

Book Reviews

L GENICOT, *Rural Communities in the Medieval West*, (The John Hopkins symposia in comparative history), The Johns Hopkins UP, 1990, x + 185 pp. 20 figures; 6 tables. £21.50.

This short and concise book, developed out of a series of lectures given in the United States, is a new attempt to explain some of the general issues connected with that elusive historical entity – the rural communities of the Middle Ages. Few scholars are better equipped than the author to deliver such a synthesis, based as it is both on his own pioneering work on Belgium and on a broad sweep of the scholarly literature from all over Europe. Even with such a wide angle Genicot wisely refrains from over-generalization, and his admission of ignorance is as frequent as is his practical advice to the less experienced. The introduction gives a short overview on the latest state of research techniques, including archaeology, pedology, palinology, historical meteorology, archaeozoology and osteology. Then follow five chapters on the problem of village origins, the economic, legal and religious aspects of the agrarian communities, and their ties to the wider entities of the medieval world. To summarize shortly some of the conclusions: On origins 'most communities were part of a manor. . . . The parish was the second step, from a perspective of consciousness . . .' (p 28). Following the demographic upswing of the central Middle Ages, assarting has played a crucial role in the consolidation of the rural community (p 42). The French concept of *seigneurie banale* seems to be applicable in other parts of Europe too, contributing again to the birth, maturation or reinforcement of the rural community, by largely unifying the status of the *rustici* as well as by leading the peasants to react to the action of the lord. As for institutions, 'the majority of local organisms were born before the eleventh century, but nearly everywhere they were appropriated and more or less distorted by the lord. Then new ones, entirely or largely independent of the lord, would arise and compete with them' (p 81). In this second phase, 'the rural community gained consciousness, strength, and shape thanks to the concessions of liberties by many lords and the pressure of population growth, which led to fixing and normally mitigating seigniorial burdens and to creating or reinforcing local bodies' (p 89). Of these the most important was probably the parish, in which the nobles did not have a part (p 105). For the reader still conditioned to insular singularity, except for thirteenth-century 'high farming' Genicot finds little distinction between the continental and English experience of village development.

MICHAEL TOCH

MICHAEL ASTON, DAVID AUSTEN and CHRISTOPHER DYER, eds, *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England. Studies Dedicated to Maurice Beresford and John Hurst*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989. xii + 318 pp. 45 maps and diagrams; 19 plates. £57.50.

Members of this society will require little introduction to the work of Maurice Beresford and John Hurst. Beresford's *Lost Villages of England* (1954) is a seminal and evocative work, whose recent re-issue in paperback is confirmation of its lasting appeal. In 1971 they collaborated on *Deserted Medieval Villages*, which documented the significant advances that had been made in the study of medieval settlement during the intervening period. Yet even to a reviewer from a younger generation, it is clear that their enormous impact on the subject has been as much due to their personal influence and enthusiasm, particularly on the famous summer excavations at Wharram Percy.

This *Festschrift* is a fitting successor to *Deserted Medieval Villages*. The sixteen contributors reflect the development of a more multidisciplinary approach to medieval settlement studies, and the volume is appropriately segregated into three sections: 'history and geography', 'fieldwork', and 'excavation'. Its scope is 'anglocentric', to borrow the editors' own phrase, although within these bounds the individual essays are eclectic in subject matter and methodological approach. Of those which assume a broad sweep, P D A Harvey presents a challenging reappraisal of the role of lordship in settlement change, and Dyer questions conventional assumptions about the nature of 'marginal' regions. Other general surveys are content to summarize the existing state of research, such as Wade-Martins' contribution on East Anglian settlement, and Bond's on the south Midlands. These are interspersed with some highly particular or localized studies, for instance Wilson on forms of ridge-and-furrow, and Fox on the settlement of the Nottinghamshire-Leicestershire wolds. The essays are prefaced by a useful editors' introduction, which not only acknowledges Beresford and Hurst's contribution to the study of medieval rural settlement, but also points the way forward with suggestions for future inquiry.

Scholars have clearly made some impressive strides since 1954. The older explanations of settlement patterns and movements have been greatly refined, and gone is the preoccupation with nucleated villages. Yet this volume reveals that there is still much important work to be done, and not only in the vital task of preserving the diminishing number of medieval sites from the predations of developers and agriculturalists. Taylor's piece on Whittlesford is a case in point,

for in a fascinating and honest account he highlights the many interpretative problems which can face the settlement historian. A considerable amount of new information about medieval settlements has been uncovered in recent years, but we have yet to construct a suitable conceptual framework in which to accommodate it all. Perhaps it will soon be time for some brave individual to paint broad strokes in the fashion of Beresford himself.

Therein lies the challenge for the future. For the present, this collection of essays indicates that much sensible and cautious research has been undertaken. The volume is beautifully produced, and the many maps, diagrams and plates enhance its attractiveness, particularly to a non-specialist audience. It is unfortunate, though, that the price will be prohibitive to many potential purchasers.

MARK BAILEY

J V BECKETT, *A History of Laxton, England's Last Open-field Village*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989. xvi + 340 pp. 27 plates; 22 figs. £45.

As the incoming administration after the 1979 general election sought to slim the machinery of government, it discovered one of those delightful English anomalies and eccentricities – that the Ministry of Agriculture owned the last surviving open-field village farming system in England, at Laxton in Nottinghamshire. This was deemed not to be the business of government, and accordingly Laxton was put on the market. Widespread protests against the possibility of enclosure ensued, and eventually the Crown Estate Commissioners took it over with guarantees to continue existing systems as long as the tenants wish it. Laxton's field system was first recognized as unique in 1906 since when the open fields have been preserved despite several alarms and excursions, and has attracted distinguished historians.

John Beckett's book, engendered in the latest battle to preserve the fields, traces the history of Laxton from medieval times to the 1980s using a wide range of estate, taxation, and administrative records, as well as photographs, memoirs and oral material. After a quick survey of Laxton's medieval period when its castle and owner brought royal visitors to the village, his second chapter sets out clearly and succinctly the institutions and practicalities of open-field farming in Laxton over the centuries, and the rest of the book charts the course of landownership and village life from the seventeenth century to the present day. His sources enable him to follow patterns of landownership and farm size at surprisingly frequent intervals. He shows that Laxton is above all a statistical anomaly, for its patterns of landownership, farm size, and landlord-tenant relations are not markedly different from its Nottinghamshire neighbours, nor

indeed from general trends in Midland England. Although Laxton's freeholders increased in numbers during the eighteenth century, the percentage of land they held fell from 25 to approximately 15 per cent, and was no real barrier to parliamentary enclosure. The freeholders and tenants accepted periodic reorganization and piecemeal enclosure at regular intervals, so that the open fields already constituted less than half the village land area in 1635, and less than one eighth, some 483 acres, in 1988. The absence of the final *coup de grace* is explained by chance factors amongst the élite – the long neglect of the Thoresby estates by the 2nd Duke of Kingston, the quarrel between the two prime landowners in the 1840s, and, after preparatory land purchases and exchanges had been completed in the 1860s, the competing claim for capital from the rebuilding of Thoresby Hall. Above all, the poor clays of Laxton promised their landlords no substantial improvement in rent or farming methods, and the survival of open fields did not prevent farm sizes rising to respectable levels for the county, or the majority of larger tenants making an adequate living.

This excellent study offers a mine of information which has been digested and presented in its national context with the author's customary lucidity. I occasionally wondered why some of the diagrams and photos appeared exactly where they did in the text, and whether the inhabitants of Laxton over the centuries were as peaceful, un-litigious, and apparently uninvolved in the question of enclosure as they sometimes appear. Some assessment of the percentage of open field on each size group of farms, and what percentage had none at all, would have helped to slot open-field cultivation into the overall farming context at different periods. But these are quibbles when set against the achievements of the book which uses the computing techniques of the eighties quite transparently to make it a worthy successor to Orwin and Chambers.

JOHN BROAD

P BRANDON and B SHORT, *A Regional History of England, The South East from AD 1000*, Longman, 1990. xix + 444 pp, 10 tables, 47 plates, 31 figures, £28 (hbk), £14.95 (pbk).

In so far as historians and geographers have focused particular attention on eighteenth-century Norfolk agriculture, or the subsequent industrialization of the Midlands, South Wales, and parts of Northern England, they fail to produce a balanced interpretation of national economic and social development. In part this deficiency arises not so much from a lack of detailed research on other areas, as an absence of overall surveys of their development. Plugging this gap is one positive achievement of this historical study

of the South East of England, comprising the modern counties of East and West Sussex, Surrey, Kent, and Greater London south of the Thames, from later Anglo-Saxon times to the 1980s, as one volume in an ambitious series covering ten English regions.

It is the work of two historical geographers who are clearly well versed in the sub-regional complexities, and geographical and geological intricacies, of the area under investigation. A consistent theme throughout is 'the essential difference . . . between the Interior and the Coastal Fringe' (p 373), the former being the Weald stretching across the ancient counties of Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Irrespective of period this has been 'a deep force within the region' (p 373), and has allowed 'new insights to be brought to bear on regional history' (p 14).

Quite apart from any original research, a pulling together and summarizing of a considerable volume and range of the publications of 'several hundred scholars, past and present' (p xix), is another outstanding achievement of this book. Although 376 pages of text are bereft of footnotes, published sources are acknowledged, and on pages 378-403 there is an impressive and useful Bibliography.

Brimming with detailed facts and considered arguments, five of the seven chapters are sub-divided into themes for ease of reference, but additionally this study is well supported by a forty page index, ten tables, and numerous illustrations, well-executed maps, etc.

There is much in this book to interest the student of agricultural history and rural society, including the structure of early medieval society and land management, early medieval agricultural techniques and productivity, followed by deer parks, forests and chases. Attention in the later middle ages is devoted to demography and the agrarian economy, rural dereliction, and the drowning of the marshes. Between 1520 and 1660 the changing countryside is examined. The themes of the period 1660-1837 include regional variation in farming systems, agricultural change, agrarian employment and rural stress, and gardens and landscape parks. Agriculture and changes in the countryside are analysed between 1837 and 1939. Encompassed within at least a third of the book devoted to rural themes are some excellent tables and maps: a table showing the principal crops and livestock of the agrarian regions of south-east England, 1640-1750 (pp 204-5), and land use trends in south-east England, 1875-1939 (p 328). Among the maps are early medieval deer parks and forests (p 73), south-east agricultural regions within the period 1660-1837 (p 206), forms of rural protest in south-east England in the 1830s (p 236), and gardens, parks and turnpike roads (p 248).

What is clearly a scholarly and well-written study deserves a wide readership spread among professional

historians and researchers, as much as among those who care for the history of south-east England.

JOHN WHYMAN

KATHLEEN BIDDICK, *The Other Economy: Pastoral Husbandry on a Medieval Estate*, University of California Press, 1989. xvii + 230 pp, 18 figures, 43 tables. \$30.

Studies of medieval agriculture have often relegated pastoral activities to a secondary or marginal role in the economy, subordinate to cereal cultivation. In this important work on the estate of Peterborough Abbey Kathleen Biddick sets out to rectify this situation. Pastoralism and arable husbandry were not competing systems of land-use on the estate, she argues, but rather meshed together in an integral whole, the prime purpose of which was to satisfy the direct consumption needs of the monastic household.

Drawing on both archaeological and documentary evidence Biddick traces the changing ways in which the Abbey exercised feudal power to exploit its resources over a period of six centuries. The core of the book, however, is a detailed study of the demesne accounts of 1300-01, 1307-08 and 1309-10. One of the strengths of her analysis lies in viewing the estate as a network and in demonstrating the meaning of the 'flows' which take place within it; the seasonal movements of animals which permitted the Abbey to maximize its self-reliance and minimize dependence upon the market. The market was used to generate a cash income through the sale of wool, grain from outlying manors, and those animals and animal products which were surplus to consumption requirements. Replenishment of herds and flocks was achieved without significant market involvement, except in the case of cart-horses. Biddick shows how the dominance of 'consumption strategies' was compatible both with an intelligent but restricted interaction with the market and with those progressive features of the agrarian economy - the use of horses for transport, widespread weeding, manuring and consequent high crop yields - which have been associated with significant levels of commercialization elsewhere.

Peterborough Abbey had 'focused' requirements from each group of animals; horses were primarily for transport, oxen for ploughing, cows for breeding, sheep for the cash value of their wool, and pigs for meat. Biddick calculates that the quantity of pigs received and slaughtered in the Abbey's piggery in 1309-10 could have provided an astonishing one-half of the annual calorific requirements of the 140-strong community.

Although this is an estate study it is slightly disappointing that Biddick does not give greater consideration to the regional context within which

the Abbey operated. Manorial accounts are often frustratingly uninformative as to places of sale and purchase of commodities. However, given the selective and disciplined use which Biddick shows the Abbey to have made of market opportunities, it is a pity that she does not speculate on the loci of exchange beyond brief mentions of the likely demands of the towns of Stamford and Northampton for raw materials and foodstuffs. And how typical were the individual manors of the localities within which they lay? To what extent could the estate's strategies over-ride the factors of resource endowment, local knowledge and technique? How commercialized overall was the regional economy? Clearly, tackling these wider questions requires a marriage between estate studies and broader analyses of manorial accounts and other sources relating to a whole region. Nevertheless Kathleen Biddick has successfully demonstrated that an appreciation of the dynamics of pastoral husbandry and of the 'strategies of consumption' are essential to a proper understanding of the medieval agrarian economy.

JAMES A GALLOWAY

'well-versed in architecture and this meant more to them than tradition'. As a result, model and industrial farms are not covered; instead they are dismissed as 'demonstrating architectural tastes rather than an understanding of agricultural economics'. Many would dispute this statement. All but the most ostentatious home farms were built to attract progressive farmers with capital whose improved methods would increase output and thus provide higher rents. These practical farmers were certainly concerned that their buildings took account of agricultural economics and were quite capable of expressing their preferences to land agents. On many estates an element of tradition remained until the age of corrugated iron and pre-stressed concrete.

It is to be hoped that this attractive and not over-priced book with its authoritative, but readable text will find its way into many homes. It has an important part to play in educating the general public to appreciate the historic value of the ordinary as well as the unique in the hope that some of our rural heritage survives into the twenty-first century.

SUSANNA WADE MARTINS

ANTHONY QUINEY, *The Traditional Buildings of England*, Thames and Hudson, 1990. v + 224 pp, 193 illus, 81 in colour. £14.95.

It is perhaps a sign of the times that almost a quarter of this beautiful and lavishly illustrated book describing both the history and types of traditional buildings from houses to watermills, should be devoted to agricultural buildings. Ten years ago, this section, if it had been included at all, would have concentrated only on some of the finest barns, but here again this book takes account of the increasing interest in all the buildings of the farmstead and what they can teach us about past farming practices. Granaries, shelter sheds, field houses, dairies, stables, pigsties, and hen houses as well as local variations are all described in detail. Many examples are cited and illustrated, providing a wide ranging introduction to the regional and typological variations to be found across the country.

Although this book is the work of an architectural historian of some renown, it does not confine itself to discussing architectural features. Farm buildings are first and foremost functional, and explanations of how they were used are always included. An agricultural explanation for regional variations such as field houses or barns, bank barns, and lincays is sought and put forward.

The book is specifically about traditional buildings and therefore confines its attention to the period before the eighteenth century when the designers were the local farmers and yeomen rather than the gentry and aristocracy who replaced them. They were

JOHN WALTER and ROGER SCHOFIELD, eds, *Famine, Disease, and the Social Order in Early Modern Society*, CUP, 1989. xiv + 335 pp. £35.

Andrew Appleby, a tall quiet American, came late to academic life and departed from it tragically early. His published works concerning famine, disease and mortality in the early modern period, span a mere seven years. Even so, these were remarkably fruitful, since Appleby was able to heighten awareness of, and raise questions about famine and disease to such an extent that, like only a limited number of scholars before him, this volume has appeared dedicated posthumously to his memory.

Its eight essays are all appropriately related to themes which Appleby developed, and although demography may be regarded as the most obvious of them, there is much in this volume of value and interest to the agricultural historian, particularly of the early modern period. Six of the essays are concerned with grain output and prices, four of which also deal with harvest failure. The first, by the joint editors, is an extensive and stimulating synthesis of the current state of research and writing into early modern famine, disease and mortality. It begins with Appleby's work contrasting the vulnerability to famine of north-west England in Tudor and early Stuart times with the experience of south-east England where subsistence crises were largely absent. This view was based on regional differences in the incidence of local mortality crises in years of major dearth, and needs, as Appleby himself stated, to be supported by detailed local studies, for some northern arable

parishes avoided the catastrophes of the largely pastoral communities, just as some Wealden parishes in Sussex, having similar agricultural and ecological characteristics to the famine-prone north, also suffered from mortality crises in years of high food prices.

In any case for determining death by malnutrition or starvation it would be helpful to have regular recording not only about the nutritional intake of individuals but also their causes of death. Rarely is this sort of information available in early modern England and hence the sources used have been movements in market prices of grains, and burials recorded in parish registers. But are grain prices necessarily a good indicator of the amount of food available (an aspect also discussed by Wrigley in his essay) and were higher numbers of deaths when related to prices good indicators of malnutrition or starvation? Perhaps where overseers of the poor accounts have survived, the fluctuations in the numbers receiving relief could be measured against grain price movements to assist in clarifying the issue. The likelihood is that little correlation between numbers in poverty and the measurement of grain prices will result, particularly since harvest variations had the effect of increasing migration (p 53) rather than acting as an institutional barrier to it (p 69). What is clearly needed is further work on the geography and chronology of famine in order to establish whether starvation or disease was the major cause of mortality crises.

This problem is addressed in the essay by John Walter concerning the social economy of dearth which indicates that starvation from harvest failure was generally avoided since, by extensive official and unofficial (widespread payments in kind, assistance by local gentry, credit and charity) provision of relief, the poor, both urban and rural, survived harvest failures. Much evidence is provided to support this view, but the more the evidence mounts so does a nagging doubt. With so much insulating so many against price increases, why did prices rise so considerably in Tudor and early Stuart England, since the implication must be that the real market for grain must have been substantially reduced. And since these prices rose at a time when gross grain yields doubled (p 80) and net yields rose by another third more, according to Wrigley (p 257), whilst population less than doubled, another conundrum remains unresolved.

The theme of harvest failures and mortality is continued by Dupaquier and Weir both, in writing about France, reminding us that Appleby was one of the few scholars to have published a comparative study of grain prices and subsistence crises in France and England. Both take the view that such crises in France were diminishing in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries suggesting the gap between

England and France was not very wide. But Dupaquier's methodology is not without criticism and Weir's conclusion that climatic influences were probably more important in reducing subsistence crises begs the question as to why then and not earlier, and certainly does not suggest the increased productivity which assisted English cereal farming out of its sixteenth-century crises.

By contrast to these national surveys the sort of detailed local study which Appleby called for in his *Famine in Tudor and Stuart England* is provided by Wrightson and Levine's examination of mortality in the Tyneside parish of Whickham, Co Durham. This agricultural community emerged late in the sixteenth century as a major centre of coal production with a highly mobile population and with mortality seriously affecting its industrial workers who increasingly formed a higher proportion of its ever-growing population.

Appleby's last publication 'The disappearance of the plague: a continuing puzzle' is evoked by Paul Slack's essay on the response to plague in early modern England which demonstrates how public measures to combat plague assisted in its disappearance.

The final two essays are by Wrigley and Schofield, jointly famous in another context. Wrigley writes about the quality of harvests and behaviour of prices and is particularly concerned with the differences between gross and net (allowing for seed corn, annual feed and a personal consumption) yields and the influences these had on prices, whilst Schofield discusses the quality of life, examining family structure and its effect on demographic behaviour. Here again the implication is that England did not have a traditional peasant society and associated extended family structures, but a society of nucleated families in a more individualist, collectivist society. It is becoming increasingly necessary to define exactly who a peasant was since some scholars still find them in nineteenth-century England. (see M Reid, *History Workshop Journal*, Autumn 1984.)

Having an extensive bibliography (but note that Rose should read Rosen), this thought-provoking book, itself inspired by the writings of Andrew Appleby, is testimony to the influence he generated in such a short time. His ideas, and the questions he raised, are being assiduously developed and the quiet American can rest, assured that his legacy continues in good hands.

BARRY STAPLETON

JOHN CHARTRES and DAVID HEY, eds, *English Rural Society, 1500-1800: Essays in honour of Joan Thirsk*, Past and Present Publications, CUP, 1990. x + 384 pp, 1 map; 1 plate, £37.50.

In this impressive volume, seventeen of Joan Thirsk's colleagues and former research students pay tribute

to the profound and lasting influence which she has had on the economic and social history of the early modern period, and especially on its agrarian component. Readers of this *Review*, which she edited in such distinguished fashion from 1964 to 1972, will need no reminding of the scholarly achievement of the editor of Volumes IV and V of the *Agrarian History of England and Wales* covering the period 1500 to 1750, substantial portions of which she wrote herself. However this volume also draws attention to, and supplements, her contributions to industrial and social history.

Seven of the contributors write on various aspects of agrarian history. John Broad's chapter on the Verneys as enclosing landlords, 1600–1800, not only throws much light on the long-term process of enclosure but adds an intriguing new insight into why so many open-fields survived in the eighteenth century. The Verneys bought small properties in parishes surrounding their seat at Middle Claydon, Buckinghamshire in order to prevent these places being enclosed, fearing that new enclosures would increase the supply of pastures and thus reduce the rents of their previously enclosed pastures at Middle Claydon. The Verneys managed to delay the enclosure of Steeple Claydon for 120 years! John Beckett goes some way to restore the slightly tarnished reputation of eighteenth-century estate stewards in a revealing study of John Spedding, the Lowthers' steward in Cumberland. Richard Hoyle charts the failure of James I's schemes ('vain projects') to increase the revenue from the Crown lands by increasing tenants' entry fines or offering them the opportunity to purchase freeholds at fifty to seventy years purchase. It's hardly surprising that most refused. Peter Large's fascinating study of the relationship between traditional agrarian custom and agricultural improvement is based on an analysis of the large parish of Ombersley on the east bank of the river Severn just north of Worcester. Here absentee landlords were confronted by a powerful and well-organized group of tenants (known as 'the homage') in the manorial court. They successfully thwarted plans for rack-renting and enclosures, but introduced convertible husbandry into their open-fields between 1604 and 1640. Strips were exchanged to facilitate temporary enclosures for clover, while pulses and oats were grown on the fallow field. The numerous small farms thrived and grew more valuable throughout the seventeenth century. Ombersley was no doubt exceptional but one wonders if its experience was not more widespread than has often been thought. Peter Edwards throws a revealing light on the development of the horse trade and horse breeding in his study of Shropshire, a leading county in that regard. Donald Woodward's study of manures explores a vital, but neglected, topic in a useful way, though one would

have liked more on liming. The agrarian contributions are nicely rounded off by Malcolm Thick's analysis of the contribution of the root crops grown in market gardens to the feeding of London's poor from c. 1550. The open fields of Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea played a part in this, showing a similar flexibility to Ombersley.

The age was alive with new industrial projects. One of the fastest growing, c. 1650–1750, was the distilling industry. John Chartres explores its relation to cider production and poses the intriguing question, why no English calvados? It seems that cider was too variable in supply and too low in sugar content to be a good raw material for gin distillers, but this does not entirely explain why the cider counties never distilled a high-quality liqueur. Perhaps port was too powerful a competitor? David Hey charts the rise of the cutlery trade in Hallamshire from medieval beginnings and argues cogently that it owed almost nothing to imported Huguenot influences, contrary to some local traditions.

In the field of social history there are some important contributions on the neglected role of women. Barbara Todd shows that widows frequently farmed their husband's holdings in a study of the Berkshire parishes of Long Wittenham and Sutton Courtenay, and Mary Prior reveals the growing sense of independence of women, 1580–1700, in an increased propensity to make their own wills (rather frowned on by the authorities).

Andrew Pettegree shows how the families of foreign immigrants into London (of the 1560s) had become more wealthy and more integrated by the 1590s, again using wills to good effect. Finally Margaret Spufford issues a salutary warning against relying too heavily on probate inventories as a measure of wealth. They ignore real estate and the deceased's debts and need to be checked against probate accounts, where these exist.

In a clear introduction the editors assess Joan Thirsk's deep and widespread influence on historians since the 1950s and Alan Everitt provides a superb inside view of her historical methodology in a fascinating personal appreciation. This volume is a distinguished tribute to a distinguished career and it's a pity it's so highly priced.

MICHAEL HAVINDEN

F J FISHER, *London and the English Economy, 1500–1700*, ed. P J Corfield and N B Harte, The Hambledon Press, 1990. ix + 208 pp. £25.

The current fashion for republishing the journal articles of distinguished contemporary historians in book form can be a useful historiographical exercise for readers and reviewers, but few such publications are as important as this book. Jack Fisher never

published a full-length academic monograph and his contributions to journals and books were widely spaced over nearly forty years. To read them side by side is a potent reminder of the remarkable qualities of breadth of vision, penetrative thinking and analysis, and compact and lucid writing which characterized all his work. For one whose primary research work concentrated on matters of foreign trade and urban development, his continuing interest and sympathetic understanding of matters agricultural and rural was marked. His 1935 article on the London food market remains an excellent starting point for undergraduates, and his central interest in the problems of economic growth and backwardness meant that acute observations on the relationship of agriculture and land-ownership to overall British economic development are to be found throughout his general essays. Penelope Corfield and Negley Harte have done a signal service in bringing the best of these essays together. Many are accessible in published thematic collections but some, such as 'London as an "Engine of Economic Growth"' have been hidden away too long. Their juxtaposition reveals just how coherent and wide-ranging Jack Fisher's contribution was and how relevant much of it remains. What makes this collection even more worthwhile, particularly to those who knew the erudition, sparkling wit, and sociability of the man, is the collection of short memoirs from students, colleagues and contemporaries which do something to carry on a sense of the human contribution to academic life which Jack Fisher made. Short and vivid, they aptly reflect his published academic output, and, with Penelope Corfield's excellent introductory essay on Fisher's place as a historian, make this book much more than a routine collection of periodical articles.

JOHN BROAD

J V BECKETT, *The Agricultural Revolution*, Historical Association Studies series, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1990. x + 79 pp. 2 maps. £3.75.

This judicious summary provides a wide-ranging and efficient introduction to debates on various aspects of English agrarian change. The major foci are the chronology of agricultural change, innovation patterns, and enclosure. In addition, there are short discussions of landownership, of output patterns, and of the relationships between agriculture and the national economy as a whole. A good range of work, both classic and recent, is brought to bear on the central questions, and the complexities of these debates are clearly communicated: a notable achievement in such a short book. Overall, this book is accurately targeted for inexperienced students, and offers as highly effective a return per hour's reading as any introductory text available. Moreover, the relatively

sensible price should encourage students to buy their copies, thereby using the useful bibliography to flesh out the text's slightly terse framework.

Beckett successfully conveys the current dynamism of debates, especially on enclosure and productivity. Broader questions of historiographic change are tackled through presenting successive revisions and modifications to Ernle's notions of agricultural revolution. Of course, this is a device which virtually all of us use in teaching. But as the years and decades pass, it becomes an increasingly contrived approach. Beckett concludes (p 68) that 'Little now remains of Ernle's views, and the old certainties . . . seem misplaced.' It is no reflection of this valuable book to say that reading it raises the question of whether there is a case for abandoning Ernle as a base-line. We might instead adopt a different set of starting points, rooted in broader questions of economic and social development, as well as the specifics of agricultural change.

PAUL GLENNIE

ALBERT BIL, *The Shieling, 1600-1840: The Case of the Central Scottish Highlands*, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1990. x + 388 pp. £25.

For many years John Donald have provided a welcome outlet for the fruits of primary research into many aspects of Scotland's past. Their policy of publishing the best of postgraduate research has, however, been a mixed blessing and this book amply demonstrates both the benefits and shortcomings of such a practice.

Dr Bil aims to provide a fresh and detailed perspective on the shieling and the role that transhumance played within the agricultural framework of the Central Scottish Highlands. Detailed it unquestionably is, for there is much of importance which has been drawn from an extensive and thorough examination of the archives relative to, in particular, the highlands of Perthshire. There is ample testimony, for instance, on how the seasonal movement of livestock to the shielings functioned both to minimize the conflict between arable and pasture and to rest the home pastures. There is much too on the shieling as a base for exploiting the varied upland resources which would otherwise have been beyond the reach of the lower-lying summer towns. Most intriguingly, however, is the evidence which suggests that shielings also acted as territorial markers and provided a means by which landowners could lay claim to disputed tracts of moorland. In a wider context, perhaps the book's greatest strength lies in the fact that it adds a wealth of useful detail to our knowledge of the diversity of a whole host of agricultural practices in what was an essentially pastoral region. For this at least Dr Bil's meticulous observations will be appreciated and must be applauded.

Where the book is less successful, and where its origins are most transparent, is in its failure to provide an interpretative overview of the shieling system. Similarly, it is regrettable that the opportunity to address the wider issue of the shieling as a regionally specific form of transhumance has been missed. In the end, the book's rigidly empirical stance means that it does little to further a broader understanding of the use of summer shielings as one of many potential strategies of resource exploitation and management which have been adopted by pastoral communities.

ALEX GIBSON

LORNA WEATHERILL, ed, *The Account Book of Richard Lathom, 1724-67*, Records of Social and Economic History, new series, XV, OUP, for the British Academy, 1990. xxxix + 283 pp. £30.

Richard Lathom farmed on the Scarisbrick family's manor of Scarisbrick in Lancashire, near the modern Southport, on a three-life lease. This volume is his record of expenditure. There is no parallel set of receipts, and little beyond unhelpful examples of probate records to tell us more of him. (There is no mention in the introduction of the records of the Scarisbrick family in the Lancashire Record Office, though Dr Weatherill is right in her essay to concentrate on the accounts.) Do payments to avoid the 'Darby Court' (eg p 6) suggest a connection with the Earl of Derby?

We learn from Richard's payments about farming in a part of Lancashire on which little research has been published. The accounts are informative on crops (winter wheat, spring oats, potatoes, clover, and hay); on digging turf from mossland, burning the moss, grazing, and reclaiming it; on buying-in, rearing, breeding, and selling cattle; and on pigs. And they survive for long enough to detect change over time. There is also detail on payments for work done on a farm whose family comprised six long-lived daughters but only one male child (who died at the age of nineteen). The expenditure on tools to work flax, wool, and cotton, and on raw materials has been interpreted by Dr Weatherill to indicate some participation in putting-out in textiles.

Dr Weatherill's main interest in this text was its information on consumption in a stratum of society from which account books rarely appear. Believers in a *consumer revolution* will find it rewarding. Furthermore, as Dr Weatherill points out, for the historian of the family there is detail on Lathom's kin, on his neighbours, and, probably, on his friends.

An innovation is the 153-page computer-produced index to a text of 125 pages! It is a concordance for each year, giving brief contextual references to items.

But to look up an item, eg hay, one has to look in more than forty places in the index – there is a lot to be said for a paragraphed index! Use will prove the value or otherwise of Dr Weatherill's index.

Though Lathom's accounts are frequently difficult to interpret, the detail given, and social provenance of his volume make it a valuable one.

C B PHILLIPS

A VERHULST, *Précis d'Histoire Rurale de la Belgique*, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, Brussels, 1990. 224 p, ills, 10 plates. BFr 708.

This vignette of Belgian rural history has its origins in a series of lectures which Professor Adriaan Verhulst, of the State University at Ghent, delivered to the students of the Université Libre in Brussels, where for the first three months of 1983 he held the visiting Francqui Chair. It is, then, a series of broad brushstrokes, spanning the period from 500 to 1800 AD, with the chapters covering great swathes of time, like 'The High Middle Ages', in just 44 pages. Verhulst includes in his remit the geographical area of present-day Belgium, plus the neighbouring districts of Dutch Brabant and Zeeland Flanders, Lorraine and substantial parts of northern France (Hainault, French Flanders, and Walloon Flanders). This broad-front approach is on the whole to be welcomed: detailed studies abound, but there are few surveys or syntheses available, and Verhulst's summary is a useful point of departure. Because of the book's origins as a lecture-series, there are no footnotes or systematic references, but there is a useful bibliographical essay appended, which includes pointers for further investigation of more detailed subjects. The subject matter of this 'rural history' is rural demography, agricultural technology and technique, land reclamation and clearance, and, in the period after 1300, prices and the volume of agricultural production. There is, as the author freely admits, little attention to rural social history in any broader sense, such as religious or community life, or the history of mentalities.

Verhulst's *leitmotif* in this broad survey is the rise and fall of intensive small-scale peasant farming. The classic feudalism of the southern part of Belgium in the early and high Middle Ages, by retaining large estates, retarded the efforts of the small entrepreneurial farmer. In the north, however, in Flanders and much of Brabant, feudalism had been much more diluted than in the south, and, assisted by the proximity of the greatest towns of medieval and early modern Europe, a dynamic small-scale agriculture evolved, technically innovative and thoroughly integrated into the market. In the course of the early modern period, it spread throughout the country. By 1800, however, Verhulst sees this system as having reached the limits

of its expansion, which appears to be the reason for the book's end-point at the dawn of the nineteenth century. He endorses the standard view that this agricultural advancement was essential to the great industrial strides made in Belgium after 1800, on the English 'Industrial Revolution' model, but indicates that, after 1800, Belgian peasants entered a phase of misery and more or less perpetual crisis, which lasted well into the twentieth century. Be that as it may, this book provides a convenient and reliable guide to the pre-1800 agricultural history of a country which for so long exported the techniques of advanced farming to the rest of Europe.

MICHAEL WINTLE

A J SCHUURMAN, *Materiële cultuur en levensstijl: een onderzoek naar de taal der dingen op het Nederlandse platteland in de negentiende eeuw: de Zaanstreek, Oost-Groningen, Oost-Brabant*, (Material Culture and Consumer Behaviour: an investigation into the language of objects in the Dutch countryside in the 19th century: the Zaan district, eastern Groningen and eastern Brabant), *A A G Bijdragen*, XXX, Wageningen, 1989; simultaneously published by HES Publishers, Utrecht; also appeared as doctoral dissertation, Wageningen Agricultural University, 1989, 450 pp, map, 52 plates. No price stated.

Anton Schuurman has been working on Dutch probate inventories for more than a decade, and must rank as one of the world's experts on this type of source. In this, his doctoral dissertation, he has selected for his database a 700-strong sample of probates from three rural areas in the Netherlands, one industrialized, one of large clay-soil farms and one of small sandy-soil farms. The study then sets out to identify differences in 'material culture' between the three regions and between three different periods (the 1830s, 1860s, and 1890s), as well as intra-regional differences based on class and wealth. The 'material culture' of the rural household is defined by consumer durables such as furniture, textiles and jewelry, and Schuurman professes a special interest in consumption as a non-verbal medium for communicating social commitments and aspirations (which goes some way towards explaining the intriguing subtitle about 'the language of objects'). The whole operation is securely located in the international theoretical debate over the pitfalls inherent in using this type of source, and about the (computer) methodology in analysing the data. The empirical results of the study are perhaps not very surprising: 'domesticity', or the culture of the home, increased during the century; there were more differences between the behaviour of the various classes and over time than there were between the three regions; and such regional differences as there

were focused on low-income groups, declining as the century went on. More significant is Schuurman's contribution to the theoretical debate on two matters: the use of probates as a source, and the history of daily life, of consumer behaviour, and of collective mentality, especially in reaction to economic modernization. There is a summary in English, and this book is a worthy addition to the already highly prestigious series *AAG Bijdragen*, which has for thirty years given us the best of Dutch agrarian history.

MICHAEL WINTLE

P MATHIAS and J A DAVIS, eds, *The First Industrial Revolutions*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1989, viii + 175 pp, £27.50.

The appearance of this collection of reworked seminar papers, and its promised successors, reflects a burgeoning interest in the origins and nature of industrialization. The objective of the series is to acquaint students with the major strands of current thinking on the process of European industrial development since the eighteenth century; and this first volume ostensibly offers an appraisal of recent research on the first industrial revolution in Great Britain. In fact, traditional views on British industrial leadership dominate the collection which embrace such 'themes' as the role of population, agriculture and transport in industrialization. While a hint of recent thinking is included here, most of the reinterpretations of Britain's experience which also emphasizes the homogeneity of European industrialization are, sadly, ignored. Not only is the content of several chapters out of date and poorly structured, but the whole volume lacks integration.

Mathias's opening discussion on the nature and meaning of the Industrial Revolution overlaps with both Crafts' clear account of the quantitative contribution to the Industrial Revolution debate (useful for those who may have missed it in earlier publications) and Davis's consideration of the relationship between British and European industrialization, which emphasizes Britain's industrial priority. Mathias and Crafts independently examine recent reassessments of growth rates, sources of productivity gains and structural change in the British economy. Mathias also highlights current preoccupations with the diffused nature of industrial growth, the persistence of traditional industries and methods and the value of the region as a unit of analysis; while the standard of living debate forms a gratuitous addition to the Crafts chapter. Davis presents some of the more original perspectives to appear in this volume, and although his chapter lacks cohesion, its value lies in the exploration of a range of new approaches to international industrialization, including the regional and

proto-industrial models, and a noteworthy assessment of the role of the state.

The thematic chapters are disappointingly traditional in concept and content. The financing of British industrialization is discussed by Mathias in a sound but familiar way. Barker's contribution fails to place transport within the context of the process of industrialization. His thesis that 'old' forms of transport continued into the industrial age, is supported by a lengthy presentation of developments in roads and stagecoaches, but little reference to recent literature or to novel interpretations. The relationship between agriculture and industrialization is examined thoroughly, if conventionally, in a third chapter by Mathias; and while Woods ably offers state-of-the-art demography, the impact of population trends on the process of industrialization receives only cursory treatment. In the final chapter, Bruland rightly emphasizes the importance of the link between the organization of work and technical and industrial change. In content and analysis this work stands at the forefront of knowledge and justly reflects recent trends in thinking in European industrial history. It sticks out like a sore thumb.

Both the promise of this volume and the content of individual chapters reveal either outmoded conceptualization or the time lag between authorship and publication. More might have been expected from such a team, and it is to be hoped that subsequent volumes will more completely fulfil the objectives of the series.

KATRINA HONEYMAN

M REED and R WELLS, eds, *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880*, Frank Cass, 1990, v + 236 pp, £19.50.

This book reprints, with substantial new essays by the editors, a series that appeared between 1979 and 1988 in *The Journal of Peasant Studies*. The result is a powerful corrective to the confidence with which notions of social conflict and class consciousness have been dismissed by what is here termed the 'ploughs and cows' approach to rural history ('its present profoundly ossified state exemplified by the *Agricultural History Review*'). It will be unfortunate if such polemical flourishes alienate the wide readership this book deserves. It combines attentive archival scholarship with an admirable commitment to open debate; and the rural history for which the editors call, 'a study of everyday life rather than concentration on so-called landmarks', should command the respect of all agricultural historians.

Reed's introduction attacks the lazy, anglocentric assumptions of much writing about English rural history. It pleads for closer attention to concepts like class, market economy, social control, and labour, and for the integration of insights from the study of

non-English rural cultures. It is here, perhaps, that the enduring importance of this debate for the study of rural history may lie. Originally, however, it arose from Wells's argument for the extension to rural England of a key aspect of E P Thompson's thesis on class-formation. For Wells the 1790s were a watershed after which social protest was endemic in the rural south: but 'the repressive agencies were fully adequate to the suppression of disturbance', and therefore covert action (crime, arson, and anonymous letters) rather than overt protest remained the norm until the early 1830s.

Other protagonists in the debate questioned the nature of rural protest, but not the core of the Wells thesis. Charlesworth stressed the importance of overt protest throughout the early decades of the nineteenth century, struggles in his view that cemented and thus help to explain the solidarity that underlay Swing. In so far as there was really a debate, it centred on the open/close parish concept and its capacity to elucidate the nature and incidence of protest. The use of it by Wells and Charlesworth was subjected to close scrutiny by the geographers Short and Mills. They, and the concept itself ('simply irrelevant'), now receive short shrift from Reed and Wells, but rumours of its death are, one suspects, an exaggeration.

Wells's close adherence to Thompson's typology of class formation obscured the more general aptness of his own thesis: that claims for any natural harmony of interests between farmworkers and their employers are increasingly unfounded from the 1790s onwards. In a new essay, much the longest here, Wells now elaborates and extends his argument, laying open the largely unsuspected extent which the politicization of southern English rural workers had reached by the 1830s. Occasionally the evidence will not bear the interpretative weight he imposes (for example, a claim that in the late 1830s 'land nationalisation speedily assumed prominence' in the south, on close inspection rests on a single reference to a speech delivered in Brighton). However, Wells's grasp of archival material enables him to paint with both broader and more-detailed brushwork than his predecessors on the subject. Even those who are uncomfortable with his broader conceptual framework are unlikely to be deaf to the implications of much that he has to say.

The meat of this book lies in the period to 1840, though there is a useful survey of issues needing to be addressed in the later period. One senses the editors will be disappointed if its picture of rural England as populated by village Hampdens rather than Hodges goes unchallenged. Like the work of Hobsbawm and Rudé (which it largely supersedes) this book should become a touchstone for future scholarship, both critical and sympathetic.

MALCOLM CHASE

BARRY REAY, *The Last Rising of the Agricultural Labourers: Rural Life and Protest in Nineteenth-century England*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990, xii + 226 pp. Illus. £30; DAVID J V JONES, *Rebecca's Children: A Study of Rural Society, Crime, and Protest*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, xiii + 423 pp. Illus. £40.

There are common characteristics shared by these authors and their volumes. First, both have their predecessors. In Reay's case, P G Roger's *Battle in Bosenden Wood* published in 1961, was principally interested in the charismatic millenarian, and self-styled Sir William Courtenay, who led and was killed in what proved a localized rising, nipped in the bud by the army in the north-east Kent countryside in 1838. Roger's account was somewhat anecdotal, but Jones' predecessor was the legendary Welsh historian, Professor David Williams, whose superb *The Rebecca Riots* was, despite its 1955 vintage, a model study of a fierce and sustained regional rebellion which quickly established itself as the definitive account of South-west Walian events which reached their riotous climax in 1843-4.

So both these revolts were, secondly, rural. Thirdly, an essentially minor affair in Kent, and something approaching a sustained populist imposition of socio-economic morality in a much larger Welsh region, comprising the counties of Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire, and Pembrokeshire, are contained only through the intervention of the British regular army. Fourthly, both authors locate their principal foci within a context defined in their subtitles; Reay, 'Rural Life and Protest in Nineteenth-century England', Jones 'A Study of Rural Society, Crime and Protest'.

Fifthly, the contexts of these events are also directly intertwined with the universally experienced, if with regionally differential impact, of the post-war agricultural depression, which began to lift in some regions only from the later 1830s. The uneven restoration of agrarian capitalism's profitability eluded some localities, including Courtenay's patch comprising the villages of Boughton-under-Blean, Hernhill, and Dunkirk, and some entire regions, including what became Rebecca's country. Similarities between the geographical areas under review deriving from agrarian conditions, included under-employment, and abysmally low wages which produced under-nourishment among many labouring families. Smaller farmers, country tradesmen and craftsmen were economically severely compromised, and some experienced the trauma of downward social mobility into labouring ranks. Prior to the attempted social-security revolution through the notorious Poor Law Amendment Act, the operation of its predecessor was of critical importance in the maintenance of a rough and ready form of equilibrium, which – as the Swing

jacquerie in England demonstrated – could be fractured on occasion.

So, the sixth and last principal shared characteristic was the very radical machinery and objectives of the infamous Poor Law Amendment Act, implementation of which commenced in the agrarian South in mid-1835 and by 1837 was being extended across Wales. This sparked widespread protest in large parts of England and Wales, but perhaps owing to the close correlation between the *organized* Anti-Poor Law movement and the genesis of Chartism, historians of resistance to the 'Poor Man's Robbery Bill' have focused inordinately on the principal theatres of the renewed Democratic Movement, namely London and other urban centres, and especially the industrializing North, Midlands, and South Wales. Both Reay and Jones, in different ways, establish the adverse – indeed for some, devastating – impact of the new system in their areas; in so doing they emphasize not only that that principal facet of state policy, introduced by the Whigs supported by the Tories when ephemerally in office, contributed much to the sheer alienation of much of the populace in Rebecca's Wales and Courtenay's Kent, and thus these events became another telling testimony against those historians who have dismissed the view that the implementation of the Robbery Bill imposed radical change in practice.

Having sketched some common factors, the very real differences, not only between the societies involved, but also in the rebelliousness itself, must be acknowledged. Among the most significant were the large proportion of small farmers, some of whose production patterns were virtually subsistence oriented, and others whose low profitability derived from trying to get a living from poor lands, who were all particularly vulnerable to the Anglican clergy's exaction of tithe. In the three counties, the 1836 Tithe Commutation Act – hailed as something of a saviour in many English regions – actually increased the burdens. Some mining and industrial districts were to be found in South-west Wales, and here industrial relations were generally poor, germinating much militancy amongst a workforce which not only in part came from the regional countryside, but also maintained contacts with their home parishes, and through this probably reinforced indigenous inclination towards direct action. Finally, but most importantly, the turnpiking of many roads came relatively late to this part of Wales, and new trusts – which essentially represented the privatization of roads – were being founded in the 1830s, saddling rural communities with what amounted to a new form of taxation (pocketed by turnpikes' wealthy backers) through the new tolls imposed on the users of roads, whose journeys were previously free; this innovation clearly fractured a fragile 'moral economy' already evaporating through the multifarious changes

– including orthodox interpersonal relationships – imposed under the New Poor Law.

Whereas Professor Williams dealt at considerable length with Rebecca's attacks on tollgates, Dr Jones emphasizes that whoever these were, dressed in women's clothes to lead local groups in their direct actions, they had a rather larger number of targets. Indeed, it was only the army units detached to guard the workhouses, which effectively stopped their demolition. Magistrates who attempted to oppose the movement were humiliated, and their properties – if not invariably their persons – were attacked. Among other objectives, Anglican clergymen were compromised in their exactions of tithe, while putative fathers released from responsibilities for their illegitimate offspring under one of the nastier (and chauvinist) clauses of the Amendment Act, could be pressurized into adopting a more supportive role – including marriage. The breadth of Rebecca's enforcement of social responsibilities impresses. So too does another major element in Jones' work, namely the chapter on 'Crime and Deviance' which reveals – among many findings – the high, and rising, level of indictable crime, especially immediately after Waterloo, and the fact that where the identities of Rebecca activists can be primarily established, 'all in all they were no strangers to crime'. Jones' findings here contribute another serious qualification of George Rudé's (and to a lesser extent Eric Hobsbawm's) reiterations that for many protesters, the criminal conviction deriving from their participation in the crowd, constituted their first (and only) serious brush with the law.

Reay's protesters were numerically miniscule compared with Rebecca's children. Yet, quite a proportion of those who mobilized at Courtenay's call, had criminal convictions of one sort or another – the most common for the primary rural 'social crime', poaching. The locality had also figured prominently in the Swing revolt of 1830, and the riotous mobilizations specifically against the implementation of the Amendment Act in 1835. It is in this context that Reay's notion of the 'last rising of the agricultural labourers in England' can be sustained, though like Swing's, Courtenay's followers included craftsmen, dual-occupationists, and small farmers. However, the tiny scale of the rising so dramatically terminated in the unequal shoot-out in Bosenden Wood – under fifty men were actually mobilized behind Courtenay on either that day, or the previous one – certainly facilitates belittling. To some extent Reay's devotion of an entire book to the topic is an act of faith in what this dramatic moment represented. It had millenarian overtures, though considerably more activists were practising Anglicans than Nonconformists; there were elements of ultra-radicalism, as talk flowed of 'the division of the land', and more immediate

intended targets – including the physical artefacts of the New Poor Law itself. Interestingly, kinship patterns are relevant – a number of the mobilized were related – and they were rather older than those involved in other mobilizations, with a high proportion of men in their thirties and forties, married with children. Several of their wives were pregnant.

The capacity to reveal these – and other normally untouched facets of the faces in the crowd – derives from Reay's localized approach which involves the derivation of aspects of everyday life from the copious information in criminal dispositions, and family reconstruction. Reay's self-praise of being the first to use such methodology on the study of a rising is justified, and his recreation of the rising's setting also involves considerable detail on a host of individuals, though it could be argued that it is only the scale of the numbers of people, and the limited geography which makes this possible. Although Dr Jones has also used handfuls of very localized evidential sources, he is rarely able to penetrate or reconstitute communities after the style of Dr Reay. The latter also warrants recognition for his grasp of nineteenth-century secondary, as well as primary sources, for all his previous published work is on the seventeenth century, though curiously Reay misses the potential significance of the ironically (?) named Dunkirk beershop, 'The Church and State'. In stark contrast, Jones is certainly the most published expert on nineteenth-century Wales; indeed his output is prolific. But if *Rebecca's Children* has established itself as an essential complementary text to Williams' *Rebecca Riots*, the former contains not inconsiderable evidence of an unsustainable rush into premature publication. The recurrent mentions of the question of professional policing suggest that Rebecca's influence on decisions to adopt or ignore the 1839–40 Rural Policing Acts, should have been systematically addressed, but the only essay in that direction (pp 352–4) reveals Jones' unfamiliarity with the details of the relevant legislation. Twenty-one-year leases on farms taken out 'in the first decade of the century' 'came to an end during the mid and late 1830s' (p 60); and an illegitimate 'baby was found by a stray cow some miles away on Treffgarne mountain' (p 184).

ROGER WELLS

GEMINGAY, ed, *The Vanishing Countryman*, Routledge, 1989, viii + 169 pp, £30.

Routledge have now issued three books developed from G E Mingay's previous compilation, *The Victorian Countryside*, of 1981. Of this book's ten chapters, six have been reprinted as a thumbnail study of the rural farming community in the nineteenth century, with no changes except that W A Armstrong has updated his comments on rural population

development, and revised his paragraphs on women's involvement in farmwork and the emigration of farmworkers. Four chapters are newly commissioned to carry it forward to the present day. Numerous proofreading errors have crept in, the worst the transposition of a line of table 4.3 by one column to the right. Dates are incorrectly rendered and words are changed (*impudent* becoming *imprudent* in a quote on page 30), leaving a general worry about unreliability.

As an alternative to reprinting in the original format, perhaps with an extra volume, this seems a poor and expensive strategy, for only 53 pages are new. To cover the changes that farmers, farmworkers, their families, and the wider rural communities have faced in this century in that, on anything but a superficial level, is surely an impossible task. C W Chalklin's chapter on the decline of crafts and trades is both poorly focused and too reliant on unsupported anecdotal evidence, while two pages of fourteen on farmers examine their treatment in literature, a topic covered in the companion *The Rural Idyll*. As good a job was done as could be expected on, for instance, rural religion in one and a half pages, but much was missed out, like the rise of agri-business, and it has little to offer except as the most general introduction.

S A CAUNCE

PETER BOSLEY, *Light Railways in England and Wales*, Manchester UP, 1990, xiv + 210 pp, £35.

Between 1864 and 1896, a number of Acts of Parliament were passed relaxing some of the most stringent railway safety requirements but restricting engine speeds and axle-loads. The main purpose of the 1896 Act was to develop low-cost transport in rural areas to alleviate the effects of agricultural depression. This book's claim to interest the agricultural historian is that it concentrates on rural light railways. The first four chapters cover general aspects of the problems facing these railways, while chapters five and six examine the working histories of five of them, and chapter seven deals with their decline in the face of competition from road transport from the 1920s onwards. Light railways were among the last to be built and, although they did see the extension of lines into remote parts of England and Wales, they were, by definition, the most economically unpromising. The precise reasons for their failure varied in each case, but for all of them agricultural traffic proved to be only a minor part of what they carried. For the Southwold Railway in Suffolk, passenger receipts always exceeded the entire goods revenue (p 105); the North Sunderland Railway between Chathill and Seahouses was built primarily to serve the local fishing community (p 116); and the

Wantage Tramway in Berkshire (pp 133-37) appears to have had no agricultural traffic at all.

For such a short work there are too many tables at the expense of text. For instance, we are given twelve consecutive pages (pp 138-49) of passengers, traffic revenues, and profits for the Southwold, Easingwold, and North Sunderland Railways. This is a case of the statistics literally being left to speak for themselves, as these tables are annoyingly marooned from the sections of text dealing with these railways. The best parts of the book are those that deal with the local economies and societies of the districts where the railways were built and their effects on these communities. For example, the discussion on the Lampeter and Abereraeron Railway in chapter five provides fascinating insights into rural politics. Unfortunately, such sections are in a minority, and the overall impression one gains from this book is that light railways alone do not provide a sufficient body of interesting material to sustain even a short study such as this.

RICHARD PERREN

HANS-HEINRICH MÜLLER and VOLKER KLEMM, *Im Dienste der Ceres. Streiflichter zu Leben und Werk bedeutender deutscher Landwirte und Wissenschaftler*, Urania-Verlag, Leipzig, 1988. 264 pp. 15.40 DM.

This slim volume contains twenty-one short essays on the life and work of German landowners and scientists who made significant innovations in agriculture and agricultural science. The book is weighted towards the nineteenth century, but an introduction emphasizes the stimulus of English writers, notably Arthur Young, and the French Physiocrats in the eighteenth century, while the first essay, though only ten pages long, concentrates on three sternly practical and successful farmers, Johann Gottlieb Eckhart and Christian Reichart, both of whom wrote influential textbooks as early as the 1750s, and Johann Christian Schubart, the master propagandist of clover, who wrote his first prize essay on animal fodder in 1783.

After these follow the more familiar story of Albrecht Daniel Thaer, the medical doctor who turned agriculturist, writer, and teacher, and Johann Gottlieb Koppe, who worked under Thaer, managing his model farm at Möglin, and later, when in charge of the farms of other landowners, revised Thaer's arable farming system in the light of his own practical experience of different soils and changing price levels. A short piece on Carl Philipp Sprengel, who was a pupil of Thaer in Hanover, and then made a special study of agricultural chemistry, introduces the forerunner of Justus von Liebig, who himself receives a fourteen-page essay. The next account of Albert Schultz-Lupitz shows the influence by 1851 of the Hohenheim Agricultural Academy, where Schultz

first studied, resulting in this case in a lifetime's work to redeem sandy land on the north German plain. Lupins, assisted by experiments with fertilizers, were the solution here. The remaining essays turn from pioneers in plant nutrition, to livestock feeding, improved ploughs, milk production, pig breeding, plant diseases, and plant breeding.

Threading their way through most of these essays are the international connections, which served to stimulate, deepen, or disseminate the progress described. August von Weckherlin's 'rational livestock management' for example, prospered with the help of merino sheep which he bought in Saxony and France, and managed on Bakewellian principles. German pig production was improved with the help of pigs from Spain, China, Hungary, and the Large White from Yorkshire.

It is a mystery how two distinguished East German historians allowed their book to be published without footnotes or bibliography. But its subject matter marks a significant step forward in East German agrarian history by paying some tribute to the agitations of liberal landlords against feudal backwardness, and according a place of honour (along with photographs) to the life and local affiliations of enlightened middle-class individuals. When the bald outlines of their work are filled in with more detail, we can expect to learn still more about the dense international network which promoted European agricultural improvement between 1700 and the present.

JOAN THIRSK

ALEXANDER SOMERVILLE, ed K D M SNELL, *The Whistler at the Plough: Containing Travels, Statistics, and Descriptions of Scenery and Agricultural Customs in most parts of England*, The Merlin Press, 1989. xxxi + 437 pp. £35.

This is a reprint of Alexander Somerville's travels through England and southern Scotland in the 1840s, first published in 1852. These travels began in 1842 and they were designed as an inquiry into the demerits of protection, as he put it. He was fiercely against the Corn Laws, and as a result of a meeting with Richard Cobden was supported by the Anti-Corn Law League in his travels. William Cobbett was another influence on his life, though Somerville's critique of the condition of the rural labouring classes derived more from his humble origins than his contacts. The 1840s may have been a 'good' time to tread a path of investigation into the lot of the labourer, and rural conditions in general, but Somerville's name, observations and opinions from his other writings have been more closely linked to Chartism. As a period of history the decades of the 1830s and 1840s have been hijacked by the 'Age of Peel' style of

historians and history teachers. The broad period is pregnant with large issues, such as parliamentary and poor law reform, and Chartism. These, and the debate over the Corn Laws, have had more to do with political reform and the rise of the commercial political interest than with the nuts and bolts of rural life. Therefore, perhaps, Dr Snell, the editor of this volume, is correct when he observes that *The Whistler at the Plough* has been overlooked by agricultural historians for too long. The landowning interest rather than the rural labourer has held centre stage. Yet if the byways of rural England are now to be explored, the question of whether that exploration will rank *The Whistler* as an essential source alongside Arthur Young, William Cobbett and other travellers, as Dr Snell thinks it should, will depend on the value historians attach to anecdotal evidence (which gains some kind of scholarly legitimacy by being called oral history), and how they treat Somerville's declared political bias. Somerville may appear to be informed, in a local history/cow and plough/customary practice sort of way, but he lacks information or data of the hard or original sort, which was the hallmark of Young. An interesting exercise might yet be to see how Somerville's view of England compares with James Caird's almost contemporary, but post-Repeal view in 1850-1, and the other much-used contemporary observations contained in the *Prize Essays*.

MICHAEL TURNER

BRIAN SHORT, *The geography of England and Wales in 1910: an evaluation of Lloyd George's 'Domesday' of Landownership*, Historical Geography Research Series No. 22, Cheltenham, 1989. £3.50.

In this short monograph - 104 pages - Brian Short describes a remarkable source for the history and historical geography of Edwardian England and Wales. In the Finance Act of 1910, finally passed after the struggle with the House of Lords, taxes on land values were proposed. These taxes were not implemented, and indeed the legislation was repealed in 1920. But the Inland Revenue had established a description and assessment of the value of land and buildings in both urban and rural England in 1910 which remained unavailable until the commissioners began to release the vast documentation which accompanied the assessment. Since 1968 letters, forms, field notebooks and maps have been made available to the public, and are to be found in the Public Record Office and local archives.

The surviving documents include valuation books, forms of return, which were filled in by owners, field books recorded by officials, form 37-Land, the provisional valuation, and Ordnance Survey sheets.

Brian Short provides a description of the material available and a critique of the difficulties of interpretation. In the second half he provides some

microstudies of the way in which the material can be used to recreate the geography of 1910; it allows a reconstruction of the urban ecology of the time, the location of industries within cities, and provides a wealth of information upon rural England. He notes that the data can be compared with similar sources such as the tithe maps and files, the land use surveys and the National Farm Survey.

Agricultural historians will find his monograph fascinating, and opening avenues of detailed research. All those interested in modern English agricultural history will want to read this guide to what appears to be one of the most detailed records of the past available to the historian.

DAVID GRIGG

DAVID GRIGG, *English Agriculture: An Historical Perspective*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, 249 pp, 25 maps; 13 plates, £35.

Professor Grigg's aim in this book is to 'describe farming in England and Wales in the 1980s' (p. 1). To do this effectively, he goes back to medieval times in order to describe and analyse the long-run evolution of farming in Britain, giving adequate attention to regional differences, so that the reader can appreciate by the end of the book that not all farmers are East Anglian barley barons.

The structure of the book is analytic rather than chronological. Thus, of the seventeen substantive chapters, there are, for example, chapters on the growth and structure of output, prices and policies, land use, crop yields, livestock, farmers and farm-workers, the use of power on the farm, and lowland and upland farming. Within these subjects, the story is told chronologically and in considerable detail. The result is a very satisfying synthesis from a wide range of sources, so that a clear picture emerges of why farming has developed in the ways it has, and some thoughts are added on current controversies and policies (in particular, the future of the Common Agricultural Policy).

A particular strength of the book is that it provides a very up-to-date picture of the industry (to the late 1980s), while placing recent changes firmly in the historical context. Thus it will be of use to the layman wishing to know how and why agriculture has developed in the way it has; to those interested in agricultural policy-making, for whom it provides a firm factual basis; and for the historian and technical specialist who wishes to understand the variety of forces which have contributed to the development of contemporary agriculture. The farming community might also read it with profit, as supplying a coherent view of what has happened in the past.

The only real criticism of substance must be directed against the book's title, since at various points in the

text (especially on statistical data) we find ourselves considering the UK, England and Wales, or Great Britain, but seldom England alone. This is a problem inherent in the use of official statistics, which needs to be borne in mind when reading this very useful and comprehensive survey.

PETER DEWEY

P. E. DEWEY, *British Agriculture in the First World War*, Routledge, 1989, x + 262 pp, £40; AVNER OFFER, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation*, OUP, 1989, xix + 449 pp, 10 plates, £25

Our knowledge of agricultural history during the First World War, as with that of other areas of the British economy which attracted state intervention, has been strongly shaped by the quasi-official Carnegie histories, most of which were written by civil servants prominent within the state agencies that were appointed to control them. T. H. Middleton's *Food Production in War* (1923) was typical of the genre. In extolling the plough policy of 1917-18, it estimated an increase in annual output of 24 per cent between 1909-13 and 1918. Dewey has for some years been associated with a re-examination of this view. His contributions to the reviews are here coalesced into the backbone of a useful and important monograph that seems set to become the received wisdom. In parts the book is somewhat tedious reading, but this is in the nature of the work and its remorselessly sequential treatment of its subject. On the other hand, it is a model of clarity. Dewey's methods are explained with no obscuring frills, and there is full discussion of the limits and imprecisions of the surviving evidence, and of the assumptions made in presenting new estimates of gross farm output (i.e. after making deductions from farm self-supplies).

Treatment of the political framework and periodization of the development of control is conventional. Despite pressure from Selborne, Milner, and Crawford, the Board of Agriculture was unsuccessful in persuading government to adopt any considerable intervention to stimulate food production before the Lloyd George coalition of December 1916, partly because of the inclinations of Asquithian Liberals, partly because of the bumper US harvest of 1915. Thereafter, as exemplified by the Corn Production Act and the transformation of the County War Agricultural Committees into Executive Committees with executive powers, controls were introduced, but only became really widespread in the last year of the war.

Estimating the labour loss in the 'uncontrolled' period of the war (to December 1916) presents considerable difficulties, not least because the pre-1914 base level is in some doubt. Dewey questions the estimates of Ernle and Middleton that as much as

33 per cent of farm labour had been lost by early 1917, since these were based on the Board of Trade's Z8 returns, which appear to have been based on a sample of only 1-2 per cent of farms, and larger ones at that. A detailed re-working suggests a figure of 11 per cent, reduced to 9 per cent when allowance is made for substitute labour – women, children and soldiers. Dewey makes no claim for precision in his new estimates. Calculations of the loss in inputs of horses, machinery, fertilizers and feeds result in figures of similar magnitude. In the 'uncontrolled' period, there was no great change in agricultural practices and organization, but the loss was evidently not serious.

In examining the second, interventionist phase of the war, Dewey pioneers the use of the records of the County War Agricultural Committees and Agricultural Executive Committees as a source for agricultural history, as well as giving an informative account of the operations of the Committees themselves. In a detailed chapter, he shows how the loss of agricultural labour was slowed down. Protection from military requirements was never secure during the war, but what losses remained were largely made good by the use of soldier, POW, and female labour. Under the Ministry of Munitions and the Food Production Department, there was an increased emphasis on tractors and a heightened dependence on the USA. Substantial progress was made, but not without experiencing delays, especially in the supply of the superior Fordsons. Dewey's overall conclusion is that the plough policy was relatively successful in making gains in a short time under difficult circumstances, but less successful than was claimed by its previous historians. Two-thirds of the acreage intended was brought under the plough, the 1918 total of 12.36 m acres being little short of the probable all-time 1875 peak, with northern and western counties not surprisingly showing the largest expansion. (Interestingly, it is shown that the powers necessary to effect these changes were contained not in the CPA, which would have involved lengthy appeals to tribunals of investigation, but in the Defence of the Realm Act). Altogether, UK food production recovered from 93 per cent of prewar levels in 1916 to 101 per cent in 1918. Because of some curtailing of imports, especially in 1917-18, this still left a food shortage, but it was not serious and was compensated for by food control policies. Farming profits, on the other hand, showed a much more positive trend. Two calculations are presented, one based on the 1908 Census of Production, the other on the 1911 Census of Population. Both show a substantial rise, essentially due to fixed rents and agricultural wages lagging behind inflation.

Avner Offer's book on the First World War is a delight, though as a contribution to agricultural

history *per se* it is much less orthodox than Dewey's. Furthermore, it is not for those only interested in the detail of agricultural techniques and practices, evolution and stability. Such matters form the substantial part of only one section of the book, that which concerns international economic specialization in the half-century before 1914. Here, Offer traces the rise of the frontier economies, and their impact on European, particularly British, food imports and consumption. More than simply a manifestation of superior conditions of production in the New World, he sees this process as having been forced to a peculiar degree by the presence of a British landowning class – beyond mere relative economic efficiency, British wheat production was forced into an artificially large contraction by the necessity of payments to an unnecessary class. Thus, more than is usual in analysis of late-nineteenth century British agriculture, Ricardian comparative advantage is brought into close proximity with the Ricardian theory of rent. British farmers had to fight against a virile frontier society.

The main thrust of the book concerns the impact of world specialization on the origins and, more importantly, the conduct, of the war. In Britain's Dominions on the 'Pacific rim' there arose in the populist politics of the frontier the spectre of Asian immigration and nativist demands for exclusion. Whilst Britain, reluctant to offend the Indian administration and in alliance with Japan, had precious little motive in endorsing such demands, fear of the 'Yellow Peril' nevertheless acted as a powerful cement in tying the loyalties of the White Dominions to Britain, and ensuring that the enthusiasms so evident in the Boer War were repeated in 1914.

International specialization also affected strategic thinking. Gradually, it came to be realized that what had initially been perceived as the weakness of the British economy in wartime – her dependence on foreign trade, in particular of food – was in fact a strength. Britain could mobilize the resources of the settler frontier, and deny them to Germany. In spite of its utilization of the archives of three continents, Offer claims with undue modesty that this book is largely a work of synthesis, but in what is clearly the most archivally-based part of the book, he analyses more fully than ever before the evolution of British thinking on a blockade strategy, emphasizing the role of four men, Hankey, Fisher, Esher, and McKenna, and the extent to which they perceived naval power as a deterrent to war as well as its potentially decisive element. The Germans too perceived their weakness – the Schlieffen plan was the prescription for a short war, the U-boat campaign a belated recognition of the correctness of Tirpitz and the navalists in emphasizing the importance of the global dimension. Such recognitions did not prevent enmeshment in a continental land war dwarfing all precedents – here,

Offer presents a trenchant criticism of the 'military mind' and the tendency to be misled by 'intuitive reasoning' on the basis of blinkered preconceptions. But, as the war dragged on, the international dimension came to dominate its conduct. Increasingly, food shortages in Germany sapped morale – the theme with which the book opens. And increasingly, men from the dominions assumed a larger and larger burden in the bloodletting of the Western Front.

The agricultural considerations of the periphery also conditioned the peace, to a far greater extent than has been realized. For Australian Billy Hughes what mattered was the recognition of dominion sacrifice. For American Herbert Hoover, there were huge surpluses of hogs to sell. In the tensions of Versailles, the Second World War too had an agrarian legacy that has until now been but dimly perceived.

There are inevitably contentious elements in a thesis so grand in scale as this. Were landlords absent from frontier economies? Was the link between anti-Asian feeling in the White Dominions and their subsequent loyalty to and sacrifice for the Crown as close and as exclusive as is presented here? Were Hankey and the Committee of Imperial Defence as influential as Offer portrays? Were naval and continental strategies and commitments so exclusive of each other?

But such caveats are minor. This is a beautiful book, with a literary quality that makes it hard to put down. Offer might sometimes take us farther into his several frontiers than is strictly necessary to sustain his thesis, but no one will reproach him. Elegant, pithy, often amusing, even with an element of suspense, his work is reminiscent of the tradition of the epic movie or the grand travelogue. But there is much more than entertainment. We are given a fresh perspective on agriculture in the Edwardian world economy and on the thinking that led to war. 'Stimulating' and 'provocative' are words frequently used in reviews, but seldom with as much justification as in this case.

A J MARRISON

ANDREW FENTON COOPER, *British Agricultural Policy 1912–36. A Study in Conservative Politics*, Manchester UP 1989. viii + 240 pp. £29.95.

This important study traces the evolution of agricultural policy in Conservative thinking from the pre World War I commitment to free trade and minimal interference, through the wartime controls, to the evolution of protectionism and controls in the 1930s. Except for the incident of 'The Great Betrayal' where the author has published a paper (Andrew Fenton Cooper, 'Another look at "The Great Betrayal"', *Agricultural History*, 60, 1986, pp 80–104) the material

is new and based largely on primary sources: inevitably since, as the bibliography shows, there are few useful secondary studies for the period. Its thesis is that the adoption of 'quasi-corporatism', with the integration of the NFU into policy making and implementation was not a revamped agrarianism. Rather it represented the triumph of forward looking elements over the traditional rural interest. The new thinking saw agriculture as an industry and not as a way of life, took a commodity approach to policy, and stressed the importance of an efficient and stable agriculture for manufacturing and economic growth. The defeat of backward looking agrarianism by the business approach to farming is a recurrent theme in the study.

The irony of seeing a permanent and elaborate system of protectionism as a necessary condition for efficiency, and the confusion between the technical and the economic that underlies it, is not explored. As the title suggests, this is a study of the politics rather than the economics of agricultural policy. But in documenting the evolution of conservative thinking on the subject it provides interesting insights into how the policy came to be what it is. The story is a complicated one, with large numbers of actors with one-liners and walk-on parts. Guidance on their roles and antecedents is usually provided in the footnotes, but to anyone without a working knowledge of Conservative politics of the period, it is not an easy read.

None the less some more analysis of the rationale of the policies would not have been out of place in the study. This is particularly the case for the evolution of policy in the 1930s where, in contrast to the earlier period, the author's touch is less sure. Parallels are drawn between tariff reform and cartelization in industry, and the creation of marketing boards and quota restrictions in agriculture. Plainly there are parallels but there are some obvious differences: nothing akin to the quasi-corporatism of agriculture was proposed for manufacturing. Was the difference to be explained by industrial structure? Or is it perhaps that agrarianism was not moribund after all? The survival of the rural interest required both prosperity and freedom from outside interference. Since these requirements were clearly in conflict perhaps the element of self-control offered by marketing boards together with the political leverage that the system offered was the best achievable compromise.

This book is unlikely to be the last word on the subject and it seems likely to lead to several debates. It should, however, become a standard work for the period and will repay reading by anyone interested in twentieth-century agricultural policy.

JOHN BOWERS

Shorter Notices

Tools & Tillage, VI, 2, 1989, National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, 1989.

Tools & Tillage first appeared in 1968 and is produced annually by the International Secretariat for Research on the History of Agricultural Implements which is connected with the National Museum in Denmark. It represents the principal publishing outlet for detailed research into the development of agricultural equipment and cultivation methods from earliest times to the present day.

Although the journal is mostly European based, two of the three main articles in the current issue are from further afield. Wan Xing-guang of Zhengzhou University has contributed a historical survey of the Chinese plough with the help of archaeological, documentary, and pictorial evidence previously largely unknown to the west. Next, the ard-plough in ancient and early medieval India is examined by Gyula Wojtilla in a study that combines archaeological with linguistic evidence. The third article is from Magdalena Beranova and looks at agricultural implements and milling equipment in prehistoric Bohemia. It introduces another avenue of investigation that has frequently been associated with past issues of *Tools & Tillage*, namely the experimental reconstruction of early implements and testing them in the field.

ROY BRIGDEN

G E MINGAY (ed), *The Rural Idyll*, Routledge, 1989. x + 143 pp. 33 plates. £30.

The underlying theme of all the contributions in this book is the changing perception of the countryside through the Victorian era and the twentieth century, and how this has affected how people live in, plan for, and use the land.

The first six essays cover various aspects of the Victorian countryside, and indeed first appeared in the book of that name. The Victorian country house by Jill Franklin, The model village, by Michael Havinden, and country towns by C W Chalklin look at the more bricks and mortar aspects of the subject, but especially the first two centre on how changing social and moral attitudes influenced the layout and architectural style of buildings. The perceived image of the countryside is brought out strongly in the next three contributions, by Rosemary Treble, Louis James and W J Keith, which review the land as portrayed in Victorian art and literature. One of the most interesting themes here is the contrasting images that emerge, rather than any strong unifying concepts.

The three new essays bring the subject into the twentieth century; Alan Rogers gives a very useful overview of legislation for a planned countryside and goes on to look at social influences, especially through urbanization, on rural life; and Philip Lowe continues this theme with how social attitudes have shaped current attitudes to nature.

All the essays stand as important contributions to the subject as a whole, and there is just the regret that the artistic and literary themes explored for the Victorian era could not have been continued into the twentieth century.

ANNIE HOOD

J BROWN, *Farm Machinery 1750-1945*, Batsford, 1989, 118 pp., £14.95.

This well-produced and nicely illustrated book will find a ready market amongst machinery enthusiasts, and those with an interest in rural nostalgia. There are many new photographs and illustrations, but it seems a pity that the familiar images shown in early pages could not have been replaced by fresh material which must exist amongst the collections at the Institute of Agricultural History.

The period is broken down into four chapters, dealing with the eighteenth century before mechanization, the rise of the agricultural engineer, the steam age, and the twentieth century. Why is it that the farmer is still described as unwilling, or too mean to adopt new machinery? There is ample evidence to show that when economics are right, farmers will take great leaps in technical advance, but generally see no need to do so when cheap labour is abundant, returns are minimal, or supporting technology is unavailable to take advantage of the benefits claimed for new machines.

The book goes no further than similar publications produced over the past twenty years. Too little serious work has emerged on agricultural engineering, and it is surely time that more critical assessments of its impact were forthcoming, even for works aimed at more popular markets.

ANDREW PATTERSON

IAN J FLEMING AND NOEL F ROBERTSON, *Britain's First Chair of Agriculture at the University of Edinburgh, 1790-1990. A History of the Chair Founded by William Johnstone Pulteney*, East of Scotland College of Agriculture, Edinburgh, 1990, iv + 114 pp. £10. This is not the 'scholarly work' we are led to expect from the Duke of Edinburgh's foreword. Nor was

Robert Burns a serious candidate for the first Chair of Agriculture.

The first half of the book is much the better, being a genuine attempt to explore the forces underlying the origins of the Chair. There is much here of interest to the historian of economics, science, and agriculture in Enlightenment Edinburgh. Sadly, there are no detailed references.

The second half is a descriptive chronology of the accomplishments of 'great men'. Gone is any attempt to unravel the hidden agendas (so beloved of historians) that can make compelling an unpromising institutional history. In its small way the book deals with a great theme, but the greatness of Edinburgh University's contribution to agricultural education would have been more apparent if its role in the overall Scottish achievement – so much more rational than in England and Wales – had been spelled out at the expense of internal detail.

The classic dilemma of university agriculture is encapsulated in an atmospheric etching of John Wilson, the third professor, lecturing on mangel wurzels in full academic regalia. By teaching science he claims to improve practice and must therefore attempt the impossible: to humour his academic colleagues and the sceptical farming community.

STEWART RICHARDS

JOHN ORD, (ed), *The Bothy Songs and Ballads of Aberdeen, Banff and Moray, Angus and the Mearns*, with a new introduction by Alexander Fenton, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1990. xxv + 493 pp., 54 tunes, 8 plates. £9.95.

This is a paperback re-issue of the 1973 reprint of the work posthumously published in 1930, with seven new plates but two of the original three silently omitted; likewise, what little information is given about the author on the original title page is omitted and not covered in the new introduction.

A classic work of regional amateur scholarship in popular culture, which badly needs interpreting, the more so since, like many in the same tradition, it has been as much an intervention in as a description of a regional culture. Ord, a north-easterner by birth and a Glasgow policeman by profession, offers no more than an anecdotal account of the agrarian culture of the north-east and the place of singing in it. Dr Fenton, likewise a north-easterner, provides little more. To a local patriot, or an enthusiast of Scottish balladry, it will not matter much. For a historian of agrarian Britain or of popular culture it may be important to know why Ord's ingenuously eclectic compilation (he was no theorist) contains texts of obviously local origin and reference, addressed briskly to the social conditions of the *ferm town*, alongside

classics of the nineteenth-century British and American variety and concert stage; or what part the book played, along with publishers such as Kerr of Glasgow and Beltona Records, in fixing and idealizing a culture even as it was fading; or why Superintendent Ord did it at all, and even who he was.

Sadly, this re-issue will not help.

A E GREEN

CHRIS PAGE, *The Oxford Down: One Hundred Years of Breeding*, Oxford Down Sheep Breeders Association, Banbury(?), 1990. 100 pp., Illus, no price stated.

Chris Page's history of the the Oxford Down breed, from its development in the 1830s and 1840s, to its listing as a rare breed in 1974, (and since then its modest revival), is attractively presented, with numerous illustrations. It incorporates a wealth of information on the principal breeders, the Oxford Down Breeders Association, fairs, shows, and the export trade. The arrangement is broadly chronological, interspersed with topical chapters, dealing with particularly important breeders. A considerable quantity of price data is treated in an anecdotal, rather than a systematic manner. The non-specialist reader may be disappointed that discussion of the breed's place within the general context of agricultural development and the market environment is limited to brief passages in chapters one, and twelve. James Johnston of the National Sheep Association provides a helpful postscript on the future potential of the breed.

ANDREW K COPUS

ARAMINTA ALDINGTON, *A History of the Jacob Sheep*, Geerings, Ashford, 1989. 116 pp., Illus. £16.95.

The Jacob sheep is a piebald and four-horned 'park' breed that has been kept in ornamental flocks in Britain for 250 years. Lady Aldington, the author, was the prime-mover in the founding in 1969 of a breed society for the then declining breed, which has since become popular as an 'easy care' sheep for smallholders, meeting the demand of handspinners for naturally-coloured wool. The book's chief value lies in the reproduction of an amazing collection of illustrations (many in colour) of piebald and/or four-horned sheep going back to antiquity, although the distribution of these characteristics is so widespread that the existence of similar sheep elsewhere does not necessarily mean that they are related to the Jacob. There is an account of an attempt to set up a Park Sheep Society in 1911 and the bulk of the book is taken up with details of all the Jacob flocks in existence before 1969. The last part deals with the recent history