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Book Reviews

RICHARD M SMITH (ed), *Land, Kinship and Life Cycle*. CUP, 1984. xiii + 547 pp. £40.

A book of fifteen essays by different authors and over 500 pages on the theme of land, kinship and life cycle is likely to attract the interest of more than a small group of specialist readers already working in the field. In that case, the reader needs to be prepared in some way for the current angles of approach and the documentary sources used in the subsequent essays. Richard Smith attempts this in a long first chapter but it makes tough reading, partly because it ranges too widely, partly because it seeks to generalize over much. It leads the reader into many byways and leaves him at the end without any clear framework in which to fit the more detailed studies that follow. It is best read last of all.

Easier to comprehend and positively stimulating are the next six essays on the Middle Ages that examine different places under different tenurial conditions before and after the Black Death, and show some clear trends and changes in the workings of kinship and the occupation of land. The abrupt alteration in the ratio of people to land in the mid-fourteenth century could not fail to leave clear traces, and these are effectively demonstrated in rural places in East Anglia by Bruce Campbell, Richard Smith, and Jack Ravensdale; by Ian Blanchard in some Derbyshire and Somerset villages where industry temporarily supplemented agriculture; and by Christopher Dyer and Zvi Razi in the West Midlands. The weight of the evidence falls on different aspects of the story, but between them all they underline the partitioning of land, multiple tenancies, and family disputes before the Black Death, in contrast with the larger holdings and more strongly differentiated peasantry that gradually emerged thereafter. Jack Ravensdale emphasizes the changing content of manorial custom, and in particular the changing status of women, especially widows, when customary land ceased to be a scarce commodity and became, instead, a drug on the market. The subtlety of changes within a formally stable structure is the essential message here. Similarly Ian Blanchard's evidence of rural industries

surging and fading, or moving to other places, reminds us of the transitory nature of many strategies for survival—an important lesson this, for all periods and not just for the fifteenth century. But Ian Blanchard's wider perspective at this point on the question of strategies narrows unaccountably at others. For example, he is puzzled by the seeming sale of pieces of land at one date and their return to the same family at another; he can only explain it by some ancient group memory of rights that permit the resumption of once-owned land. He does not contemplate the possibility of an unwritten custom (that is found in some villages in Spain to this day) obliging sellers of land first to offer their property to kin and/or neighbours; again, when reconstructing family relationships, he never sees mutual aid, and support gladly given, between fathers and sons, but only 'tyrannical paternalism'. This is only half a view of reality. Zvi Razi uses Halesowen families to emphasize the need for family pedigrees to be fully explored, if the historian is to gauge correctly the influence of kinship on changing land patterns. This is a salutary reminder, especially as it draws attention to the women involved in some way in almost every land transaction. Yet his own analysis is not free from criticism. He reckons a transfer of land from parents to son-in-law as a transfer between kin, while that between husband and wife is not. This procedure draws objections from Christopher Dyer in a second contribution that has the welcome flavour of constructive debate between the essayists. Medieval historians already stand on firmer ground when studying land, kinship, and life cycle than the early modernists.

Writers on the period after 1500 present a less coherent picture, reflecting the unsatisfactory state of present knowledge, and a desire to generalize prematurely. But individually some of the essays are rewarding reading. The economic resources of widows, many of whom were considerable money-lenders, are demonstrated and discussed by Jim

Holderness. The poor who depended on parish relief at some stage in their life cycle are examined by Tim Wales in Norfolk and by W Newman Brown in Aldenham, Hertfordshire. Both case studies show a generally flexible, accommodating, and often compassionate system at work. Tim Wales sensitively describes its accepted place in the routine of family life whenever ordinary strategies failed – notably in sickness and old age. But women throughout their adult lives had most cause to be grateful for the institution. Keith Wrightson studies one community, using much the same methods as the medievalists, and shows in Terling, Essex, the small nuclear family and a generally loose kinship network serving satisfactorily in this commercially developed corner of south-east England.

In this company of local historians, all sensitively attuned to regional and structural differences and to changes that may occur between one decade and the next, Alan Macfarlane's essay strikes a discordant note with its simplistic and timeless assertions about England as a whole, even though his generalizations are based ultimately on the single example of Kirkby Lonsdale. But his essay must surely have been written before his book, for it rehearses the same arguments, yet makes no concessions whatever to the severe criticisms which his book received. The case for printing it here is obscure.

The last essay by Dennis Mills is a well-rounded study of Melbourn, Cambridgeshire, examining the reasons for the continuance there of a substantial peasantry into the nineteenth century. It is a satisfying piece of work for it uses a wide range of sources, and sensitizes the reader to some of the less obvious factors that seem to have assisted the unusual survival of a peasantry to this late date in grain-growing country. Two of these seem to have been the willingness of larger yeoman farmers to continue to subdivide farms, and the absence of a gentry, eager to engross and consolidate. This essay has a breadth of viewpoint and a sensitive awareness of time and place that commands respect. But this verdict, in fact, applies to all the best essays in this volume. The book does not achieve a unity. But it affords many glimpses of land, kinship and life cycle in a variety of places and circumstances. It will help those who work with other unique places and structures, who nevertheless search for comparative examples that will permit safe, but not sweeping, generalizations to emerge.

JOAN THIRSK

E WILIAM, *The Historical Farm Buildings of Wales*. John Donald, Edinburgh, 1986. x + 202 pp. 141 illus. £25.

Eurwyn Wiliam, Keeper of Buildings at the Welsh Folk Museum, has followed his intensive regional study of farm buildings in north-east Wales with an

excellent general account of historical farm buildings in Wales. The study, based on twelve years' field research involving the examination of some 900 farmsteads, brings out the regionalism within Wales and the relationship of building history to changing farming practices. Contextual studies of farm buildings are a relatively new departure within the field of vernacular architecture. Wiliam acknowledges the influence of Ronald Brunskill but also draws on a Welsh tradition of social studies of domestic architecture which goes back via Iorwerth Peate to Sir Daniel Lleufer Thomas, the remarkable Secretary of the 1893–1896 Royal Commission on Land in Wales.

Wiliam shows how farm buildings relate to vernacular houses and introduces some important points of relative chronology. Very broadly, as Peter Smith has shown, the topographical contrast between the eastern timber building areas and the stone and clay building areas of the west also marks a chronological passage from earlier to later buildings. However, for reasons which are not entirely clear, farm buildings tend to be later in date than the vernacular houses with which they are associated. Farm buildings dating from before the middle of the seventeenth century are not common and are usually found on lowland gentry farmsteads. Dated farm buildings become more numerous in north-east Wales during the last quarter of the seventeenth century and, Wiliam argues, represent the first identifiable wave of agricultural rebuilding which spread westwards. Superimposed on this sequence is a more general pattern of rebuilding initiated by the great and small estates which has given Welsh farmsteads a largely nineteenth-century character.

Wiliam clarifies the plan and development of the cowhouse, stable, and barn in successive chapters on cattle, motive power, and crop processing. Some historically important practices like transhumance husbandry have left few traces above ground. Nevertheless, Wiliam aims to be as comprehensive as possible and discusses many minor structures such as gorse mills, field kilns, and the intriguing round goosepens associated with the better known corbelled south Walian pigsties of late date but uncertain origin.

Wiliam takes a detached view of the complex and somewhat acrimonious controversy over the origin and distribution of the longhouse. In its classic form the longhouse combined house and byre in a single range with a common entry which contrasts with the otherwise general historic separation of farm and homestead. Whatever the origin of the longhouse, Wiliam argues that surviving examples, generally stone-built or timber rebuilt in stone, date only from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries and have a distinctive distribution in the south-eastern upland pastoral region. The earliest longhouses are thus characteristic of the southern Welsh marches, an area administratively and socially not unlike the

Scottish borderlands, and date from a period which saw endemic cattle rustling and raiding. In Wales, however, no defensive structures sheltering men and beasts have been found which correspond to the bastles and pelehouses of the Scottish border. It is tempting to speculate that the Welsh longhouse with its single range, thick walls, and easily-secured cross-passage may have been an architectural response to the disturbed conditions of the marches, offering some security against cattle thieves. There is a revealing contrast between these longhouses and the free-standing, storeyed, sub-medieval houses of Caernarvonshire and Merioneth – a pastoral area which enjoyed an earlier history of settled administration than the southern uplands.

Eurwyn Wiliam has written an original book which will, no doubt, stimulate further regional research; in the meantime it will serve as an indispensable guide to a largely obsolete and increasingly depleted group of vernacular buildings of absorbing historical interest.

R F SUGGETT

NICHOLAS RUSSELL, *Like engend'ring like: Heredity and animal breeding in early modern England*. CUP, 1986. ix + 271 pp. £27.50.

This is an excellent book. It is an exploration by a biologist of the historical relations between science, technology and economic development, with the accent on the scientific aspects of livestock breeding. The author begins by drawing attention to the gap between accounts of domestication and the early changes in domestic animals, and recent breed histories, which go back no earlier than about 1800. Not only are the sources of evidence different for the three broad periods, but the questions asked differ. Russell uses the meagre evidence available for the long intervening period, which he regards as having deterred serious analysts, to answer questions of a different kind, and restricts his treatment to the horse, the cow and the sheep during the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

Chapter 1 is an account of the numerous breeding strategies available. Here it is to be hoped that in drawing attention to our incomplete understanding of certain genetic processes, the historian is not led to believe that the laws of heredity are in doubt. The author next stresses the extent to which the classical agricultural writers of antiquity influenced the writers of Renaissance Europe, but questions the extent to which any of these writings influenced contemporary breeding practice. In Chapter 3, 'Generation and the market', is considered the background to animal breeding in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the breeders either satisfied a market for products or produced superior animals for sale to others.

There are two chapters on horses, the first covering

war, sport and fashion, and the second, blood, speed and carriages during the eighteenth century. These and the next chapter on cattle are well illustrated with old livestock prints. The period under consideration was of course when meat replaced wool as the most important commercial product of sheep and this provides the theme of Chapter 7. Here Russell covers regional sheep types in considerable detail following the work of Trow-Smith, which I compounded with biological evidence to produce a map. Russell is what in biology is termed a 'divider' when it comes to classification, while I am a 'clumper' and it would have been helpful if my map had been reproduced alongside his two maps (of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) so that the reader could see how Russell's details differ from those of mine and Trow-Smith. In addition to quoting my paper of 1964, my *Sheep and Man* (1983) could have been quoted to show how the subject had developed. The lack of a key to the numbers on the maps makes them difficult to follow – the details are given only in the lengthy text.

The author lists much useful data on body and fleece weights from diverse sources, as well as equally-valuable data on the productive characters of the other species. The book ends with a summary in which he stresses that since many commercial breeders today have an incomplete understanding of Mendelian genetics, it is not surprising that successful improvements were rare in the past. There is an extensive bibliography and a good index. It is impossible in a necessarily short review to do justice to this important work, which makes a rare contribution to the history of livestock breeding and genetics, as well as to agricultural history.

M L RYDER

JOHN D POST, *Food Shortage, Climatic Variability, and Epidemic Disease in Pre-Industrial Europe: The Mortality Peak in the Early 1740s*. Cornell University Press, 1985. 303 pp. \$32.95.

Among the features of the world that west Europeans have thankfully lost are crises of mortality associated with food shortages. These plagued the pre-industrial world until the nineteenth century. Indeed the author of the present volume previously published an account of *The Last Great Subsistence Crises in the Western World*, referring to Europe in 1816–17. But the beast of hunger still roamed in the 1840s, notably in Ireland, and appeared again in the west of that country in 1879–80, leaving to the twentieth century a legacy of possibly the only shrine and certainly the only international airport (both in Knock, County Mayo) more or less attributable to an outbreak of hunger.

Historians have often been vague about the relationship between climate, food supplies, hunger, and death, generally asserting that bad weather caused harvest failure, which in turn caused famine, which in

its turn caused people to die. But now Professor Post, in a magisterial study of the European mortality peak of the early 1740s has examined the connections in great detail.

Professor Post's conclusion is that 'the principal link between climatic variability and epidemic disease in the 1740s, and probably in pre-industrial subsistence crises in general, was . . . more social than nutritional, in the sense that it owed more to social upheaval than to dangerously lowered human resistance to louse-borne infections, typhoid and dysentery'. This judgement rests upon the knowledge that even in conditions of severe food shortage, people rarely starve to death, although they do die – and apparently did so in large numbers in Ireland and Scandinavia in the early 1740s – of 'famine disease', i.e. emaciation, oedema and diarrhoea. The major killers in the 1740s were 'fevers', principally typhus, relapsing fever (both louse-borne infections), typhoid and dysentery. None was directly caused by nutritional status, although malnourished people are vulnerable to infections. Rather, these diseases were spread by direct bodily contact between humans which is increased in periods of extreme cold as people huddled together for warmth and by scarcity that forced the hungry into towns in search of food. Interestingly, there is no discussion of vitamin deficiency diseases.

The underlying reason for the food shortages was the sequence of three consecutive cold years, 1739–40 to 1741–42. These caused short-falls in the grain harvests which pushed up prices and brought about widespread scarcity. Cold also had a direct effect by increasing mortality from 'exposure hypothermia' (eg postmen freezing to death) and 'accident hypothermia' (a fall in body temperature). Professor Post's discussion of the latter well illustrates his methods when dealing with matters of nutrition and health. Numbers of deaths attributable to accident hypothermia, he tells us, were 'pronounced' in the early months of 1740. He then defines hypothermia as 'the unintentional decline of deep body temperature, measured rectally, to a reading below 95° F'. This immediately conjures up a vision of a hitherto untapped body of social data for the eighteenth century. One is disappointed, although not surprised, to discover that Professor Post's assessment of the extent of accident hypothermia in the 1740s rests on an extrapolation back to the past of the incidence in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s. This he relates to an assembly of contemporary climatic data from various parts of Europe, a study of the seasonal incidence of deaths in 1739–41, and reasonable inferences about room temperatures in eighteenth-century houses.

The great strengths of this book are the rigorous examination of the relationship between climate, harvests, grain prices, welfare programmes, hypothermia, hunger, and epidemic diseases. The range of evidence marshalled is impressive. At times he strains

the argument too far ('the temperature and precipitation time series for England are fairly representative of the weather conditions that prevailed throughout the British Isles' – this reviewer, sitting in Belfast in August, listening to the London weather forecast, disagrees). I have doubts about the firmness of some of the Irish data, and, if I knew more about France, the Low Countries, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Scandinavia, etc, I might have quibbles about that evidence as well. But such comments should not detract from the fact that this book is a major contribution to our understanding of eighteenth-century European society and sets new standards for historians interested in the wider aspects of historical demography.

L A CLARKSON

ANN KUSSMAUL (ed), *The Autobiography of Joseph Mayett of Quainton (1783–1839)*. Buckingham Record Society, 23, Aylesbury, 1986. xxxii + 101 pp. £10 (hbk); £4.50 (pbk).

Readers of this *Review* will find Mayett's account of life as a farmworker more interesting than his confessional, but opaque description of his experiences in the enrolled Militia between 1803 and 1815. Incidents from the post-war years of agricultural depression commonly conflict with historical orthodoxies. In 1821 he is encountered consuming the works of Wooler, Carlyle and Cobbett, hardly a testimony sustaining perceptions of the isolation of the countryside, and the ideological immaturity of the agricultural labourer in the decades of the making of the English working class. In 1825 Mayett 'went to the Squire and Stated the Case' of his wife's illness only to be told by that 'Chief Justice in this part of the Country' that 'I was a good labourer and could get the best of wages and therefore I must pay for a doctor myself'. This same 'Chief' magistrate, the experienced William Pigott of Doddershall, was also responsible for the arbitrary and draconian cut in the wages of those in parish work in that year of peak rural unemployment, 1829 – on the eve of Swing. If Mayett, on occasion, won appeals against such harsh treatment at the hands of amateur social security administrators, his account proves that the local judiciary were not the invariably indiscriminate authors of generous provision under the old poor law that they became in the polemics of utilitarian critics, and in the studies of certain historians. Nor were Mayett's employers altruists. He had a typical experience in 1823: 'when the haytime Commenced my master and I disagreed about wages he wanted me to work from four in the morning till eight at night which was two hours per day longer than other men for the same money for he said I had no Children and therefore I Could afford it'. Such rationale became even more widespread after the implementation of the notorious Poor Law Amend-

ment Act, but unfortunately Mayett's account does not extend to cover his encounter with this brand of Victorian values.

Mayett, a Methodist and later a Baptist, wrote retrospectively about 1830–1, when his religious beliefs were clearly more conditioning than during his soldiering period – and hence that period's account is choked by recurrent guilt. But the autobiography also provides interesting insights into a small, and primarily plebeian dissenting congregation, struggling to preserve and extend its membership, create an educational programme, and financially underwrite their activities, while inwardly bedevilled by clashing personalities.

Dr Kussmaul has written an admirable appreciation of the autobiography; but this is hardly the 'introduction' claimed, as it so comprehensively analyses the fundamentals of Mayett's sketch for the historian, that the text itself is essentially pre-empted. Perhaps readers should read Mayett first, and then Kussmaul to check that she has not missed anything. Nevertheless, the editor and the Buckinghamshire Record Society, are to be congratulated for making another early nineteenth-century working-class author readily available to a wider modern audience.

ROGER WELLS

CHRISTOPHER HARRISON (ed), *The History of Keele*.

University of Keele, 1986. 168 pp. 11 maps; 32 plates. £4.95.

In this attractively produced book, seven authors from the University of Keele tell the story of the village and estate from its medieval origins as a Templar colony in the twelfth century to its purchase by the University College of North Staffordshire in 1949, and its subsequent growth into a University in 1962. Robin Studd shows how the Templars gradually expanded their agricultural settlement on the rather bleak uplands of north Staffordshire into an open-field community with four common fields. Being Templar tenants gave the farmers more freedom than was usual in the medieval period, but subsequent authors reveal how the purchase of the estate by a local family of rising gentry – the Sneyds – in 1544 gradually led to the reduction of these freedoms and the conversion of the village into a model Victorian 'closed' estate by 1870.

Christopher Harrison outlines the history of the Sneyd family and shows the effects of their policies up to 1660. They became resident landlords about 1580, and built the first Keele Hall. Angus McInnes contributes an interesting analysis of the community between 1660 and 1760, when its population roughly doubled in size from about 320 people to about 600. Keith Goodway follows with a description of the landscapes and gardens at Keele between 1700 and 1900, showing how successive Sneyds gradually converted the park and gardens into a Georgian and

Victorian showpiece. Anthony Phillips unravels the mechanisms whereby landlord control was strengthened and perfected between 1830 and 1870, with a consequent shrinkage of the population, and change in its occupational structure with those engaged in agriculture falling from 46 per cent of household heads in 1841 to 29 per cent in 1871, while domestic servants rose from 2 per cent to 19 per cent. Francis Doherty discourses amusingly on some rather slight Sneyd literary leavings, while Stanley Beaver, the founder professor of Geography at Keele shows how the estate was rapidly transformed by the College and the University after 1949.

A brief review fails to do justice to many other informative aspects of this book, which is indeed much more than a mere exercise in local patriotism. It shows how many aspects of English history can be better understood by a good local study.

MICHAEL HAVINDEN

SIMON BAATZ, *'Venerate the Plough': A History of the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture, 1785–1985*. PSPA, Philadelphia, 1985. xii + 124 pp. 12 plates. No price given.

In the preface to this bicentennial history, Simon Baatz draws attention to the apparent paradox of the existence of an agricultural institution in a now sprawling metropolis and the remoteness of the Society from the concerns of practical farming is a recurrent theme running through his account of its varying fortunes. When the Society was founded its membership was largely recruited from 'an elite group, closely connected to the most powerful and wealthy men in the country' which was unable 'to impress a scientific agriculture onto dirt farmers'. By the 1880s the Philadelphia Farmers' Club, founded in 1849 as an organization separate from, but linked to, the PSPA for the encouragement of new ideas in agricultural science had become 'a typically Philadelphian institution – eccentric, exclusive, and aristocratic'. Chapter 4, rather misleadingly entitled 'Agriculture in the Gilded Age 1862–1909' as the agricultural content is minimal, is essentially about this second institution.

It is difficult to discover whether the PSPA promoted much agriculture; its greatest endeavours in this direction were during the early years when its various projects show an interesting similarity with the concerns of many British agricultural societies – the sponsorship of prize essays and technical publications, the encouragement of agricultural experiments, the establishment of a veterinary college, a pattern [model] farm, and the promotion of an agricultural show being examples. There were also more specific concerns such as the ravages of the Hessian fly, the excessive exploitation of land, state funding, and agricultural support policies. The projects were, however,

invariably short-lived and flawed. The PSPA was constrained by lack of finance and dissension over its aims and objectives; there were several periods when its organization and activities ceased followed by revival and reorganization.

Although we are told that recently the PSPA has been invigorated by members broadly connected with 'agribusiness' there is virtually nothing in this narrative on the Society's recent past apart from some account of its involvement with herd-accreditation for bovine tuberculosis eradication during the early part of the twentieth century. This is essentially an internal history of a prestigious society which is more informative about eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Philadelphian social life and politics than it is on the course of agricultural progress.

NICHOLAS GODDARD

JAMES R GIBSON, *Farming the Frontier: The Agricultural Opening of the Oregon Country 1786-1846*. University of British Columbia Press, 1985. 265 pp. 1 map; 17 plates. £24.95.

There can be few students of the affairs of North America who are unaware how bitterly the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is resented by many Mexicans today. The work reviewed lights a long fuse in its prologue that smoulders throughout and explodes in the final sentence that bears quotation and reminds us of the similarities between 1846 and 1848. 'It may come as a surprise to Americans, and even to Canadians,' argues Gibson, 'that unlike the United States, Canada has an irredentist legacy, to which the Oregon "compromise" was the chief contributor.' It is Gibson's view that the United States had no claim on the right bank of the Columbia River and it is one based on a convincing command of the history of agricultural development to the north of the river before 1846.

Gibson suggests that previous works on the Oregon Country (and Question) have tended to ignore or misrepresent the state of agriculture there before the American takeover, in part because the Hudson's Bay Company archives have been inaccessible until lately. In the 1840s Americans in Congress certainly believed the entire Oregon Country to be a wilderness and argued that it should fall to the United States by virtue of the doctrine of use. Such a view would not now be possible by virtue of Gibson's work.

Gibson shows in detail the extent of the Hudson's Bay Company's developments north of the Columbia. He sees, however, that the Company was not a force for social and economic diversification since its monopolistic demands ran counter to the growth of settlements of individually minded pioneers. Thus few Canadians were attracted especially south of the Columbia while a number of official visitors gave the entire area a poor report when they visited it in 1845 to

give London a view of its value. By contrast the United States wanted the Puget Sound harbour since the mouth of the Columbia was so treacherous. Some American historians have argued that the Democrats did not win the election of 1844 by promising 54° 40' but Gibson believes Polk felt he had an expansionist mandate. The British Government by contrast, especially after Lord Aberdeen replaced Lord Palmerston, was not interested in defending its claims and so the United States won a triangle of territory to which it had no rightful title. The Hudson's Bay Company was already weakened by the decline of the trade in beaver through over-exploitation and changes in fashion, so it had diminished influence.

The book makes its point by ending in 1846. There were few Americans north of the Columbia at that date. It does not suggest what would have happened to the tide of American settlement afterward if it had found an international boundary at the Columbia River and if the number of Canadians north of the river had remained low. It would be interesting to know whether Gibson would have expected a second adjustment, though the history of the Prairie Provinces would seem to suggest that Americans could settle north of the border without behaving like Texans. It is clearly unwise to descend into such speculations but this lively, interesting and provocative work does tend to promote it.

R A BURCHELL

ROGER J P KAIN AND HUGH C PRINCE, *The Tithe Surveys of England and Wales*. CUP, 1985. xvi + 327 pp. £27.50.

The tithe surveys, produced in implementing the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836, are a prime source for early Victorian agricultural history, as well as for the structure of landownership and tenancies, the form of the rural landscape, and the existence of rights of way. Such a rich source has, naturally, long been known to historical geographers and historians, not least through the work of Hugh Prince and Roger Kain, dating back to 1959 in the one case and 1974 in the other. It has been used in a very large number of local and county studies published in the last thirty years or so, but has not yet been exploited on the grand majestic scale which the capacity of the computer to handle millions of items of information has made possible in principle. That still remains true. The present book is the result of many years of thought and labour, but even that has not been sufficient to encompass the construction of a vast and comprehensive tithe database, for the task of inputting data from over 11,000 parishes and over 14,000 tithe files is immensely laborious and time-consuming even if the processing of such a database this way and that could be carried out in the twinkling of an eye. The time and effort has, rather, been devoted to a penetrating and exhaustive

examination of the source, its provenance, characteristics, potential uses as evidence, and limitations, pointing the way for future researchers. In the words of the conclusion, 'the tithe surveys, fully exploited in conjunction with early Ordnance Survey maps, the 1841 and 1851 census enumerators' books, the land-tax assessments, private-estate accounts and surveys, farmers' notebooks and diaries, and the Royal Agricultural Society of England's prize essays on county farming, can present a vivid picture of many aspects of the condition of rural and urbanising England in the middle years of the nineteenth century and provide solid points of reference for retrogressive enquiries'.

Thus, projects for an agricultural atlas of England and Wales at the time of tithe commutation, for an analysis and evaluation of farming systems, for an account of the structure of farm holdings, for a linking of land use data to the early years of the official agricultural statistics, and many more, remain as challenges to research dedication and funding, some of which, as with Roger Kain's forthcoming *Atlas and Index of the Tithe Files*, have already been met. What is in the hand is a deluxe guide to the source, lavishly illustrated with worked and mapped examples of what can be done with such questions as crop distribution and crop yields, as well as with more traditional illustrations of examples of the actual tithe documents, and accompanied by a comprehensive inventory of research making use of the tithe material which has already been completed. For those about to set out for the PRO at Kew, or to a county record office (or, as the authors warn, possibly to a diocesan, municipal, or university archive) with tithes in view, this guide will be essential preparatory reading and an invaluable companion.

The guide is essentially in three parts, although the authors have not explicitly invoked these magic numbers into which all history and geography is always divided. The first looks at the nature of tithes, at those which were still leviable in 1836, and at the provisions and administration of the 1836 Act. The second examines in detail the types of document which were produced under the Act, the tithe maps, the apportionments, and the tithe files, with a special section on the reliability and accuracy of the maps and surveys. And the third sets out the value, and methods of use, of these documents as evidence for field systems, land use, farming systems, and for ownership and social structure. As an introduction to a class of records this is a model, a virtuoso performance, a handbook of research methodology as well as of document identification with a bibliographical essay of prodigious proportions thrown in for good measure. This last features particularly strongly in the third section, most especially in the discussions of land use and cropping, where the literature from the Land Utilisation Survey of the 1930s onwards is sum-

marized and the methods and results of historical geographers and agricultural historians who have studied land use or farming systems through the tithe material are passed in review. Such a digest of all the books and articles that have been published in the field in the last fifty years, and of many of the theses which have been written, is an immense boon; and it is a source of personal gratification to see that the *VCH* is given a pat on the back for the extensive use of the tithe material made in its more recent volumes.

What it all means for agricultural history is another matter. First and foremost, the tithe commutation material gives a single snapshot of any one parish, although countrywide the process of apportionment was spread out over a dozen years or so. The tithe files, of course, did in many cases give some recent history of farming in the parish when recording comments on cultivation, harvests and yields, and the condition of farming. But in order to harness the records to the purposes of history all writers have linked the tithe materials to some other observations: mainly forward, to the 1854 agricultural returns for a handful of counties, to the post-1866 national returns, to the 1873 New Domesday, or to the Land Utilisation Survey, but sometimes backwards, to the 1801 Crop Returns, to eighteenth-century estate surveys, or with greater leaps of retrospection in identifying individual fields or buildings. This is the perfectly standard procedure for placing a snapshot in the context of a process of continuity and change, and it is no more than mildly disappointing that the intensive exploitation of the tithe records has not infrequently done little more than confirm, at almost mind-boggling parish-specific or field-specific level, what was already believed about continuity and change from other sources, for example about the differences in farming systems between light land and heavy land areas, or about the broad chronology of arable/pasture balances.

It is, however, a reminder that the tithe records themselves were generated at a particular point in a process of continuity and change, and it is at this point that a little bit of theoretical muscle might have been flexed to add tone to the technically highly accomplished and professional performance on a record-based theme, with a view to presenting the coverage that these records chance to provide in a wider setting. The problem is that the 1836 Act only commuted tithes in those places where tithes still existed, and their existence was not evenly or randomly spread across the country. The distribution of the tithe surveys is very clearly mapped in the frontispiece, and discussed briefly in the text, where a contemporary estimate is used to state that about three-quarters of England and Wales were covered. This is misleading, since in some areas, such as Sussex, almost all parishes were surveyed but actually covered only the small remnants of titheable lands as the major part of the area had become free of tithes long before.

The proportion of the total farmed area of the country for which useful data were generated was, therefore, much less than 75 per cent. Moreover, the distribution of unsurveyed areas conformed broadly to that of parliamentary enclosures, most tithes having been commuted, frequently by an allotment of land, at that time. Thus, tithe surveys cover around 98 per cent of the land area of Essex, Kent, Cornwall, or Devon, but more like 20 per cent or less of the area of Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, and most of the belt of Midland enclosures.

The question arises, then, whether in counties where the tithe commutation data are thin on the ground those data were representative of conditions and practices in the region generally, or whether there were some peculiar features about lands that had remained titheable when all around were tithe-free. Working from the correspondence between tithe-free areas and areas of parliamentary enclosure it would appear that such 1836 Act commutations as did take place in these counties concerned pockets of land which still remained unenclosed, suggesting peculiarities of ownership structure and soil conditions, or pockets of ancient enclosures that had remained titheable, suggesting peculiarities of situation, or pockets of recent enclosure where tithe commutation had been overlooked, suggesting mismanagement. With adequate specification of the circumstances of the minority titheable districts it would become possible to test empirically the contemporary opinion that tithes were an obstacle to agricultural improvements, for this implied that farming in the still tithed areas must have been more backward and less productive than in surrounding tithe-free areas which were comparable in other respects. Admittedly, more general regional comparisons do not suggest that there was much substance in this opinion: by far the greater part of Norfolk and Suffolk were still subject to tithes in 1836, yet no one would claim that the farming of East Anglia was remarkably backward or unenterprising in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

On this reasoning the extinction of tithes on parliamentary enclosure by allotments of land to the tithe-owners was a great boon to farmers and farming, and the authors take the view that tithes were indeed such a nuisance and impediment that the landowners were willing to buy off the tithe-owners with absurdly generous compensation, the allotments being usually far in excess of one-tenth of the titheable land. This is to misunderstand the economics of tithes, assuming that they did, pre-enclosure, represent one-tenth of the produce of the land. The tithe-owner received one-tenth of the output without bearing any of the costs of production, and in the traditional but infrequently found case of taking tithe in kind being liable to meet simply the costs of collection and storage. The well-known rule of thumb of the times

was that the output of a piece of land was equivalent to three rents, one for the landowner, one for the farmer, and one for the labourers. Tithe was a rent in this context: whether it was actually a deduction from the landlord's rent, the farmer's profit, or the labourers' wages is a different point. The amount of land required to furnish the tithe-owner with the equivalent of one-tenth of the gross output free of cost was not one-tenth, but three-tenths. To put it another way, if all rent were to be extinguished a landowner would not thank you for offering him one-third of the land as full compensation, since by his lights he already owned all of it. The figures cited for the inordinate swelling of glebe lands and other tithe-owners' properties are, therefore, no more than a record of the application of the logic of contemporary property rights.

These are, however, indications that there is still room for discussion and debate on the tithe question, rather than criticisms of a work whose solid virtues as a handbook and bibliographical guide will stand future users of the tithe surveys in good stead for years to come.

F M L THOMPSON

ANTONIO GÓMEZ MENDOZA, *Ferrocarril y Mercado interior en España, 1874-1913*, Vol I: *Cereales, harinas y vinos*; Vol II: *Manufacturas textiles, materiales textiles, combustibles y metales*. Banco de España, Estudios de Historia Económica, 10 (1984) and 13 (1985). 261 pp; 169 pp. 1300 ptas each.

Controversy still rages in Spain over the contribution of the railways to that nation's economic development. Antonio Gómez Mendoza, a former student of Patrick O'Brien at Oxford, was courageous enough in earlier publications to challenge some of the cherished opinions of one or two eminent Spanish economic historians. Among other matters, he denied that the invitation of the Spanish Liberals to foreign entrepreneurs to construct a radial network of lines both held back the progress of indigenous iron industry and resulted in the under-development of the economy. He also maintained that considerable social savings accrued from the great wave of railway building of the 1850s and 1860s. In his two pamphlets, published by the Bank of Spain as part of their series 'Studies in Economic History', his aims are more modest. Here he sets out to analyse the statistical data collected by the Norte railway company on the movement of freight in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Comparisons are made with other leading companies, among them the MZA (Madrid-Saragossa-Alicante) and the TBF (Tarragona-Barcelona-France), which served different hinterlands. However, the Norte, which crossed twenty-five Spanish provinces, offers the modern researcher the most complete set of records, despite numerous gaps and pitfalls, while the

company provides an excellent picture of economic life in the north of the Peninsula.

Volume I, which should be of most interest to readers of the *Review*, focuses on the transport of cereals, flour and wine, which occupied leading places in the traffic of all the main railway companies throughout the period, and bears witness to the unmistakably agricultural character of the Spanish economy. The relative weight of these items in the total traffic of the companies, the changing direction of trade and the nature of the main consumer markets clearly illustrates the many-faceted agricultural crisis that hit the Spanish economy from the early 1880s and which producers sought to alleviate by calling for hefty doses of tariff protection.

Gómez Mendoza's detailed study shows how the influx of American and Russian grains after the 1880s had a more pronounced impact on the south of the Peninsula than the north. Figures for the *Norte* indicate that the volume of cereals transported by rail began to recover in 1889, two years before Cánovas' celebrated tariff granted in response to requests from the wheat farmers of Old Castile, and nearly a decade before recovery occurred on lines serving Andalusia. Apart from the catastrophic harvests of 1904-5, this wave of expansion was sustained until 1913, ample evidence of the increasing commercialization of wheat south of the Pyrenees.

Among the main purchasers of the grain carried by the *Norte* were the flour mills dotted along the banks of the Canal de Castilla, a legacy of the flour trade between Old Castile and the Antilles which had flourished via the port of Santander, since the eighteenth century. The loss of Cuba in 1898 had severe repercussions on the fortunes of both the cereal growers and the millers. However, the spread of the rail network opened up new markets within Spain for grain and flour, both on the periphery and in the interior. The burgeoning industrial conglomeration of Barcelona remained the main market for cereals carried by the *Norte*, due in no small measure to protective duties placed on imported grains. Interestingly, Madrid received most of its cereals from the south of the Peninsula, which entered the capital at Atocha railway station.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century Spanish wine growers enjoyed an unparalleled prosperity as a result of the outbreak of phylloxera in France. Between 1876 and 1891 exports of *vin ordinaire* to her northern neighbour rose eightfold. However, in 1891 a most favoured nation clause between the two powers expired, new competitors appeared, not least Algeria, Spanish vines were decimated by phylloxera, and exports began to tumble. As the author demonstrates, there existed a strong correlation between wine exports and the volume of transport. Both reached a peak in 1873, 1881-3 and 1891 and fell in 1876 and 1885-6, evidence that the main user of this

form of rail transport was the foreign consumer. Even so, Gómez Mendoza shows that the area served by the *Norte* was less devastated than the wine districts using the MZA.

With its extensive statistical sections and well-written chapters on the contribution of the Spanish railways to the mining and manufacturing sectors, Gómez Mendoza's work is yet another example of the magnificent contribution of the Bank of Spain to the field of Spanish economic history.

JOSEPH HARRISON

JANET POPPENDIECK, *Breadlines Knee-Deep in Wheat. Food Assistance in the Great Depression*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1986. xvii + 306 pp. \$30.00.

Readers are familiar with the modern dilemmas presented by beef mountains and milk lakes in the Western World while malnutrition and starvation run rife in the Third World. It may thus not come as a surprise to find that American capitalism confronted the paradox of scarcity amidst abundance at an earlier stage in the twentieth century. *Breadlines Knee-Deep in Wheat* looks at the plight of millions of poor Americans who remained hungry while their fellow commercial farmers produced surplus crops which were either stockpiled, sold abroad or even destroyed. Written by a sociologist whose heart bleeds as she confronts this shameful situation, the book describes the way in which American ideology, institutional arrangements and interest group politics prevented the effective distribution of excess commodities to the needy even during the severe distress of the Great Depression. Food assistance programmes could and should have relieved the conditions of the hungry, but they did not do this.

The study spreads over a long period from the 1920s into the 1960s, but most attention is directed to the 1930s. As the United States' economy collapsed and the Hoover administration failed to provide solutions either to the problems of unemployment and poverty or to those of low agricultural prices, so opportunity for reform, even of a drastic variety, loomed large. New Dealers were anxious to bring change as well as general recovery, but they had to establish priorities in order to move forward. When higher priority was given to farm policies than to the hunger of the unemployed and distressed, then the distribution of surplus commodities to the poor faced difficulties. The creation of a government agency, the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation, certainly signalled reform possibilities and while this corporation was active, between 1933 and 1935, it did a remarkable job despite political infighting. But when federal relief programmes were reorganized in 1935 and the Department of Agriculture took over food assistance policies, then the renamed Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation

became more a tool for boosting the incomes of commercial farmers than for feeding the indigent. And this approach continued in the postwar years. The author draws on the archival records of the agencies concerned, manuscript collections of politicians, contemporary published sources and a broad range of secondary literature to produce discussions of policies and details of decisions. At times the book gets bogged down in digesting the primary records, while at other times general explanations of events using secondary

sources flourish. There is an uneasy balance between the two types of information, and some of the finer points on bureaucratic decision-making might have been made more effectively in articles. Nevertheless students of the New Deal and of social welfare history and policy will welcome the insights which the volume can throw on an aspect of the American past which has received little attention.

MARGARET WALSH

Shorter Notices

U MATTEJIT et al (eds), *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, Vol 3, Lieferungen 7-10. Artemis Verlag, Munich, 1986. pp. 1345-2219. 39 DM each fascicule.

This dictionary of medieval history (AD 300-1500) in seven volumes, with the completion of the third volume, has nearly reached the half-way mark. It appears rapidly at regular intervals, maintaining the highest standards of scholarship, and is always strictly relevant. Each volume contains ten fascicules of 112 sides, each costing DM 39. Articles in volume 3, fascicules 7-10, of interest to agricultural historians are: Drechsler, Dreifeldwirtschaft, Driesch, Drost, Düngung, Eberraute, Écuyer, Egge, Ei, Eibisch, Eiche, Eichenmistel, Eichhörchen, Eidechsen, bäuerliches Eigen, Eigentum, Einfriedung, Eisenhut, Eisenkraut, Elch, Elephas, Enclosure, Endvie, England (pp 1924-1994), Enzian, Erbrecht, Erbe, Erbschaft (pp. 2101-2116), Ernährung, Erntegeräte. Bibliographies extend to 1985.

D J DAVIS

V M MIKKELSEN, *Borup: Man and Vegetation*. National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, 1986. 48 pp. 4 maps; 7 illus, 6 tables. DKr 150.

Sub-titled 'Agricultural influence on the development of vegetation in the vicinity of the deserted Viking Age settlement Borup in Zealand, Denmark', this is an excellent example of the integration of palaeobotanical investigations of peat deposits with intensive archaeological and historical investigations. The latter in combination with radiocarbon dating give a reliable chronology for the pollen record.

Comparisons with the few available maps show that the corrected pollen spectra give a good estimate of the relative proportions of forest and open land in a circular area of 100 hectares, thus making it possible to suggest the proportions of these vegetation types in periods for which no maps are available.

The pollen diagrams show the effect of human interference on the vegetation including the influence of clearing, burning, grazing by cattle and pigs, and arable cultivation. This interference extends from the first farmers about 3800 BC to the present, the period of most intense activity being from the setting up of the Viking farm in about AD 700 until about AD 1250.

There is an interesting discussion of the significance of finds of cornflower, *Centaurea cyanus*, with the conclusion that, in Denmark, winter sowing of cereal crops was either not practised at all, or only very rarely, until about AD 1000.

D D BARTLEY

JOSEPH ARCH, *From Ploughtail to Parliament*. Century Hutchinson Ltd: The Cresset Library, 1986. xxx + 412 pp. £5.95 (pbk).

This book is a facsimile reproduction of the first (1898) edition of Joseph Arch's autobiography, with a new title and a brief introduction by Alun Howkins. It is a vigorous, partisan account of the events which led, in 1872, to the creation of the first national union among the agricultural labourers. The hostility the fledgling organization encountered from farmers and land-owners is recounted in graphic terms that owe much to Arch's earlier experience as a Primitive Methodist local preacher. Overall the book strongly reflects the author's own character, with all its stubborn power and self-opinionated vanity.

There is little doubt that Arch was the main inspiration behind the new union. He was also a courageous fighter for the labourers' legal and political rights. But he undervalued the help he received from other, less charismatic, fellow unionists. The Radical wing of the Liberal Party lent support, too, seeing this as a way to 'dish' the Conservatives in their traditional rural strongholds by winning the labourers to their cause. The 1885 general election, when Arch himself

was elected to Parliament as a Liberal MP, appeared to justify their policy; but subsequent internal divisions prevented it from reaching fruition.

This autobiography is required reading for anyone wishing to understand labouring life in the Victorian countryside and its republication at modest price is to be welcomed. However, the new edition would have benefited from a longer introduction, analysing the powerful regional pressures which ultimately undermined the attempts to create a unified rural trade union, and the effects of agricultural depression, which fatally weakened the organization's ability to negotiate successfully with employers. It was these factors – not the 'moral' weakness of the labourers, as Arch himself suggests – that brought about the union's demise in the mid-1890s.

PAMELA HORN

'PETER GURNEY' (C S SMITH), *Shepherd Lore*. Wiltshire

Folk Life Society, Avebury, 1985. 140 pp. Illus. £5. The nineteen-thirties formed the last decade during which it was possible to record traditional shepherding practices in southern England, and one might suppose that with W H Hudson's *A Shepherd's Life* (1910); W Johnson's *Talks with Shepherds* (1925) and B Wills's *Shepherds of Sussex* (1938), much of what is known is in print; yet here we have a new book from the period.

The twenty-eight newspaper articles comprising this account were discovered by Jean Morrison, editor of the Wiltshire Folk Life Society who took steps to trace the identity of the author and to arrange for their re-publication in book form. Peter Gurney turned out to be the agricultural journalist C S Smith, who in the nineteen-thirties, when the articles were written, was an observant young reporter with the *North Wiltshire Herald* in which they were first published.

The articles form a valuable account of the 'Golden Hoof' folding of Down sheep on Wiltshire's chalk upland between the wars. Covering such topics as lambing, shearing, sheep fairs and bell making, through association with the mostly aged shepherds involved the customs are brought to life in a personal way. The book is well illustrated with photographs from the families of the personalities included, as well as with archival material from the Institute of Agricultural History, Reading.

It is a pity that no index was prepared for this material which could be usefully compared with W H Hudson's account referring to the southern part of the county written twenty years before.

M L RYDER

A G STREET, *Country Calendar: Farming Life in the 1930s*.

OUP, 1986. xvi + 231 pp. 27 illustrations by Lionel Edwards. £3.95.

By the mid-1920s Arthur Street was losing money as a

cereal farmer on the Wiltshire chalk downs. In 1928 he converted his 300-acre holding to pasture, became an early practitioner of A J Hosier's open-air system of milking, and built up a profitable dairy herd. He wrote his first book – for fun – in 1931; it was quickly followed by several more books and numerous articles. His writing became a serious business and Street soon felt that 'I must now be careful when I set pen to paper'.

Country Calendar, published in 1935, was written to recapture the 'glorious fun' of composing his first book. It is the record of this busy farmer-writer's life from October 1934 to September 1935, with each of the twelve chapters devoted to a different month in the year. Part of the book's charm lies in the fact that it is not exclusively agricultural. The Thelwellian world of adolescent pony riders, a day's partridge shooting, foxes, hounds, and numerous fishing trips are all amiably and unaffectedly described. Street was progressive in his farming methods and refreshingly unsentimental about the changes affecting British agriculture in the 1930s: more livestock on more temporary pasture was the way to achieve prosperity; and the displacement of horses by modern machinery should not be a matter for excessive nostalgia.

The author's love of the land suffuses every chapter of the book, but never cloyes. There is a good short introduction by John Cherrington, and Lionel Edwards' original illustrations are unobtrusively excellent.

C J HOLMES

WENDY OWEN (ed), *The Wheat King: Selected Letters and Papers of A J Cotton, 1888–1913*. The Manitoba Record Society Publications, VII, Winnipeg, 1985. xxxvii + 166 pp. Illus. No price given.

Wendy Owen's selection from the letters and papers of Almon James Cotton extend over the quarter century he took a pioneering role in Manitoba's economic and social transformation from Hudson's Bay Company frontier fur-trading reservation to premier wheat raising province of the Dominion of Canada. Cotton came, aged thirty, from Ontario to achieve agrarian success on a scale he never could have attained in the older province, his eye for land and hard effort enabling him to build up something of a patriarchal kingdom for himself and his family.

The pioneer farmers of Manitoba had to face some 'hard' winters followed by late springs, but their greatest problems were getting their grain to consumers, a somewhat similar 'distribution' perplexity to that of the EEC today. Roads and railways had to be constructed to the prairies, and the latter particularly charged dear for their services. Labour shortages and also those of horses hastened farm mechanization.

Cotton's active promotion of immigration resulted

in numerous letters to prospective incomers of various ethnic origins. He favoured Ontario- and then other American-born, but welcomed refugee Russian Dukhobors if they accepted lands which seemed to be attracting no immediate interest on the part of English-speaking settlers. He also preferred members of his own Methodist Church, albeit demanding of ministers, as of farming folk, active physical exertion and missionary zeal rather than sedentary ratiocination.

JOHN ROWE

DAVID GRIGG, *An Introduction to Agricultural Geography*. Hutchinson, 1984. 204 pp. £12.95 (hbk); £7.50 (pbk).

A common criticism of the discipline of geography is that it is a jack of all trades. This book demonstrates that in fact this can be one of the subject's strengths; it is the breadth of coverage in this introduction to the study of agriculture that makes the book of more general interest than comparable texts written from the perspective of an agriculturalist or an agricultural economist. Given Professor Grigg's evident mastery of his trade this book can thus be read with profit by agricultural historians to remind themselves of some of the general issues involved in the study of agricultural systems.

Professor Grigg considers that the aim of agricul-

tural geography is 'to describe and explain spatial variation in agricultural activity over the earth's surface'. He does this not by classifying agricultural types (the approach of his *Agricultural Systems of the World* published in 1974), nor by looking at ways of analysing agricultural change over time (the theme of his *Dynamics of Agricultural Change* published in 1982), but by presenting a list of 'explanatory factors' that can account for the great diversity of agriculture. These factors are grouped under three headings: the economic environment, the physical environment, and the social, political and cultural environment. Thus the discussion ranges widely across such topics as the concept of diminishing returns, food chains, and the impact of religion upon agricultural production.

While the issues involved in these topics are skilfully summarized and the inevitable brevity of coverage is offset by very useful guides to further reading, some readers might be surprised by the book's omissions. The nature of agricultural regions is not discussed for example, although this theme, along with several others, is covered in other texts on agricultural geography and in other work by Professor Grigg. A more serious criticism is a failure to examine the interrelationships between the various 'explanatory factors'. Admittedly this is a difficult task but a weak conclusion of just a single page is a disappointing end to a book that raises so many interesting issues.

MARK OVERTON