

Book Reviews

JOSEPH NEEDHAM, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol 6, *Biology and Biological Technology*, part II, *Agriculture*, by FRANCESCA BRAY. CUP, 1984. xxvii + 724 pp. 13 tables. 271 illustrations. £50.

The dust-jacket of this book reminds us that many superlatives have been used of the previous volumes of *Science and Civilisation in China*, and the first thing to say is that *Agriculture*, written by a much younger author but still within Joseph Needham's personal and intellectual field, is a work worthy of its predecessors meriting many of the same superlatives. This is the first of a number of volumes which will deal with technology rather than science, and it sets high standards of scholarship, judgment and presentation. It is also the first Western attempt to present a technical history of Chinese farming throughout the traditional centuries. It reminds us that the greatest topics in agricultural history are those about which least is written — the growth, rationale and development of the great agricultural societies of Asia. Asian agriculture, still fundamentally traditional in form, continues to maintain approaching one-half of the whole human family; and it has probably always done roughly that. China is only part of this experience, although in recent centuries the largest single part; in earlier centuries it appears likely that India took primacy.

The materials for the history of Chinese agriculture are surprisingly good. Traditional farming systems gave rise to a series of farm manuals which no doubt represent superior practice but which give many indications of closeness to real farming experience. These works depend much upon quotation, century after century, in the Chinese way; and also in the Chinese way, many devote major sections to questions of administration rather than cultivation; but the best are works of great distinction. None, unfortunately, is yet translated into English in full, though *Ch'i Min Yao Shu* (*Essential techniques for the peasantry*), the most important of all, written around 535 AD, has been the subject of a brief analytical summary in English, with extensive quotations, by Shih Sheng-han; and Ms Bray herself promises us a full translation. Books of this kind give advice not only on cultivation and land management but also on orchard trees, silkworm management, poultry, animals and fish, manufacture of food products such as soy sauce, storage and marketing of farm outputs, and (in *Ch'i Min Yao Shu*) even cookery and preserving. The tradition of these books is quite well known and well documented among Chinese scholars both before Liberation and since, with reprints, contemporary annotated editions, a few translations into modern Chinese, and so forth;



FIGURE 104

The caption says this drill is used for sowing wheat, barley, or setaria millet. TKKW 1/15b.

and there has also been considerable Japanese study in this and related fields; but it has been unfamiliar in the West until the present time. These traditional books represent the foundation of the present author's materials, and they display, as she says, a unique degree of continuity. As well as general farm manuals like *Ch'i Min Yao Shu*, they include a long tradition of farm calendars (related more closely, surely, to the predictability of the east Asian seasons, than to the 'harsh and unpredictable climate'), and a wide range of supplementary written materials. In addition Ms Bray has cast her net widely beyond the standard written sources — into archaeology, modern agronomy, Western travellers and writers, and so forth. The main body of the book reviews the main farm operations and techniques (field systems, tillage implements, sowing, fertilization, weeding, harvesting and storage), and the main crops. In these chapters, Ms Bray is scholarly, dispassionate and sensible. She knows her sources and deploys them masterfully. The longest and most detailed chapter,

on implements, is particularly well-informed and perceptive; and she returns later to the same theme, in the form of the possible Chinese origins of the European seed-drill. It is when handling objects, whether ploughs, 'transplanting horses', archaeological finds, or the written sources themselves, that Ms Bray writes at her best. Even so, when she has a path of judgment to tread among conflicting opinions based on limited or feeble evidences, in fields far removed from implements and documents such as the origins and spread of maize or the origins of wet-rice terracing, she does so purposefully, judiciously and securely. The author's scholarship is fortified by valuable features common to the whole series — painstaking referencing, elaborate bibliographical apparatus (in Chinese and Japanese as well as in European languages), spacious treatment, generous illustrative material, and welcome identification of Chinese words and names by characters in footnotes. The idiosyncratic and now sadly outdated romanization system, once adopted for the series, is no doubt here to stay.

As the author points out in her Introduction, 'This volume differs from its predecessors in that agriculture is not a science but a technology.' 'Agriculture is *par excellence* the technical system that mediates between nature and society.' In fact this book is addressed to agriculture itself, and relates only rather indifferently to either nature or society. It is introduced by a rather perfunctory review of Chinese farm regions based on the work of John Lossing Buck in the 1930s. The author points out that twentieth-century data probably relate only imperfectly to conditions before 1600 AD (her notional cut-off point) or even before 1800; but does not attempt the construction of an alternative scheme of Chinese regions. In fact Buck's work is itself vulnerable to criticism as a data-gathering exercise based heavily upon over-confidence in cropping zones as the key to rural realities among American geographers of that period. One of its weaknesses was failure to recognize any course of change within these formulations, or to make allowance for development over time. Ms Bray herself instances respects in which Buck must not be considered an authority for the historic past, but nevertheless appears willing to accept him in that guise. In fact, dependence upon Buck has tended to over-formalize and under-represent very real historic distinctions in Chinese landscapes about which Ms Bray is perfectly well informed, such as those between a dryfield north and a paddy south, between mountain and plain, and between the old-settled north China plain and the north-east which remained detached socially from China until late in the nineteenth century. It is good to see the author introduce the nine regions of north and central China proposed in the ancient

Yü-kung text, but strange to see these compared to those suggested by Buck, or indeed to see two such disparate partners jammed into one intellectual bed.

Society as well as nature is taken rather more for granted than might have been expected in so intelligent and sensitive a book. The view of the Chinese countryside outlined here is formal rather than functional — for instance, going back to land, Ms Bray's discussion of paddy land relates mainly to physical form, and hardly at all to functional organization; and similarly her discussion of rice cultivation remains close to technical materials and does not really attempt to develop various useful insights about labour, yields and cropping systems. Here however there is a prior preoccupation — relations between farm progress in China and farm progress in Europe. When the author returns to the functioning of paddy systems, discussion is still brief and over-general.

A tendency to neglect functional realities has general as well as specific implications. Most Chinese rural landscapes are extremely full of people — indeed, this is their most remarkable characteristic, and one which they share with those of Java, Vietnam and many parts of India, and even Japan. The tremendous population growth which underlies this crowding began in China towards the end of the period represented by this book if that is taken to terminate around 1600; but it was based upon the organized countrysides of the Ming dynasty, represented by books such as *Nung Cheng Ch'üan Shu* of which the author gives so lucid and enthusiastic an account. These are the mature landscapes of her history. Although the expansion of the Chinese population towards its modern total is a subject primarily for the eighteenth century (it was in full flood in 1800), and the expansions in India and Java for the nineteenth, nevertheless there is a case for taking the maintenance of very large and densely settled populations more seriously in the centuries which preceded the modern expansion. This is particularly so when the modern expansion took place with the help of technical processes which are discussed elsewhere in the book. Here too agriculture is discussed with less reference to its social relationships than might have been hoped for. One difficulty, of course, is the idea of a cut-off period in time in itself. Agriculture in China up to the present and for the foreseeable future is and is likely to remain traditional in all essentials, and particularly in its social relationships; in these conditions, no date in time can represent a convincing terminus.

FRANK LEEMING

MARGARET GELLING, *Place Names in the Landscape*. Dent, 1984. 326 pp. £15.

The study of English place-names has taken a new direction during the last two decades. Dr Gelling's earlier book, *Signposts to the Past* (1978) was acclaimed by historians and place-name scholars alike. This new volume will convince historians that the linguistic analysis of settlement names can be integrated with other approaches to the study of early history in a fruitful manner. As Margaret Gelling says, for example, among the words for habitations *aern*, *bōthl* (and variants *bōtl*, *bold*) and *stōw* may be instanced as terms used only in the naming of places which were, or later became, of some administrative importance. 'It follows that Much and Little Cowarne in Herefordshire are not named from an ordinary cowshed, and that Colerne (a large parish and ten-hide Domesday estate in Wiltshire) should be seen as more than a shed in which charcoal was stored' — sentiments that agricultural historians will applaud.

Earlier place-name studies were dominated by the search for exceptional names; topographical names aroused little interest. Dr Gelling makes it clear that topographical settlement names (as distinct from minor- and field-names) outnumber other types of names recorded by AD 730. Moreover, they predominate in areas shown by archaeologists to have had the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlers, and they predominate as names of parishes. Collectively, their historical importance is undoubted.

Readers of the *Review* will also welcome the statement that names in all instances must be considered in relation to the landscape. 'The general picture which emerges is of a people in possession of a vast and subtle topographical vocabulary.' This is illustrated vividly by her suggestion that *waesse* signifies 'land by a meandering river which floods and drains quickly', an idea inspired by noting that a broad lake near Buildwas had evaporated overnight, thus enabling cattle to graze the following day on the recently flooded meadows.

Dr Gelling does not analyse the results of her investigation. Her aim is the more modest one of stimulating others to undertake field work. The book consists of a short introduction and a lengthy series of essays on topographical names arranged alphabetically. She disarms possible criticism of some of her derivations by acknowledging the disadvantages of a single author undertaking such a large-scale work. Topographical names usually present fewer linguistic difficulties for the non-specialist than most other early names. They therefore provide opportunities for historians to make a positive contribution towards furthering this line of research. Dr Gelling's book will be the essential starting point.

DAVID HEY

MICHAEL HAVINDEN, *The Somerset Landscape*. Hodder and Stoughton, 1981. 272 pp. £7.95.

This book is a delightful introduction to the county of Somerset. It is written by an economic historian who knows much about agrarian history, agrarian societies and about the business of farming itself; it is therefore saved from the platitudes of landscape 'histories' in which economic and social contexts are relegated to the status of an appendix of inappropriate or poorly understood models. Mr Havinden's passages on post-medieval enclosure, for example, form the most perceptive account yet written of reduction of open fields and wastes in a county which experienced a wide and complex range of enclosure processes, contributing in part to the diversity of its landscapes today. Again, behind his adventurous yet deft handling of Domesday statistics lies the common sense of an agriculturalist; his brief calculations lead him to the conclusion that, high moorlands and low 'moors' apart, Somerset was already relatively densely peopled at the time of the Conquest. And throughout there are many little insights and observations — on the houses of native gentry and newcomers, for example — which show that the eye of a professional historian has been turned on the Somerset landscape. The book also differs from some other volumes in the same series in that Mr Havinden decided to devote half of it to surveys of the several regions into which he chose to divide the shire. This was a wise decision, for the pattern made by Somerset's farming regions is a good deal more complex than that of many an English county. The decision has allowed him to escape, to a degree, from the slavery of conventional chronological divisions which contort interpretations in most books on landscape history: the Anglo-Saxons relentlessly advancing; early medieval settlement everywhere expanding; later medieval landscapes predictably contracting; the sixteenth century beautifully blossoming; and the nineteenth ubiquitously despoiling. For each of his regions Mr Havinden describes what was unusual or distinctive in its evolution after about 1500. For each he provides a series of thumb-nail sketches of principal towns; taken together, these make an excellent guide to a collection of urban places which, as we might expect, is as diverse as the county's farming regions. The sketches are written with a freshness which comes from recent observation in the field. The same quality marks the work as a whole, as it must in a book intended in part for the general reader.

Yet if Somerset historians complain that the book is not a definitive account of the making of the county's landscapes, particularly before 1500, it is only because their own researches (not least this reviewer's) have been so painfully slow. They simply have not completed the background work

with sufficient thoroughness. The county offers ample scope for research into some of the most intriguing problems of English agrarian history, of which three may be mentioned here. Unlike parts of eastern, north-eastern and midland England, much of what was later to become the county of Somerset enjoyed almost a quarter of a millennium during which internal development of a Romanized society proceeded unchecked by 'the nations of the men of strange speech'. Like other eminent writers on west-country landscapes, Mr Havinden lays a dead hand on this period by evoking plague and emigration to Armorica as disruptive forces. Romance aside, it may well turn out that the period contributed much of significance to the present-day Somerset landscape; and if that is the case the county will tell us something about rural societies which elsewhere vanished leaving few traces. We shall know only when the terms in the county's very rich store of Anglo-Saxon charters, which cast a backwards glance into the 'darkness', have been analysed along lines laid down by Mrs Hooke's work on the west midlands; when lack of a place-name survey by experts, which must have infuriated Mr Havinden in his early chapters, has been rectified; and when full and systematic use has been made of the evidence of ecclesiastical topography, which is there for all of us to employ if we are patient enough, and loving enough, to tease out its meanings. Second, parts of lowland Somerset, her rich vales and her marshland fringes, supported some of the densest populations of all of medieval England. Mr Havinden's perceptive re-working of Domesday statistics hints that they may have been well peopled already at the time of the Conquest, thereby casting further doubts on the concept of a poorly developed and late developing south-west. Over the following two hundred years, further and probably very fast growth produced those bursting villages from which Postan drew some of his evidence for late thirteenth-century crises and in which Titow calculated a man/land ratio of one person to perhaps as little as 1.5 acres. The agricultural practices which nourished such high densities need to be explored in work akin to BMS Campbell's meticulous research on another highly distinctive marsh fringed region — in north-east Norfolk — and we need to know more about relationships between marshland resources, reclamation and growth of population in these extraordinary communities. Third, Somerset is remarkable in that, according to Schofield's figures, it was the second most wealthy English county in the early sixteenth century, yet had ranked only twenty-third at the beginning of the fourteenth. Gross figures such as these undoubtedly conceal even more marked accumulation and concentration of wealth in some parts of the county. 'Crisis and

decline, 1320-1460', implying a downward spiral, is not the happiest of headings for a sub-section on Somerset in the later Middle Ages, as the author knows well when he concludes it by describing the lofty Perpendicular of Yeovil church, pointing upwards as evidence for a rather different state of affairs.

H S A FOX

R N DORE (ed), *The Letter Books of Sir William Brereton*. Record Society of Lancashire & Cheshire, 1984. xvii + 534 pp. £25 to non-members.

The letters collected together in this substantial volume all belong to the first half of the year 1645 and will be valued principally by military historians of the English Civil War. The siege of Chester looms large in these pages, but there is much information here about tactics, troop movements, weaponry, the relations between county regiments and between the Committee of Both Kingdoms and the provinces, as well as about pay and army discipline. The text also provides repeated reminders of the religious convictions which animated the Parliamentary war effort.

Readers of this journal, however, will be less concerned with the military side of the war and more likely to be interested in what the letters reveal about its social and economic consequences. This is an area still in need of further investigation and the publication of any source materials dealing with it is to be welcomed. We get some sense here of the disruptions and privations which the war occasioned both for combatants and civilians. Within the besieged city of Chester, we are told, 'they begin to stint the inhabitants to one meal a day... It is said fire, salt and hay are much wanting' (p 186). A later letter tells us that a quarter of veal had just sold there for ten shillings, 'some say 13s 4d'. Outside the city, however, in the rest of the county, conditions were becoming desperate. 'And for money they are so far exhausted betwixt free quartering of our own men and plundering by the enemy, their daily taxations and their weekly mises for these garrisons that they are subject to, that they profess that, being restrained from selling that little cheese which is most of their sustenance, they are not able to contribute any more unless they should sell the very clothes off their backs and their wives and childrens' (p 191).

There are many references in the text to the provisioning of the army with meat and corn and, since the theatre of operations was Cheshire, to supplies of cheese and salt. Plundering is mentioned on a number of occasions, a practice which Brereton deplored and desperately tried to prevent. 'Our reputation is extremely lost hereby with the com-

mon people, who for the most part judge our cause by the demeanour of our army' (p 297). Elsewhere we hear of the requisitioning of horses, carts, even pickaxes and spades. Sir George Booth held back from making further appeals to the country people in April 1645, conscious that their chief concern at that point was with seedtime.

The standard of editing of the four letter books included in this volume is high and represents a considerable achievement in view of the problems posed by the hasty copying, errors, and use of cyphers in the originals. All the more pity, then, that so much skilful and patient editorial labour has had its usefulness reduced by the omission of maps and, above all, an index (presumably on grounds of expense). The index of names, places and (possibly) subjects will come in the second volume, but we are warned that 'there is bound to be a sizeable gap between publication of the two volumes'.

R C RICHARDSON

A FENTON, H CHEAPE and R K MARSHALL (eds), *Review of Scottish Culture*. John Donald, Edinburgh, 1984. vii + 104 pp. £5.

To launch a new journal is always an act of faith. This is particularly so at a time when many libraries will only take a new periodical if an existing one of equal cost is cancelled. For a price of £5 for the first annual issue, *Review of Scottish Culture* provides good value though, with over a hundred large-format pages and attractive illustrations.

The journal is produced by John Donald publishers who have, within a few years, made a major contribution to academic publishing on Scottish topics. The editors claim that their new periodical fills a gap in the available publication outlets for work on Scottish material culture. They are probably right. Although existing archaeological, geographical and historical journals provide some scope, many folk-life journals have fallen on hard times within recent years and there is no specific forum within Scotland for the publication of research of this kind.

The first issue demonstrates the editors' broad definition of 'material culture' and the interdisciplinary nature of work in this field with articles by archaeologists, geographers, historians and museum specialists. It is difficult to decide how a journal is likely to develop on the basis of the first issue though. The early numbers of 'Scottish Studies' were far more wide-ranging in their content than those of subsequent years. One hopes that *Review of Scottish Culture* will maintain its broad perspective and will not become too narrow and specialized.

The editors provide a brief statement of intent regarding the aims and scope of their journal but it is

a pity that they did not go further and write, or commission, an introductory review article surveying the current position of studies of Scottish culture. R H Buchanan's short paper 'Box beds and bannocks. The Living Past' goes some way to meeting this need but at a more general level.

The volume is dedicated to T Henderson, the first curator of the new Shetland museum in Lerwick, who died in 1982, and one of his stories, 'The wreck of the Lastdrager', is included. There are two papers on material culture at a domestic scale — on wooden tumbler locks and clay tobacco pipes — but the editors' aim of interpreting 'material culture' more widely is shown by papers on wet-nursing and the pre-industrial origins of the Scottish tenement. Agricultural historians will be particularly interested in R C Boud's article on the development of agricultural improvement societies in Scotland between 1723 and 1835. The author provides a useful gazetteer of 133 societies. Unfortunately the numbers of the entries in the gazetteer are not reproduced on the accompanying maps so that one is left to speculate on the location of some of the more obscure societies.

The journal looks as if it will provide a useful new outlet for research on aspects of Scottish agricultural history, as well as other aspects of material culture, and the reviewer wishes the editors and the publisher every success with their venture.

IAN D WHYTE

JOYCE YOUNGS, *Sixteenth-Century England*. The Pelican Social History of Britain, 1984. 444 pp. £2.95 (paper) and £14.95 (cloth).

During the last two decades or so the content of modern economic history courses — and textbooks — has changed substantially. Gone are the great social issues such as poor law reform, drains and housing, post-Napoleonic repression and Chartism, education and trade unions. To compensate, social history has emerged replete with its own texts and courses, its own jargon and journals. But for teachers and students of the pre-industrial or early-modern period the dichotomy has been less acute. Interests have shifted — among economic historians the institutional approach had almost disappeared — but economic and social historians continue to share many common interests. Many studies, and especially the growing number on local themes, defy an easy classification and bridge the two branches of study. Joyce Youngs's new book which appears in the Pelican Social History of Britain series is firmly in line with this trend. Although this is in a social history series it is rooted, quite rightly, in the study of economic change. The argument is presented in fifteen chapters which deal with the major issues of

economic and social life: occupations and life in town and country; social hierarchy and relationships; population change and price movements; the church, and education; crime and armed risings; poverty and unemployment; social groupings and allegiances at family, county and national levels. The reading on which Professor Youings's study is based is impressively wide and the examples used to illuminate generalizations are well chosen. In short, the book has much to offer, especially to those not entirely fresh to the subject. Throughout, Professor Youings is advisedly wary about the possible abuses of statistics, whether they relate to migration patterns, wage rates, or population growth: thus, 'it is a sobering thought that the splendid figures now available for the country's overall population each year from 1541 are based on the registers of just over four hundred out of some ten thousand parishes in England' (p 20). Even more sobering, perhaps, although not mentioned here, is the fact that much of the explanatory framework in Wrigley and Schofield's enormous work is based on the reconstitution of families from a mere dozen parishes.

For agrarian historians and their students chapter two on landlords and tenants in early Tudor England usefully threads its way through difficult terrain with valuable glances back at previous centuries. Similarly, chapter seven on the land market is a judicious summary which, of course, incorporates the author's own excellent work on the confiscated monastic estates. Changes in agricultural techniques are dealt with briefly at the start of chapter ten, which is entitled 'New Horizons'. Unfortunately, the discussion is so compressed that in places controversial matters become hard fact. Before long I expect to meet the following passage in an undergraduate essay:

In the great midland plain farmers were slowly but surely, from the 1560s, abandoning the rigid distinction between arable and pasture land and adopting the more flexible 'up-and-down' husbandry, 'up' for grain and 'down' for grass. This must have led to radical changes, even total abandonment, of time-honoured local customary rotations, with considerable consequences for community life. Corn-yields on some farms crept up to as much as twice their former levels, and with the better grass, though with as yet little selective breeding, the quality of stock slowly improved (p 252).

How far this process had spread by 1600 we are not told, nor, in the even briefer discussion of water-meadows, is there any comment about their confined geographical location.

However, agriculture forms only a relatively small part of the study. Professor Youings set out to write a general textbook on sixteenth-century social

history and it is as such that the success of the volume must be judged. The first and arguably the most difficult task facing the textbook writer is to decide on the structure to be adopted, and Joyce Youings opted for a compromise combining chronological and thematic treatments. There are five chapters in each of three sections, each section covering about a third of the century, although two or three chapters are allowed to range over the whole period. Unfortunately the three major sections are not identified in the text and the inattentive reader may slide over page 21 — where the structure is revealed — and remain confused. In addition the material under discussion refuses to remain in the slots provided. Thus chapter one — entitled 'Occupations' — belongs to the years 1500 to c.1530, but some examples are drawn from later in the century. Moreover, many of the general comments in the chapter are true for much, if not the whole of the century, not just for the first three decades. The novice reader will face two further problems. First, there are various places where prior knowledge of the period is required. The causes of the 'rebellions in 1536-7 in Lincolnshire and the north' are discussed in some detail but not the course of events, and the uninitiated would find it difficult to discover what exactly was going on in 1549 (pp 210-216). Similarly some readers might like to know what Daniel Hochstetter and Thomas Thurland were mining in England (p 242), or what had happened in Drake's 'episode at Nombre de Dios' (p 245). Secondly, the need to compress arguments has led Professor Youings to make comments which will confuse newcomers to the literature of the period. Thus a discussion of the early history of the Russian Company explains the development of the joint-stock principle followed by the statement that:

The Russian Company itself, and also the Levant Company formed in 1581, was later to revert to private trading under regulation, like the older Merchant Adventurers' Company. Perhaps it was the open-field tradition, individual proprietorship under communal regulation, which best served Englishmen's talents for collaboration (p 236).

It will take a perceptive reader to discover from this the basic characteristics of the regulated trading company. These two problems — the expectation of prior knowledge and the compression of discussion — are exacerbated by the absence of footnotes. The experienced reader can get a great deal of pleasure from trying to 'spot' the sources, but undergraduates need greater help than the, admittedly useful, annotated guide to further reading can provide. What, one would like to know, is the authority for the suggestion that many of the 6000 or so Kentish men who served abroad in the later Elizabethan army 'eventually returned home, but

diseased and unlikely to beget healthy children?' (p 152).

Occasionally it becomes more difficult to see exactly what is meant by a particular passage; thus we are told that as well as those most dependent on wage-earning:

there were others, perhaps only a minority, at all social levels, whose income failed to keep pace with the rising cost of living, a situation not made easier for them to bear by the rise in the standard of material living which characterized the Elizabethan period' (p 304).

The average undergraduate may have difficulty grasping this passage; similarly, he may be thrown by the statement that blast-furnaces were 'producing iron ore to supply the smiths for the making of tools and utensils' (p 239). The inattentive will also be misled by the statement on p 151 that 'By 1591 overall population growth had actually slackened and was down to only about 2.5 per cent *per annum*, compared, as already noted, with nearly 6 per cent in the 1580s' [my italics]. Of course, these are quinquennial estimates of growth as is revealed on p 148. The discussion of population growth, population densities, price changes, and the like would have benefited from graphic representation: the book does not contain a single map, table, diagram, or graph.

Despite problems there is much of value in *Sixteenth-Century England*; like most textbooks it has the power to annoy, but it can also stimulate. However, it cannot be recommended unreservedly to undergraduates. One final word of warning: buy the paperback — my copy of the hardback is already dropping to pieces.

DONALD WOODWARD

NORMAN J G POUNDS (ed), *The Parliamentary Survey of the Duchy of Cornwall, Parts I and II*. Devon and Cornwall Record Society New Series, Vols 25 and 27. Pp xxiv + 272, continuously paginated. (1982 and 1984). £8 per vol from Asst. Secy. c/o Devon and Exeter Institution, Exeter.

'It is remarkable that the archive of a great agricultural estate such as the Duchy of Cornwall has never been very fully published.' Thus astonished is Charles, the present duke, in his Foreword to this edition of the surveys of 1649, 1650 and 1652. The editor gratefully acknowledges the financial help of the Duke and his Council: let us hope that when the heir apparent succeeds to his wider kingdom he will display the same enthusiasm and generosity to facilitate the publication of the estate records of the Crown proper, to say nothing of the Duchy of Lancaster. He will then get a loyal huzzah at his coronation from agricultural historians.

These Duchy surveys were part of a general survey of Crown lands which followed the confiscations of 1649. The 64 manors concerned lay mainly in Cornwall: those beyond Tamar are mapped in a frontispiece to Part II; in the more crowded map of Cornwall, a frontispiece to Part I, places are numbered and identified by reference to a later Table (p xxi). The boroughs are distinguished from manors in the Cornish map but not in the Devon. The text itself is an alphabetical re-arrangement of the original surveys collated from two surviving series, one in the Duchy record office and one in the Public Record Office.

The editor's Introduction briefly describes the provenance of the surveys and the territories covered together with a tabulation of the number of tenements in each manor and its monetary yields. The reader is left to conduct his own researches into the significance of these numbers and values, and into the varied local economies revealed, which are industrial as well as agrarian. The remarkably varied agricultural resources of the Isles of Scilly are faithfully recorded alongside the remnants of the garrison from the days when they were a Fortress Falklands. The editor makes no attempt to look backward to these tenements as described earlier, often in equal detail (as in Assessment Rolls of 1356 onwards or the great survey of 1337 published by the Society in 1971 as vol 17, curiously omitted from such references as those in note 24, p xiv).

The bulk and detail of the Parliamentary Surveys has presented a difficult editorial problem: the resulting text is a mixture of transcript and calendar, the transcript being identified by single quotation marks, as is any direct quotation occurring within the calendar. This makes a ferocious task for printer and proof reader: since any lost quotation mark, as happens for example somewhere on p 42, makes it impossible to distinguish the end of transcription and the beginning of editorial calendaring. *Id.*, it will be noticed, is employed for two purposes, misleading when (as on p 14) both are employed in adjacent passages: (i) for a tenant's name repeated after a first occurrence but (ii) for every place-name when its modern spelling is identical with that in the document.

The place-name index is very full, and will assist the elucidation of names in the older unpublished surveys. There are inevitable slips in a work of this complexity: Portpigham (*ie* West Looe) becomes East Looe in the headnote to no 32 even though the document itself three lines below reads 'alias Westlooe'; while on the very first page of the Introduction (p ix) a reader might think that the confiscating Parliament of 1649 was that of Mr Attlee's government, since it allegedly met in 'November 1946'. Neither of these slips had been

noted by the time of the *Corrections* on an unnumbered page of Part II. On p xviii the former Courtenay lands incorporated in the Duchy 'be almost wholly devided [*sic*] into small copyhold tenements': Table I on the facing page below shows, however, that there were 156 freehold tenements as against 145 copyhold.

MAURICE BERESFORD

MARGARET SPUFFORD, *The Great Reclothing of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and their Wares in the Seventeenth Century*. The Hambledon Press, 1984. xiv + 258 pp. 28 illustrations. £18.

It is only recently that historians have begun seriously to examine what Dr Spufford calls the domestic framework of living and this study, following on from Dr Thirsk's seminal work, *Economic Policy and Projects*, extends our understanding of this important but neglected subject. In particular, she describes the great variety of goods which the chapmen made available to the ordinary consumer and the minute differences in the prices of items of varying quality. (At times, however, it is difficult to know if wholesale or retail values are being referred to.) Cloth, especially linen, predominated, although a range of drapery and haberdashery ware was also carried. On the basis of this evidence Dr Spufford suggests that a revolution in the standard of clothing and soft furnishings occurred in the post-Restoration period, extending at least as far down the social scale as the poorer sections of the population who left inventories.

The term 'chapman' was given to anyone acting in a middleman capacity but interestingly dead ones tended to be the people discussed in this book, presumably because the others were normally (but not always) given an occupational label that corresponded to their particular specialism. Dr Spufford's chapmen varied in wealth and status, even if their median wealth in the years 1660-1700, £28 (excluding debts), put them on a par with (Cambridgeshire) husbandmen. In contrast to many of the specialist chapmen, however, they had little connection with agriculture. Most worked on foot, although a career cycle is discernible, with the successful ones purchasing a horse to extend the scope of their activities and then eventually establishing themselves in a shop. Some spectacular examples are recounted in the book but they were exceptional and one must sympathize with the majority who continued on foot, growing old in a young man's occupation. They all experienced the hostility felt towards middlemen at the time; those travelling around the country were treated with suspicion by the authorities, whereas in the towns shopkeeper-chapmen met opposition from the linen-drapers and

mercers, who seem to have been motivated by a mixture of snobbery and fear of competition. Dr Spufford admits that there was a disreputable element whose actions influenced attitudes towards the whole class but emphasizes the positive contribution that the chapmen made in bringing essential household supplies and little luxuries to large numbers of people. Concentrations of chapmen existed, often in centres of textile manufacture, but they demonstrably could be found in the remotest parts of the kingdom. Villages were mostly served by pedlars on foot but significantly some chapmen's shops were located in settlements smaller than market towns. Credit underpinned the system and was practised throughout the entire distributive network from the wholesaler at the top down to the humble pedlar who offered easy terms to his clients.

Dr Spufford has written a well-researched book that provides many insights into the social and economic life of early modern Britain. She handles the disparate and fragmentary sources with skill and makes deft use of examples to illustrate her general points. Her analysis of the inventories is particularly judicious and her discussion of their limitations should be read by all those looking at these important but deceptive records. The book itself is well-produced and the long appendix comprising a number of inventories (partly included, one suspects, to make the book of viable length) provides a useful source of reference and a valuable teaching aid for comparison with other occupational groups, although the inclusion of a glossary of terms would have been helpful. There is a wealth of illustrative material but the maps depicting the areas covered by individual chapmen would have been improved by the addition of some basic geographical detail to make the seemingly eccentric circuits intelligible. There are also a few mis-spellings and the anachronistic use of the place name 'Telford' jarred with this native Salopian but these are minor blemishes in what is an immensely enjoyable and informative book.

PETER EDWARDS

DONALD HARMAN AKENSON, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History*. McGill-Queen's University Press, Kingston, Montreal, 1984. Pp xiii + 268. 35 Canadian dollars.

Professor Akenson's industry is fast becoming an embarrassment to other, especially native, Irish historians. This is his tenth book in field since *The Irish Education Experiment* (1970); he has also found time to be a novelist, publisher, academic, and editor of the excellent *Canadian Papers in Rural History*. Till now he has specialized in the story of the Irish at home, but here the focus shifts to Akenson's own

back yard near Kingston, Ontario. The change has produced a forceful and stimulating, if sometimes idiosyncratic, book.

Readers who judge books by their titles and expect another exercise in grand SPSS history à la Thernstrom or Katz, are in for a disappointment. Nor is this really mainly about 'the Irish in Ontario' either: it is more an essay in the economic history of a small township — population 361 in 1803, 3586 in 1846 — in eastern Ontario in the century after 1776. A quick overview shows this. Chapter 1 does a useful job of debunking the myth that Irish emigrants were averse to having a go at farming life abroad; in Ontario the great majority of them ended up on the land. It also reclaims a role for Catholics in emigration to Upper Canada, long stereotyped as a haven of Ulster-Scots. By 1871 Irish-descended Protestants and Catholics together, in a ratio of roughly two-to-one, made up one-third of Ontario's population. Chapter 2 narrows its focus to a specific area, Leeds and Landsdowne township. For almost seventy pages, the Irish do not feature at all. Nor is there much about them in Chapter 3, mainly an interesting and often amusing account of yankee loyalist entrepreneur Joel Stone (pp 66–78, 101–3). Chapter 4 is about another anti-hero, Dublin-born Ogle Gowan, who arrived in Canada in 1829 with loyalist credentials as impressive as any of the earlier settlers, and quickly climbed the local political ladder through his Orange connections. Wounded during the uprising of 1837–8, though 'from a bayonet in the buttock', the tale of this demagogue's rise to respectability takes another thirty pages to tell.

Akenson's excuse for the long excursus on Gowan is that it is 'a metaphor for the radical upgrading in status of the Irish immigrant community'. None such is needed: the next section of this chapter makes the case effectively enough with some generalizations about farming from censal manuscript data in 1842. Akenson's admittedly small sample shows the Irish to have had more land, more acres cleared, and higher average yields than the average settler. That much is interesting and will come as a surprise to some, though perhaps Akenson overargues the case: Marvin McNnis's Ontario-wide data base for 1861 (pp 339–344) puts the Irish slightly below the average by similar criteria. The rest of the chapter is about confessional history, again with little specifically Irish content. Finally the township becomes more industrialized after a fashion, and, curiously enough, the Catholic Irish fared rather poorly — more to form! — in the main town in the area.

Chapter 7 spells out the significance of all this. On the assumption that emigrant communities are good laboratories for testing hypotheses about life at home, Akenson's perspective from Leeds-Landsdowne prompts him to argue for greater cultural

similarities between Catholic and Protestant in Ireland than usually conceded. The claim is based on relative economic performance in Canada only, for these similarities rarely led to partnership or intermarriage. Akenson also claims a basis for attacking the traditional notion of Irish 'failure' in the New World, which goes back to Oscar Handlin and still finds many supporters. For Upper Canada, this seems fair enough: the evidence from myriad recent local US studies remains confusing, however.

CORMAC Ó GRÁDA

D H AKENSON (ed), *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, Vol IV. Langdale Press, 1984. 338 pp. \$19.95.

The papers in this volume range widely in subject matter, methodology, and purpose. Some analyse broad trends and developments; others deal with relatively narrow questions. Some employ quantitative data and theories from the social sciences; others rely primarily on qualitative evidence and personal intuition. Some suggest explanations of historical circumstance; others offer solutions to research problems and aid in using historical records. All, it is the editor's implied hope, will further our understanding of rural history and its relationship to other fields of Canadian history.

Several of the papers investigate issues related to the economics of farming. Based on responses to a detailed questionnaire sent out by a British colonial official, R E Ankli and K J Duncan plausibly estimate that farm-making expenses in Ontario in the mid-nineteenth century were, at the very minimum, £100 plus the cost of land, which ran from a few shillings to £7 per acre, depending on the amount of improvement, location, and quality. Their findings suggest that for a young Canadian to enter farming with a reasonable prospect of success required a substantial, though normally not unattainable, investment. W L Marr's comparison of owner- and tenant-operated farms in York County, Ontario, in 1871 reveals support for the agricultural ladder thesis, minor differences (favouring owners) in farm size and capital stock, and similarity in overall productivity. The evidence sustains the conclusions, but Marr misses an opportunity to relate them to those of corresponding studies of the nineteenth-century United States. E C Gray and B E Prentice, using land transfers in the original deed records, trace movements in rural land prices from 1842 to 1981, and speculate that successive farm improvements and the rising demand for agricultural products were the principal factors in the secular appreciation of values. Their time series employs, inexplicably, current rather than constant prices, which unnecessarily complicates its interpretation; the authors might also have developed more

rigorous tests of their explanatory hypotheses. The inclusion of K Kelly's study of commercial agriculture in northern Bengal, India, during the nineteenth century is curious, as it is the only piece that does not deal with Canada. Still, this is a deftly argued, if somewhat overdrawn, account of the change from an emphasis on export staples, especially indigo, to a diversified agriculture of foodstuffs and raw materials in response to modifications in land rent payments and an end to use restrictions on leased land, both of which freed tenants to cultivate the most profitable crops, and to the expansion and broadening of farm markets, which provided the incentives to modify cropping patterns.

Another quartet of papers deals with social-demographic questions. R S Dille culled the biographical history of Waterloo County, Ontario, for Mennonite settlers and their descendants, and discovered a comparatively stable subgroup within the population. Occupation was the main discernible difference between the 32 per cent who left the county (most for elsewhere in Ontario) and those who persisted over the three-quarters of a century covered by the study: professionals, businessmen, and skilled workers tended to leave; farmers, clerks, and unskilled workers tended to stay. Employing a 'life course' model, which postulates that the timing of key career transitions is a function of personal objectives adjusted in accordance with individual circumstances and societal norms, D A Norris analysed a predominantly Irish Protestant township in mid-nineteenth-century Ontario. He found families with strong kinship and community bonds, and a common migratory background that stretched back to Ireland and progressed through stages to what, we are told, was for many their final destination. Neither the explanatory power of the model nor the nature of the evidence, however, makes convincing the homogeneity, stability, and personal success that Norris attributes to this group of settlers. In yet another paper on Ontario in the nineteenth century, G J Lockwood argues that Irish immigrants in a township in the eastern part of the province successfully adapted to their new home by responding to a variety of economic opportunities. That they enjoyed a steadily improving standard of living, as Norris maintains, seems beyond question; that this was due in large part to the confidence they gained from gravitating to regions of poor quality soil, where competition for land was weak and valuations low, seems of dubious validity. E Padolsky and I Pringle describe their procedures in organizing a demographic data file to be used in constructing a grid — or areal framework — for a linguistic survey of the Ottawa Valley. A demographic model, according to the authors, is superior to the more common geometric or topographical

models because it allows for an analytically appropriate subdivision of the area under investigation and for more precise definition and selection of representative communities and regions; moreover, the resulting grid has predictive capabilities for identifying locations of special linguistic interest or importance.

Governmental action provides the unifying theme for another group of papers. I MacPherson and J H Thompson chart the World War II transformation of agriculture on the Canadian prairies that brought a dramatic shift out of wheat and into feed grains and livestock production, a more efficient organization of farm labour, an increased pace of mechanization, and more systematic marketing procedures. In the face of wartime exigencies, the federal government, working closely with farm organizations, implemented policies designed to promote and facilitate each of these developments. The changes may have been inevitable, as the authors claim, but their suggestion that war-induced intervention provided for a more orderly reconstruction than would otherwise have occurred needs further study. B M Gough's informative essay recounts the efforts of the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company, a subsidiary of the Hudson Bay Company, to settle and develop the agricultural potential of the colony of Vancouver Island at the behest of the British government, which was anxious to secure the area against American penetration. Although the company's attempt from 1849 to 1857 to set up a system of corporate farming failed, due in part to unwise policies and in part to fortuitous circumstances, the concern left its mark on the early history of the island, played a role in averting American absorption, and established a precedent for future government-business ventures. Easily the most enjoyable of this collection is C J Brannigan's piece on a libel suit brought in an upper Canada frontier community during the 1840s by an influential minister-cum-businessman and his family against a local school teacher for defaming their good name. Besides making fascinating reading, the story demonstrates the maturity of the legal system and its effectiveness in resolving personal disputes in sparsely settled outposts of the country. B Osborne and R Pike evaluate the factors behind the rising demand for postal service in central Canada from 1851 to 1911. Adopting a 'public works' philosophy as their operative principle, provincial governments responded by expanding and upgrading the system and in doing so, the authors contend, contributed significantly to modernization of the region.

Finally, T A Hillman has performed a valuable service to scholars of Ontario by providing a statutory chronology and genealogy that traces the evolution of boundaries and place-names of subdivisions in the eastern section of the province.

Notwithstanding some unevenness in quality and a few editorial oversights, this anthology expands our knowledge of Canadian (and Indian) rural history and should contribute importantly to broader syntheses and general works on the subject.

D L WINTERS

A GAILEY, *Rural Houses of the North of Ireland*. John Donald, Edinburgh, 1984. x + 289 pp. 269 figs. £25.

It is both a privilege and a pleasure to review Mr Gailey's book, especially only a few months after doing likewise for the similar book from the same publisher on the vernacular architecture of Brittany. John Donald Publishers are currently doing the subject proud, for books covering Scotland and North Yorkshire and Cleveland also come from the same house, releasing into the study quite suddenly a formidable mass of data and not a few ideas for many to consider.

Alan Gailey is Keeper of the Department of Buildings at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum; whatever official backing he may have received, his book is clearly the result of enthusiasm, application, and many a busman's holiday. It has too an impeccable, and quite distinctive, pedigree, acknowledged in the dedication to Estyn Evans and rooted throughout in long-term examination of the subject-matter by personal fieldwork. The approach is cultural, geographical, archaeological, ethnological, anthropological, folk-lorist, rather than historical or architectural in the senses of trying to narrate or make value judgments about design. Indeed, the distinction is one of which the author is well-aware, drawing attention to it in his brief discussion (p 11) of the different traditions underlying the development of studies of vernacular buildings on either side of the Irish Sea. This occurs in a stimulating, wide-ranging first chapter, 'Vernacular Housing and the Built Environment' which, as well as providing a pertinent opening to the book, deserves a life of its own as a general paper for an audience wider than that which will be attracted by the geographically-limited subject-matter itself.

The book is otherwise largely arranged on a thematic basis. Chapter Two deals with early and medieval houses in 12 pages, not summarily but completely: how satisfying it must be to be able to discuss every single known example of one's subject from the early Neolithic to c.AD1600 from a whole country (not just Northern Ireland) in such a compass. Thereafter, abandoning chronology, we proceed from construction and size through wall

materials, the roof, the hearth and chimney to floors and piercing before moving into synthesis with discussions of house types and hearth-lobby houses in particular. Expanding to more general issues, the author reviews matters in a British perspective in two chapters which must excite comment in and east of Aberystwyth and then withdraws slightly, despite a title of 'The House and Society', to his own evidence again; yet here, paradoxically, is much that is actually germane to students working elsewhere and not only in studying vernacular houses. The book ends with a brief look at farmhouses, farm buildings and farmyards in Northern Ireland alone, to which area the last chapter on conservation and restoration is limited, though some of the problems are familiar enough elsewhere.

The penultimate chapter apart, there may appear to be little in all this about agrarian history. The houses studied, however, are without exception both expressions of and evidence for a deeply agrarian way of life. This is so from the 'creats' — the temporary summer dwellings of transhumance — through the stone-built thatched one-room houses occasionally still in use to the 'degenerate-formal Georgian' farmhouses that characterize the countryside today. Embedded in them too is not just a local vernacular but much material relevant to wider issues such as the origins and development of the long-house (here called the 'byre-dwelling'), the variations on the lobby-entrance house, and the range and extent of different roof structures among which the cruck in several forms bulks large. Given the Anglo-Irish connection, there is also much implicit here of a 'compare and contrast' nature for arguments about models of diffusion or invasion, in this context of course politely called Plantation.

The book is well-written and well-produced. The line drawings are unfussy and clear, though as a medium of communication they suffer from non-standard reduction to different scales; the far larger number of in-text half-tones are on the whole reproduced much better than in many another offset litho production and are a crucial component of the presentation. Misprints are almost entirely absent, which makes 'neotholic' (p 16), a gem by any standards, the more remarkable. Following international scientific practice, all measurements are given in metric, an irrelevance as far as the builders of Northern Ireland's rural houses were concerned, and without their imperial equivalents significant dimensions, such as a house width of 16 ft expressed as 4.88 m, can actually be obscured. Any major work, however, can absorb such pinpricks without its integrity being questioned or its status impugned. Alan Gailey has produced a scholarly landmark in the study of rural houses in the British Isles; that it comes from and is about an area whence, for the

outsider, most news is currently bad news makes it all the more stimulating, both intellectually and as a portrait of another kind of reality.

P J FOWLER

SAMUEL CLARK and JAMES S DONNELLY JR (eds), *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest 1780-1914*. Manchester University Press, 1983. Pp viii + 454. £29.50.

This is a very substantial volume of essays, confirming incidentally, as it was printed in America, the high quality of American book production. It is a less unified volume than the title suggests, consisting of a group of essays dealing with the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, closely related to the themes of the volume, and two other groups of essays, one dealing with orthodox politics of a rural or agrarian character, the other concerning itself with the rural labourer, the trader in rural life and politics, and turn-of-the-century conflict between graziers and smallholders. The real strength of the volume lies in the solidity of the individual contributions. However, a unifying framework is created by a general introduction, separate introductions to the three sections into which the book is divided, and a concluding agenda for research. The chapters by Donnelly on the Pastorini prophecy — a strange prophecy foretelling conflict and final overwhelming of the protestants which caught a grip on the rural mind around 1820 — and by Roberts which goes a long way to making sense of the confused and confusing conflict of the Caravats and Shanavests which was so prominent in Munster in the first decade of the nineteenth century, are both admirable studies. Miller's essay on the agrarian or sectarian conflict in county Armagh in the 1780s is an equally effective piece of writing, and these three essays are supplemented by a pioneering article by Dickson on the impact of growing fiscal burdens in the 1790s.

What these contributions bring out collectively is a substantial amount of popular politicization, justifying the editors' observation that 'the Irish case gives little support to the view that peasants are incapable of political organization' (p 15). While recognized on a number of occasions, this insight is not elaborated though it clearly merits further examination. Professor Miller's study of county Armagh points to the political framework of the county's troubles, and it is within a political frame-

work rather than an agrarian one that relations within the county deteriorated in the 1780s and 1790s.

On the whole, while the book recognizes the cultural forces behind unrest and changes in its pattern, they do not get as much explicit recognition as the essays on the early period themselves suggest they merit. However, the agenda for further work does recognize the possibility of parallels with societies such as those of southern Italy and Corsica (p 421). The essays on post-1848 politics are on orthodox political activity. The editors themselves recognize a marked contrast between the nature of protest activity before and after the 1840s, and this may to some extent call in question their own emphasis on the late 1870s as 'a great turning point in modern Irish history' (p 273). The problem of the social historian lies in part in the fact that the approach in Irish political history has tended to unduly accentuate the episodic character of events at the expense of attention to the remorseless transition which runs through all of nineteenth-century Irish history.

In their own demesne the editors somewhat uncharacteristically contradict their own interest in long-term trends by an emphasis on the 'rancher'-peasant conflict as a novelty of the post-1840s, drawing a correlation between this phenomenon and the mass evictions of the 1840s and 1850s. This emphasis is derived from the essay by Jones on 'The cleavage between graziers and peasants in the land struggle, 1890-1910', which is the least happy piece in the volume. However, this issue was a real but relatively minor one of its day, pursued in highly coloured language by its supporters. The editors themselves elsewhere recognize that it had antecedents in the eighteenth century (p 423), and indeed one of the articles in the volume, Roberts's, persuasively relates the Shanavest-Caravat conflict to a class divide between larger and smaller landholders in Munster, a region in which the class theme had already become persistent in the second half of the eighteenth century.

The achievement of this volume is to have commissioned a substantial number of solid contributions which are likely to become standard sources of reference for both social and political historians. The introductory and later editorial commentaries are probably also the best guide to the large but uneven literature on rural unrest and politics.

L M CULLEN

Shorter Notice

F W J MCCOSH, *Boussingault*. D Reidel Publishing Company, 1984. xviii + 280 pp. £35.50.

Of the sciences, chemistry had an early importance in the understanding of agriculture and in solving problems in agricultural production. Boussingault (1802-1887), from an unconventional

background, made important contributions to agriculture, agricultural chemistry and agricultural education. Dr McCosh has produced a straightforward account of Boussingault's life that sets his career in a social as well as a scientific context.

JEREMY ELSTON