

Book Reviews

W. ABEL and HELMUT DREITZEL (eds.), *Konrad Heresbach. Vier Bücher über Landwirtschaft. Band I. Vom Landbau*. Verlag Anton Hain KG, Meisenheim, 1970. 305 pp. DM. 39.50.

It is remarkable that Konrad Heresbach's *Four Books of Husbandry* published in Latin for a mainly German readership in 1570, should have been translated into English by Barnaby Googe in 1577, but should have had to wait until 1970 to be translated into German. The first volume in this new translation concerns arable husbandry for the most part, and describes the cultivation and harvesting of grain, legumes, flax, hemp, and woad, finishing with a few pages on pastures and meadows, and the purchase and leasing of land. Three more volumes will complete the work, on gardens, orchards and woods, cattle, fish, and bees. A facsimile of the original Latin is printed on the left-hand page, while the right-hand page contains the German translation. Two brief introductions are included, one by Professor W. Abel who sets Heresbach in the context of his time, and one by the translator, who identifies Heresbach's classical sources.

This translation which celebrates the 400th anniversary of the original work affords an opportunity to look afresh at the strength of foreign influences on European, and more particularly English, agriculture. Heresbach, born in 1496, was the son of a landed gentleman, and received an education at French and Italian universities. He became a lawyer and government official at Cloves, and finally settled on an estate in the Rhine valley where he wrote his books of husbandry. As a lawyer, he found Latin a comfortable language in which to write his book, and in this international language it found readers all over Europe. Published in Cologne, it quickly passed through six editions.

Heresbach portrayed an intensive agricultural system, operating in a comparatively advanced commercial region in the lower Rhine valley. Populous cities afforded a market and producers had the advantage of good river transport upstream, and downstream into the Netherlands. Heresbach's work was a

mixture of scholarly references to classical wisdom and practical sixteenth-century experience. This combination of intellectual learning and practical good sense exactly suited the interests of English farmer-landowners who had had a not dissimilar education, both scholarly and practical. Thus Barnaby Googe, the Lincolnshire country gentleman who was Heresbach's translator, was a member of William Cecil's intimate circle of friends and had served in his household; he received an English university education and entered state service, spending some time in Ireland in the 1570's and 1580's. It was there that he found time to translate Heresbach. Earlier he had translated the poems of a Christian writer, Marcellus Palingenius, and later translated the proverbs of a Spanish author.

It is a sad reflection upon the narrow specialisms of our own age that we should look dubiously upon intellectuals and civil servants who wrote manuals of husbandry, and suspect them of being inadequate farmers, whose influence was negligible. All the evidence suggests the contrary: that Googe and other writers taught agriculturists an enormous amount of wisdom, as well as opening their minds to new ideas. The English bought up four editions of Googe's book and were willing to read it again in substance under the new title of *The Whole Art of Husbandry* by Gervase Markham. In the 1650's when agricultural improvement enjoyed a new vogue, Googe was re-read with enthusiasm, while Gervase Markham's writings were shipped off to America to help the pioneer settlers in Virginia. We should not underrate our forebears and imagine that they cheerfully read nonsense and swallowed it whole. When Barnaby Googe decided to include the section on vines from Heresbach's work, he optimistically hoped that they might be acclimatized in England. He was expressing a reasonable expectation: men had recently been successful with the fig, the apricot, and the walnut. Fact and fiction were inevitably mingled in a work that paid respect to classical writing and contemporary observation, but then it is certain

that our descendants will similarly judge twentieth-century textbooks of agriculture, though we may not like to think so. Sixteenth-century readers took from such books ideas which struck them as relevant to their needs and neglected the rest. They did not believe everything they read in print. In this way books of husbandry exerted great influence among the gentry class as seventeenth-century correspondence and journals of country gentlemen bear witness, and much interest was aroused thereby in experimentation and improvement. "Googe's noble Heresbachius" were the words used to describe this volume by a member of the Royal Society in 1675. He wrote with admiration and respect. But what influences guided Heresbach? Was it his Italian experience that set him to work? He was the first in Germany to take up the pen to write of agriculture, preceding both Martin Grosser and Abraham von Thumbshirn. Perhaps the editors of this new German translation will venture a little more deeply into this question when they reach the end of their "noble" work.

JOAN THIRSK

D. E. GREENWAY (ed.), *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray 1107-1191*. Published for the British Academy by the Oxford University Press, 1972. lxxxiv+308 pp. 16 illus. £7.

One of the earliest publishing ventures of the British Academy was the series called 'Records of the Social and Economic History of England and Wales' begun in 1914. It ran to nine volumes, which included Sir Frank Stenton's *Documents illustrative of the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw*, and ended in 1935 with Beatrice Lee's edition of the twelfth-century records of the Templars. Now the series has been restarted under the less restrictive general title 'Records of Social and Economic History', for the sensible reason that local record societies are much stronger than they were 60 years ago. Thus the Academy's effort in this field is now best directed to the publication of material which falls outside the scope of any local society. Dr Greenway's volume is the first in this new series and fits its declared intention for in the twelfth century the lands

of the honour of Mowbray were widely spread over the north and midlands of England as well as in Normandy itself.

Dr Greenway has collected and printed details of 400 Mowbray charters belonging to the years covered by the tenure of the first three holders of the honour. It was in 1107, during the redistribution of forfeited lands which followed the battle of Tinchebray, that Henry I granted to Nigel d'Aubigny, then one of his household knights and the younger son of a petty Norman baron, that great complex of estates henceforth known as the honour of Mowbray. Nigel thus became one of the greatest of the Anglo-Norman feudal lords and the founder of a powerful aristocratic family which lasted until 1481, when the child Ann de Mowbray died. Roger, Nigel's son and successor, now called de Mowbray, held from 1129 to 1188. Under him the Mowbray lordship, although mauled and battered, survived the troubles of Stephen's time and the heavy hand of Henry II. Roger's son, another Nigel, somewhat misguidedly joined the third crusade, and died at Acre in 1191.

It can be said at once that Dr Greenway has done a good and thorough technical job on some very difficult material. Only seventy-four original charters survive, and of these a number are probably forgeries. Thus she has been compelled to draw heavily on medieval copies of the lost originals in cartularies, chancery enrolments, and the like, while post-medieval transcripts, particularly those of Dodsworth and Dugdale, have also contributed their share. Charters of which satisfactory texts are in print and easily available are simply calendared and their witness lists noted. Where charters only survive in later copies, Dr Greenway has not hesitated to reconstruct what seemed to her the best text from the variant versions. This she has done skilfully and well. The first nineteen items in the collection are charters recording grants made to Nigel d'Aubigny and Roger de Mowbray. The remaining 381 documents listed are grants made by various members of the Mowbray family. Of these no less than 309 are grants to religious houses and other ecclesiastical bodies. Only seventy-two record transactions with lay folk. This is disappointing but not surprising for lay

records are notoriously scarce in this period. More tiresome is the fact that most of the charters can only be approximately dated, and this is where the editor's careful and scholarly annotation of the texts is particularly helpful.

Great Anglo-Norman fiefs like the honour of Mowbray were the pillars of the feudal kingdom. To discover how they were individually organized and managed is as important for a proper understanding of the social and economic arrangements of twelfth-century England as it is for tracing the course of politics in that period. Each honour was the kingdom in miniature, at least as far as structure and organization were concerned. The honorial household was modelled on the royal household, while the hierarchical range of lordship and dependence was the same at every level, involving the basic distinction between demesne and tenanted land. But this general uniformity allowed considerable individual variations, arising chiefly from local circumstances. Thus each honour needs to be studied for itself, and this volume contains the essential surviving material for such an examination of the honour of Mowbray. That alone justified the effort needed to compile, arrange, and edit it.

The Introduction discloses something of what can be learned from this material about the organization, the administration, and the economic management of the honour. The Mowbray estates in England were grouped in seven reasonably compact lordships: round the Isle of Axholme, Hovingham, Melton Mowbray, Brinklow, Thirsk, Kirkby Malzeard, and Burton-in-Lonsdale. In each there was a residual demesne and the remainder was granted out to provide the hundred knight's fees for which the honour was assessed in 1166. The household was peripatetic, moving *de manerio in manerium per varias provincias*, but the effective economic management of the English lands was conducted separately in each of the seven lordships. From these, for instance, was directed that vigorous colonization of the waste by drainage, reclamation, and clearance which the charters reveal. The pattern is far less complete than could be wished, but the outline is clear enough. It is the indispensable framework into which the

results of more detailed local work can now be slotted.

GEOFFREY TEMPLEMAN

JOAN THIRSK and J. P. COOPER (eds.), *Seventeenth-Century Economic Documents*. Clarendon Press, 1972. xxi + 849 pp. £8.

This volume sets out to provide for the seventeenth century the service that R. H. Tawney and Eileen Power's *Tudor Economic Documents* has for so long provided for the sixteenth. The intention is admirable and it is almost wholly realized in execution. Tawney and Power's somewhat idiosyncratic sixteen sections are here reduced to eight: economic crises, agriculture, industries, inland and coastal trade and communications, overseas trade, finance and the coinage, aliens, and statistical comment relating to wealth, population, and land. No major areas of economic activity are neglected, though the early history of banking gets scant mention. The overall provision is generous; the number of selections in this single volume is greater than in the three volumes of *T.E.D.* Most of the themes illustrated by Tawney and Power carry over into the present volume and this alone makes it an indispensable companion to its famous predecessor. Inevitably there is much here to interest the agrarian historian, though, as in *T.E.D.*, the reader has to be prepared to search around. The process is aided, however, by a thirty-three-page index.

Given the pre-eminence of Mrs Thirsk in the field of seventeenth-century agrarian history it is hardly surprising that the 'Agriculture' section admirably illustrates recent work in that field. Here are to be found the advocates and practitioners of improvement, of new crops and cropping routines, of enclosure, and also the opponents of open-field farming, commons, and wastes. Occasional glimpses are obtained also of their morality: Robert Loder's "Memorandum ever hereafter that I sell away my sheep afore winter if I know them to be rotten" is no less interesting than his call to God to protect him as a buyer on such occasions. There are constant reminders also of the great variety of contemporary agricultural practices, farm systems, and the social structures enveloping them. The socio-geographical determinists of the origins of social conflict

will find food for thought in the frequent complaints about those loosely manorialized wood-pasture areas which were the focus of immigration as "nurseries of beggars," and those manors with abundant commons and wastes which "draw many poor people from other places, burden the township with beggarly cottages, inmates, and alehouses, and idle people; where the great part spend most of their days in a lazy idleness and petite thieveries and few or none in profitable labour," and Pseudonismus's objections against common fields in 1656 as "the seat of disorder, the seed plot of contention, the nursery of beggary."

It is useful to have here also the important Restoration statutes encouraging the export of native produce and legislating against Irish imports, particularly as they are accompanied in another section by documents debating the issues involved. But there are some disappointments. There is perhaps in the 'Agriculture' section an over-reliance on the familiar names: no less than five of the extracts are from John Norden; three are from Robert Loder's farm accounts; four are from Walter Blith; and three are from John Worlidge. Some of these extracts of course are splendid, like those from Robert Plot's *The Natural History of Oxfordshire*, but some readers will feel disappointment that comparatively few of them are from little-known manuscript sources. Secondly, the emphasis is placed perhaps a little too firmly on progress, on calls for improvement and innovation. There is too little illustration of the obstacles to improvement, and not sufficient heed is given to the champions of the *status quo* and the Arcadians. The case against enclosure here rests essentially on John Moore's *A Scripture word against Enclosure*. Yet the radical movements of the mid-century threw up a host of such opponents and they deserve a voice in any sequel to *T.E.D.*

Contemporaries reserved their most interesting speculations about economic phenomena for moments of crisis, and the literate propertied classes, who are naturally heavily represented here, for those moments when their accustomed material standards were in danger. For this reason the section 'Economic Crises' is in some ways the most valuable in the whole volume and it naturally contains much

to interest agrarian historians, concerned as it is with breakdowns in relationships between industry, trade, and agriculture, and focusing obsessively, as it often does, on shrinking agricultural markets, falling prices, and falling rents. Subsistence crises of a more familiar kind are illustrated, as also are some of the means of partial relief: the J.P.s of Nottingham reported in 1631 that "the reason that the prices at this time do somewhat abate in our markets is for that a good quantity of corn hath been brought into our country by the river of Trent from remote places where corn was not at so great a price as with us, and we hope that in summer time, when coal carriages do come into our country for coals, that they will bring corn with them as formerly divers countries have done." In 1649 it was reported from the north, however, that "The necessities of these parts are very great especially Cumberland and Westmorland; the poorer sort are almost famished and some really so, the number whereof are too many and more than I shall now mention that have died in the highways for want of bread."

Demographic historians will also note scattered throughout the volume the frequent references to over-population in the early part of the century and the growing complaint about "want of people" thereafter. Even the ecologists get their due: a describer of lead works in Somerset in 1667 relates, "And children sometimes in these houses have died suddenly. If any sort of cattle eat often of that grass, on which the steam, which rises from the smelting of lead, falls, they all die in a while after..."

Certainly the editors have succeeded in illustrating a great variety of economic activities and have fulfilled their general aims: the volume will become an indispensable teaching aid and it will encourage more research on seventeenth century economic history. Two general quibbles remain. It is a pity that the editors have modernized the spelling. It is also a pity that nowhere is any illustration given of what historians have come to acknowledge as the most potent factors determining family progress in this society—marriage and inheritance.

R. B. OUTHWAITE

ALAN CROSSLEY (ed.), *The Victoria History of Oxford*, Vol. x, *Banbury Hundred*. Oxford University Press for the Institute of Historical Research, 1972. xxiii + 287 pp. £14. This volume contains the history of Banbury, Charlbury, Cropredy, and Swalcliffe, the scattered north Oxfordshire estates of the Anglo-Saxon see of Dorchester which comprised the hundred of Banbury. For any period after the eleventh century this hundred is an unsatisfactory unit of study. Eleven of the thirty-three settlements within these four parishes are excluded from the present work because they lay within another hundred, whereas the parish of Charlbury, fourteen miles to the south-west, is included even though it was distinct in character and lay detached from the rest.

Nevertheless, there is much in this volume that the agricultural historian will applaud. Of particular interest is Dr P. D. A. Harvey's scholarly and detailed study of the medieval topography of Banbury and the changing pattern of its markets. Here he is given space to elaborate the account he has already published in the *Historic Towns Atlas of England and Wales*, 1. The general Market Place was laid out at the centre of the "new town" that was successfully grafted on to the old settlement in the twelfth century; then during the course of the next four hundred years several specialized markets were established beyond. References to street names include Ox Market (1319), Sheep Market (1441), Horse Market (1525), Flax Chipping (1549), Swine Market (1552), and Cornmarket Street (1606). Furthermore, certain market days came to be associated with particular products and became known as fairs; thus, in 1555, Thursday, 28 February was known as "the fish fair day," and, in 1558, Thursday, 3 January was known as "the leather fair." Banbury's markets flourished because they served a prosperous farming region with some of the best corn-and-sheep land in the country, and because the town's position at the junction of ancient routes made it ideally suited as a collecting centre for the south Midlands. The stock market is reputed to be still the largest in Europe.

In 1610 Banbury was noted for its cheese, cakes, and zeal. Its cakes are still famous, the

zeal (both religious and political) was as pronounced in the nineteenth century as it had been in the seventeenth, but by 1841 the great trade in cheese had almost passed from memory. The local ale also had a wide reputation during the Middle Ages, and the number of inns rose markedly after 1660, when Banbury became an important thoroughfare town. It was about this time that the manufacture of webbing and horse-cloths was established. In essence Banbury remained a country market town until the arrival of heavy industry during the 1930's.

The red loam soils of north Oxfordshire were most suitable for corn-growing, and the clays of the lower and upper lias provided good grazing for sheep and cattle. The pastures were stinted, and although flocks of sheep were kept on most farms they were not usually large. Most parishes had adopted a four-field system by the early seventeenth century, with many permanent leys. Thus, a pattern of mixed farming was normal until after the period of parliamentary enclosure, when there was much conversion to grass.

Charlbury parish lay on the thin soils of the oolitic limestone at the edge of Wychwood Forest. It contained numerous smallholders, for it had once been a market centre and there were opportunities to assart the woodland. Finstock township, which lay partly within the forest, had sixteen copyholders in 1538, rising to fifty-four in 1630. The farming was pastoral in its bias at a much earlier period than elsewhere within the hundred. Some of the hamlets were deserted during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the common fields of each of the three townships were enclosed privately. There were glovers and tanners in Charlbury, especially during the eighteenth century.

This volume maintains the high standard one has come to expect from the *V.C.H.* The illustrations are excellent and add greatly to our understanding of the buildings and the topography. The contributions are scholarly, and at times use new approaches. B. S. Trinder, for instance, uses religious tracts and statistical material with admirable effect in his article on Protestant nonconformity. The result is a valuable work of reference.

But it must be said that the volume suffers from the usual faults of the series. The division of the work into Topography, Manorial History, Economic History, etc. is maddening to anyone who wishes to form an overall impression of Banbury at any one time. And in the rural areas it is not easy to discern any patterns. The reader is overwhelmed by a mass of information; he is rarely enlightened, and does not get a feeling of time and place, such as can be obtained from Margaret Stacey's sympathetic study, *Tradition and Change in Modern Banbury*.

The fault lies with editorial policy, which allows few general statements or comparisons. J. M. Laithwaite's article on the older buildings is the only part of the book that attempts to place Banbury in a national or even a regional setting. The choice of source material is also indicative of the approach of the editorial team. The early Chancery rolls have been searched systematically, but the wealth of material about local people (rather than about formal institutions) that is to be found in the Six Clerks division of Chancery has been neglected entirely. The most original work in this volume has come from external contributors.

The general editor defends such a restricted approach in the volumes devoted to parochial history on the grounds that each county has a general volume that discusses the regional setting. This sounds perfectly reasonable until one turns, for instance, to the general remarks on agriculture in *V.C.H. Oxfordshire*, Vol. II, and finds that they were written in 1907. The *V.C.H.* ought seriously to consider issuing new general volumes when each of the county series is complete. The contributors to the current volumes are obviously the local experts best able to draw general conclusions from their recent work.

DAVID HEY

E. S. HIGGS (ed.), *Papers in Economic Prehistory: Studies by Members and Associates of the British Academy Major Research Project in the Early History of Agriculture*. C.U.P., 1972. x+219 pp. £4.40.

The project with this resounding title was begun in the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, in 1966, and this

volume is a collection of sixteen resulting papers by twelve of the members or associates. There is no particular theme and, despite a foreword by a professor of archaeology and a conclusion by a professor of agriculture, it resembles a volume of an academic journal, and is therefore not easily reviewed—a task made more difficult by the use of obscure language throughout. This will tend to restrict the readership to specialists and discourage the prehistorian who would gain from the scientific ideas discussed.

The book is divided into three sections: theory, methods and techniques, and field and case studies. In the first paper on the origins of animal and plant husbandry E. S. Higgs and M. R. Jarman unfortunately lend credence to the baseless suggestion of S. Payne that sheep and goats interbred as late as the Pleistocene. Why this is virtually impossible has been shown by Curtain (*Antiquity* 45, 303, 1971) and Ryder (*Antiquity* 45, 220, 1971). On the other hand many scientists would be surprised to note the ecological approach and genetic considerations being put forward as novel—some genetic ideas were indeed discussed by the present author in this journal in 1964.

After a paper on wheat and barley by H. N. Jarman, Higgs and Vita-Finzi follow with a territorial approach to prehistoric economies, starting with a belated acceptance on the part of archaeologists of ecology and even ethology. The term "economy" is so fundamental to the whole volume that one would have expected it to be precisely defined: different kinds of economy are defined, but not economy itself.

There are five papers on methods and techniques, some perhaps out of place in a volume of this nature, but it is good to see emphasis laid upon retrieval, sampling techniques, and interpretation. Even the most casual biological observer of normal excavation realizes that much is missed, and proper sampling is the long-accepted basis for all biological investigations.

In discussing the criteria of animal domestication M. R. Jarman and P. F. Wilkinson toy again with economic reasons and are reluctant to embrace ecology as the only possible explanation. There is a danger that in a full discussion

of size changes their statement that some might have been associated with initial domestication might be taken out of context to imply conscious selection by man, which is very unlikely until recent times. In my *Antiquity* article of 1971, I have already demolished their criticism of my (and others') assumption that all modern wild sheep are not feral domesticates. The apparently wide-ranging references are in reality highly selective, and not necessarily the first or only ones to the subject e.g. Ryder (*Advance Sci.* 23, 9, 1966), and Chaplin in Ucko and Dimbleby, *The Domestication and Exploitation of Plants and Animals* (1969) are omitted. The summary and conclusions to this chapter are, however, excellent, and give a well-balanced view with a plea for closer inter-disciplinary co-operation.

The section on case histories begins with a review by Wilkinson of the relevance of current experimental domestication to pre-history, starting with a musk ox and antelopes. In listing a whole range of relationships between man and animals from fishes to kangaroos the author gets carried away. Some of these can hardly be seen as precursors of con-

ventional domestication. Similar relationships exist throughout the animal kingdom, and one must not exaggerate their importance to domestication, which must be here considered in its narrow sense.

This is followed by a paper on the prehistoric exploitation of the gazelle in Palestine, another on a modern reindeer economy in Greenland, and a third by M. R. Jarman who seeks to demonstrate the existence of red deer economies at the close of the European Mesolithic, in which some form of game management or incipient domestication existed. The ease with which red deer have been "domesticated" very recently in Scotland supports such an interpretation of the finds. What interests me is why, given a similar potential in deer, goats, and sheep, only the last two were effectively domesticated, and why only the sheep produced a wide variety of breeds and fleece types.

The volume ends with a papers on plants in Bulgaria, soils in Palestine, and excavations in Anatolia.

M. L. RYDER