be understood fully only in the context of contemporary farming regions and practice. Dr Sheail's observation that the railways modified both the distribution of warrens and the arrangements for marketing their produce raises interesting problems. So too does that extraordinary phenomenon the

game warren, to which the author devotes a section. Its geographical distribution, especially when compared with that of an earlier generation of warrens, might prove enlightening. Again, the impact of the rabbit on its surroundings, here vividly portrayed, has implications for the student of crop yields and liveweight gain in areas where the rabbit was once numerous.

This is an engaging book. It is greatly to be hoped that it will attract historians, geographers, and others to their nearest record office, there to unearth and pursue the rabbit further.

A. HARRIS

Mary Wedlake's *Priced List of Modern Farm Implements*. Reprinted by the Museum of English Rural Life. Univ. of Reading, 1970. 54 pp. 20p.

The subjection of Victorian women has become a notoriously untrue assumption, illustrated in many outstanding examples. The reprinting of Mary Wedlake's *Priced List of 1850*, by the Museum of English Rural Life, supplies one more example of the highly self-reliant women of the Victorian age. She took up the business, which had been established for forty years, when her husband died, and apparently ran it with some success. The List describes and offers a great variety of implements, tools, etc., and is an excellent guide to the kind of things the farmer could then buy. Mrs Wedlake was strongly supported by members of the aristocracy; the list she supplies of these people is long and impressive, and it must have been by the influence of some of them that her List was distributed with one number of the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*.

In addition to producing farm implements, etc., Mrs Wedlake was concerned in the then current railway boom. She also aimed at the business to be got by supplying intending emigrants with the equipment they would require, providing a list, not uninformative, of what was necessary "for the cultivation of fifty acres and upwards." Something of a curiosity, this List is nevertheless a quite valuable historical document, and was well worth reprinting.

G. E. FUSSELL

E. J. T. COLLINS. *Sickle to Combine: A Review of Harvest Techniques from 1800 to the Present Day*. Univ. of Reading, Museum of English Rural Life, 1970. 48 pp. 100 illus. 65p.

Most modern minds when considering the increased work that can today be done by one man as compared with that he could do in the recent past think of the mechanical aids engineering has provided for his use. This is no less true of farming than of any other industry. It has remained for Dr Collins to give another slant to the subject. In this piece of research he has shown that before, or perhaps at the same time as, he turned to the machine, the farmer sought to improve the daily quantity of work done by each of his men by introducing improved hand tools in gathering the harvest, i.e., what was called the bagging hook. This was a much heavier and more cumbersome type of sickle, a tool few men would care to use for the whole of an eight-hour day, but which was probably used for longer hours by our indomitable ancestors. Dr Collins argues that hand tools continued to be used for harvest work side by side with the machines which slowly became popular after the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition. He supports this contention by an estimate that perhaps 25 per cent of British corn was cut by machine in 1871, 80 per cent in 1900 and so on.

After being cut, bound, and shocked the corn harvest was formerly ricked, threshed by hand, winnowed by using a winnowing basket, and then sacked, these processes being familiar to all. When the traction engine came into use, steam power drove the threshing machine, but it was not until the oil-fuelled tractor was invented that the horse was superseded as power unit for the reaper. Today all these processes are obsolete, the whole job being done by the combine supported by a drying plant. This story is told in much detail by Dr Collins, with a wealth of illustrations. He has performed the seemingly impossible task of discovering some new, and incidentally quite fascinating, information about the development of harvest technique in Britain during the nineteenth century.

G. E. FUSSELL

D. J. MALE, *Russian Peasant Organization before Collectivization; a Study of Commune and Gathering, 1925-1930*, Soviet and East European Studies Monograph Series, C.U.P., 1971. viii + 253 pp. £4.

In the period between the Emancipation of the serfs in 1861 and the revolution of 1917, the peasant commune in Russia had a dual function. Not only was it the organ of village self-government, responsible for many aspects of local administration, including the regulation of agriculture and land-tenure; it was also the lowest unit of the central government system, and the village elder—the elected executive officer of the commune gathering—had to perform specified fiscal and judicial duties on behalf of the state bureaucracy. The nature of the commune as an economic, social, and political institution was the subject of much controversy. Valued by the government as a conservative bulwark of peasant traditionalism, idealized by the Populists as a rudimentary form of agrarian socialism, and scorned by the Marxists as a symbol of Russia's backwardness, the commune came into its own in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 as the agent of peasant seizure and redistribution of the land of the large estates. The lessons of 1905 caused the government to reassess the role of the commune: the Stolypin reforms sought to encourage peasant landholding on an individual rather than a communal basis, but little progress was made in this direction before 1917.

Donald Male's book examines the problem posed for the Soviet government by the vitality of the commune after 1917, with particular emphasis on the background to the ultimate solution of that problem, the mass collectivization drive of 1929-30. In law, the functions of the commune were clearly distinct from those of the rural soviet, the lowest unit of the new state administration. The commune was to restrict itself to matters of agricultural organization, whereas the rural soviet was to take over many of the tasks of local administration which had been performed by the commune before the revolution. In practice, however, there was considerable overlap between the functions of the commune and the rural soviet, and it was usually the commune which proved to be the

dominant organization—a situation which hardly commended itself to the Soviet government as it endeavoured to secure an adequate agricultural base for its ambitious programme of industrialization. The Bolsheviks were deeply suspicious of the commune as an institution which represented traditional peasant resistance to agrarian reform and provided a platform for Stalin's political bogey-man, the *kulak* or rich peasant. In the end, after a period of considerable vacillation, it was decided that neither the commune nor the rural soviet was capable of conducting the transition to voluntary collectivization with the necessary speed, and collectivization was forced through by detachments of party workers from the towns.

Mr Male provides a detailed, painstaking, and, on the whole, lucid analysis of the extremely complex and confused situation which existed in the Russian countryside in the 1920's. Much relevant material is made available for the first time in English: the text is illustrated with numerous statistical tables, and there are helpful maps and diagrams. In contrast to the Soviet sources with which he has had to contend, the author is meticulous in defining and explaining his terminology, and the Appendices include a useful English-Russian and Russian-English glossary. This monograph represents a serious and important contribution to our knowledge of the relationship between the Soviet state and the Russian peasantry on the eve of collectivization.

MAUREEN PERRIE

JOHN BURKE, *Suffolk*. Batsford, 1971. 200 pp. £1.80.

This is a book for the glove compartment of a subtopian motorist, his windows closed against the smell of "muck-spreading, ditch weeds and burning rubbish." He must be able to enjoy sentences like "Leafless branches are sketched in filigree on the sullen yet luminous sky, each thread of twig faithfully reflected in the water." The writer has clearly read every anecdote about the past of the county which has appeared in any guide book. Whether, in rewriting them, he has always been faithful to his sources, one would need to be omniscient to judge. His handling of some small details on

my own doorstep makes me doubt. The stone coffins of Icklingham were never "forgotten;" there is no village there called Briswell; the Elveden memorial which he calls "a tall Corinthian column" is described by Pevsner as a "tall composite column with urn." Abbot Samson of Bury would hardly have been pleased to read that the Bishop of Ely was his "superior."

The publisher must be convinced, and probably correctly, that many of the motorists who crowd our roads look upon our county only as a museum of ancient monuments with little significance for today. There is a plethora of anecdotes about men of the past, the few names dropped of living persons are mostly those of literary or artistic interest. However, amongst the names of the dead, those of two of our very famous sons, Tusser and Arthur Young, do not appear in the lengthy index. They were the advanced agriculturalists of their time, and the author does not expect his readers to be interested in advanced agriculture, ancient or modern. The motorist is told that along the road "farmland continues," but nothing is said of that farmland, although it is our advanced agriculture which is the main justification for the very existence of our Suffolk. The thirty-nine artistic photographs show only nine living animals, two peasants over sixty, four under ten, two holiday-makers and one dog. The book has been given a misleading title.

J. T. MUNDAY

JAMES A. BATEMAN, *Animal Traps and Trapping*. David & Charles, 1971. 286 pp. illus. £3.50.

Agricultural historians have given a great deal of attention to the plough, horse harness, the scythe, sickle, and mower. They have paid less attention to the animal trap, although it was also an important piece of equipment in rural communities in the past. Traps were used to catch mammals, birds, fish, and insects for food, and to protect crops growing in the fields or stored in barns. Sportsmen also set traps for catching the natural predators of their game birds and animals. This book is essentially an inventory of these devices and gives details of their manufacture in the world today. There is

information on bear traps, Eskimo squirrel traps, a bug trap from Poona, a giraffe wheel trap, and the German self-setting mouse trap. The book is extremely well illustrated and the descriptions are lucid. The author tries to cover as much ground as possible: there are chapters on the history of trapping and legislation, "the traps of nature," and the ethics of trapping. This is a laudable objective in a book selling at £3.50, but unfortunately these chapters are too superficial. For example, less than one page is devoted to such topics as trapping in Siberia or the medieval game laws: the details are so scanty they will hardly serve as an entrée for further study. Perhaps the book would have been more helpful to the agricultural historian if the author had concentrated on the British Isles, Europe, or the Americas: he would then have been able to examine these themes in greater depth.

JOHN SHEAIL

J. J. BAGLEY (ed.), *The Great Diurnal of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire. Volume 2. 1712-1719*. Transcribed and annotated by F. Tyrer. Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1970. xiv + 328 pp. 17 plates, 2 figures. £3.15 to non-members.

The publication of the second volume of Nicholas Blundell's diary carries the text down to the end of 1719. Like the first instalment, which covered the years 1702-11, the present volume is well produced and very thoroughly indexed—an absolute necessity in the case of texts such as this which are more likely to be

consulted and ransacked for information on specific points than avidly read from cover to cover.

The second volume, like its predecessor, contains a great deal which will be of particular interest to historians of agriculture and rural society in the early eighteenth century. As a source of information about farming methods and experiments, about prices, rents, wages, and labour the diary is of considerable value, as it is also for its annual reports on the weather and on the state of the different harvests. (See, for example, pp. 119-20.) Blundell was an active agriculturalist with varied interests, but the present volume may be especially useful to historians on two counts. First of all, the diary contains frequent references to the subject of land drainage—a constant problem in this low-lying south-west corner of Lancashire. (See the long entry on water-courses in the index.) Secondly, the diary is extremely informative about the practice of marling. (See, for example, pp. 21-7 and 282-3.)

South-west Lancashire, however, is not the only backcloth to the events described in this second volume of the diary. As a practising Roman Catholic, Blundell recognized that it would be expedient to go into temporary exile during the uncertain times which followed the 1715 Jacobite Rebellion. It was to Flanders that the Blundells eventually came in 1716, and the section of the diary relating to the period which they spent there is crammed with observations on all aspects of their new environment.

R. C. RICHARDSON