

Book Reviews

JOHN C BARRETT, RICHARD BRADLEY, and MARTIN GREEN, *Landscape, Monuments and Society: The Prehistory of Cranborne Chase*, CUP, 1991. x + 255 pp. 2 plates; 116 figs., 29 tables. £35.

The Acknowledgements (p x) remark on how the authors have 'benefited from the care taken with the production of this volume at Cambridge University Press'. Not just 'the care', surely? – in what are dire days for the proper publication of primary data in British archaeology, a 'bravo' too must go to the Press in actually deciding to undertake the publication of such a volume. May it be the first of many. Even so, a companion volume, *Papers on the Prehistoric Archaeology of Cranborne Chase* (Oxbow Monograph, Oxford, 1991), is required to deal with much primary evidence (environmental and artefactual). Nevertheless, what better place than Cranborne Chase for such Oxbridge inauguration: General Pitt Rivers would be pleased, while doubtless allowing his enthusiasm for cultural evolution to remark that whereas he was able to investigate and publish entirely in-house, as it were, the late twentieth-century equivalent involved not just two publishers but three universities, multiple funding, numerous national and local institutions, and a host of specialists.

His methodology and achievement lurk behind both the project reported on here and the achievement of his successors on archaeologically hallowed ground a century after the publication of his four famous blue and gilt volumes of *Excavations*. Indeed the project began in a re-investigation of South Lodge Camp, one of the General's more enigmatic sites now re-investigated and contextualized within an ambitiously incremental *schema* rationalized in terms very close to his original intentions: '... what had started as an investigation of landscape history almost inevitably extended into a study of social change' (p 1).

This latter is examined from the Earlier Neolithic to the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age (rather surprising, this anachronistic reversion to a Three Age chronology in so contemporary a volume). In fact, '... in Cranborne Chase there is little sign of large-scale occupation until the Later Neolithic period' (p 35) when we see 'the establishment of a social landscape dominated by the Dorset Cursus and the non-utilitarian monuments which develop around it', replaced in the first millennium by a settlement system with 'its growing concern with land and food production' (p 2). The latest site taken into account is the well-known but now sadly-reduced complex of earthworks on Gussage Hill with occupation into the Roman period (p 242), here re-interpreted as a 'sub-Durotrigian' equivalent of *oppida* in south-east England.

Is not all this rather a long way from agrarian history, the documentary historian may well ask? More is the

pity for agrarian history's sake if it is so regarded. Such unwritten and unconscious evidence as is here displayed and discussed is fundamental to understanding how people have used and, as important, regarded their contemporary landscapes while living in and off them. 'The architecture of the Romano-British landscape operated upon the remnants of four thousand years of prehistory and was in many ways a product of that prehistory' conclude the authors; and as on Cranborne Chase, so virtually everywhere else in Britain. Not only that: add another 500 years to be in the early medieval period, and 1000 to be with the Normans, and the principle holds good for a well-informed understanding of agrarian history in medieval and later times too.

P J FOWLER

Rural History. Economy, Society, and Culture, vol I, no. 1. April, 1990. CUP. 146 pp. £18 pa.

A new journal has appeared in these hard times for beleaguered academics. Its editors hope it will match *Études Rurales*, even *Annales ESC*. Its prime aim is to integrate a wide range of rural interests, including, for example, literature, folklore, religion, and vernacular architecture, with mainstream research in economic and social history. Moreover, this interdisciplinary venture proposes to cover a long time period from prehistory to the present day and to encompass all countries with a European cultural background. Considering all the many journals already catering for one or another group of such interests, this is imperialism indeed!

Seven articles appraise the trends in past writing and plan a new future in archaeology, history, rural geography, and folklore studies. The restlessness of some of their authors may have something to do with the forty-year rule: the end of World War II involved a new start around 1950 in all academic studies, and a reappraisal is, therefore, due. But the editors' stance in this case is more backward- than forward-looking. The integration of cognate disciplines was the great aspiration of the 1950s and 1960s, and while the strength of that co-operation has ebbed and flowed, its successful practitioners who, in the nature of things, cannot be numerous, already find a ready home in existing journals; *Past and Present* especially has accommodated much of this work.

In the 1990s a brighter future might seem to loom for collaborative research within a truly European circle of scholars. The time is surely right for a Renaissance flavour to be injected into discussions of common cultural processes? But the editors' main skills, as their footnotes citing foreign journals bear witness, do not lie in the European forum of debate. Nevertheless, B K Roberts in a mature survey of

human settlement patterns over a long period has his eye on a European framework for his findings. And Richard Hodges offers a highly encouraging account of what has been achieved since the 1960s through Italian, French, and English collaboration, in exploring the archaeology of medieval settlement in Italy.

Among the general surveys, Christopher Dyer on medieval history recognizes a tension now existing through the development of local history. The value of probing regional differences more thoroughly, while avoiding excessive fragmentation of the total picture, is squarely faced, though in his own work Dyer has shown how constructive that tension can be. Keith Wrightson, writing on trends in early modern history, does not confront this problem (surprisingly in view of his own work), but bewails narrow specialization, which he blames for sending social history to the margin in schools and elsewhere. In fact, he might have seen in local studies a marked broadening of our historical experience, and an approach which finds a comfortable home in our schools. Nor is this zest for local history in tune only with teaching trends; it arouses considerable public interest as well. Local histories sell remarkably well locally, and the fostering of local pride could well prove to be one of the historian's major contributions to public affairs in the late twentieth century, combating the tide of uniformity with which our planners wish to overwhelm us.

Wrightson's criticism of specialization contrasts with Alun Howkins's article regretting over-generalized studies of the rural poor in the nineteenth century. He seeks more differentiation by gender, class, and place when studying change. For geographers Paul Cloke rightly foresees a changing content for 'rural studies' as more industries move into rural areas. Or should we not recognize this as a return to the past? J D A Widdowson pleads for a new era in scholarly folklore studies, seeing folklore not as a corpus of material quickly vanishing from sight, but as a continuously developing element in our culture.

Not all writers in this first issue can be mentioned. Nor can its pages give much idea of what will follow. It is rather a call for manuscripts, and since two of the three papers offering original research are concerned with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this may well be a foretaste of the future. It is certainly characteristic of *Études Rurales*, and studies in oral history, dialect, regional novels, artistic representations of rural life, and folksong may also draw the journal inexorably that way.

JOAN THIRSK

N J C POUNDS, *An Historical Geography of Europe*, CUP, 1990. xiii + 484 pp. £30 (hbk); £12.95 (pbk).

Between 1973 and 1985 Norman Pounds produced *An Historical Geography of Europe* in three volumes;

now he presents a single work under the same title. This new publication is itself substantial, and is in many ways impressive testament to the scholarship of an individual whose interests embrace 2500 years of European history. The book is replete with facts and figures, graphs and maps, through which Pounds charts the 'changing spatial pattern of human activities'. But the end result is a work which looks to the past in more ways than one. This is a book for geographical traditionalists; devoting attention to population growth, and the pattern of urban centres, to agriculture, manufacturing industry, and trade in material goods. These are the chief recurring themes that structure the chronological chapters. There is no gainsaying their importance, nor the value of making accessible to an English speaking audience information first published in other European languages. But this is hardly a balanced record of human activity.

The shadow of a receding age of historical geography as economic history with maps hangs over this book to the detriment of treatment of social, cultural, and political themes. Much recent, and interesting work in these latter spheres goes unacknowledged; indeed the select bibliographies accompanying each chapter make scant reference to work published during the last decade (eight references from over 300). Pounds relies more on work from the 1950s and 1960s (161 references), not always the most attractive or challenging fare for his intended audience, the undergraduates of the 1990s. I would also hesitate to recommend to my students a work that restricts itself so narrowly to the description of spatial patterns. For this means that while some of the outward signs of change are detailed there is little opportunity to analyse the processes and significance of change. There is no place here, for example, for debate over the nature of developments involved in transition from feudalism to capitalism. There is little place indeed for ideas or theoretical explanation amidst the relentless accumulation of facts. While impressive in its historical sweep this book lacks a vital spark of intellectual excitement.

MARTIN PURVIS

G E MINGAY, *A Social History of the English Countryside*, Routledge, 1990. xiv + 246 pp. Illus. £35.

Writing a comprehensive social history of the English countryside from about 1300 to the 1930s, the effective span of this book, is a prodigious task, especially in 229 pages. What we actually have are 'essays dealing with some of the major aspects of rural society as it developed through the centuries, and with the economic and social setting'. These aim at 'a rounded picture', but they lack overall, and sometimes internal, coherence. The emphasis is firmly on the last two and a half centuries in any case.

The socio-economic survey material the book opens and finishes with is generally lucid and informative, but it is too compressed to be the textbook the title suggests. Only well-informed readers will get the full value so it is hard to see who this book is aimed at. As there is no bibliography, and the footnotes are no substitute, it is not a good introductory book. The purely social history never reaches the same standard and it can be, at its worst, like dropping back a century to early folklore. Lists of oddities are presented out of context for the delectation of readers and some, on the limitations of village education for instance, are used two or three times. The lack of care over comparability on dating and places is breathtaking at times and in great contrast to the economic history.

On pages 124-5, we range from the Dissolution back to medieval times and then on to the 1820s in a diffuse examination of the quality of village clergy: surely this tells us nothing. Page 72 is a strange mixture of material on cures including an East Anglian idea that whooping cough sufferers should put their heads in a hole in the ground to trap the cough. The hole was then filled in in Essex. Even accepting that they are different holes, this kind of lumping together of traditional practices according to the barest description of appearances may hide fundamental differences in underlying motivations. It is, of course, the ordinary folk who come out worst from this methodology which can only travesty our ancestors' ability to think rationally. Occasional reminders that we must not generalize too far, and even a well-made point at the end that most of the efforts of recent times to improve the farmworkers' lot were futile as long as their wages were too low to pay economic house rents or develop their own social activities, do not compensate for the bulk of the book. Women are barely mentioned, which is a comment in itself on its value as rounded social history.

In many ways this seems like an attempt to do the same job as *The Victorian Countryside* on a grander scale but in far less space. It does not work.

S A CAUNCE

DAVID H ALDRED, *Cleeve Hill, The History of the Common and Its People*, Alan Sutton, Stroud, 1990. xvii + 174 pp; 91 plates. £9.95.

Cleeve Hill is a stretch of common land which is still some thirteen hundred acres in extent, and was formerly very much larger. It is four miles north-east of Cheltenham on the highest part of the Cotswolds with spectacular views across the valley of the Severn. Using the evidence of archaeology, careful fieldwork and extensive documentary research, David Aldred has compiled an interesting account of the development and use of this common from prehistory to the

present. During the Middle Ages Cleeve Hill lay on the edge of the Bishop of Worcester's great estate on the Cotswolds, and for agricultural historians the most interesting section of the book will be the use of episcopal records to show the way in which the land was exploited and the life of the societies which used it. Much of the hill remained as common pasture, but there were also arable fields, woodland, many assarts, quarries and, in spite of the exposed and windswept situation, there were even small settlements, although few survived after the mid-fourteenth century.

After the Middle Ages the great expanse of common grazing on the hill remained a crucial feature of the agriculture of the neighbouring manors of Bishop's Cleeve and Southam, and there were numerous disputes over rights, overstocking, 'strangers' cattle, enclosures and other pressures on the land. Problems grew with the expansion of Cheltenham as a spa and the rapid growth in its population. Cheltenham races were held on the hill from 1818 and attracted vast crowds to the annoyance of the commoners who found their ancient rights turned into 'an open-air extension of the spa's many amusements'. Other threats to the common have included the building of houses, hotels and health resorts, the extension of quarries, its use for football, golf and other sports, and for military exercises.

But in spite of all this, a large expanse of the common survives, and this book provides a scholarly and well-illustrated exploration of its development and changing use.

J H BETTEY

MARK BAILEY, *A Marginal Economy? East Anglian Breckland in the Later Middle Ages*, CUP, 1989. xv + 350 pp; 4 maps. £35.

In an absorbing account of the East Anglian breckland as a farming region Mark Bailey identifies the uses to which the land was put, the varied sources of livelihood of its inhabitants, and their relative prosperity from the thirteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century. The mystifying question mark in the title refers to Michael Postan's discussion of marginal land and its use in the High and later Middle Ages. Seeing agrarian change determined mainly by the changing relationship of land to labour, Postan depicted poor and hungry soils like those of the brecklands as an unattractive terrain, which men did not choose to cultivate until population pressure forced them to do so. How does his proposition fit this case?

In a general sense, of course, Postan's argument must be valid, and he doubtless did not intend his remarks to apply to whole regions; as is well known, the breckland was continuously settled and cultivated from Neolithic times onwards. So the author's

severely theoretical discussion of the term 'marginal' is pitched at a different level from Postan's, and gives the word so narrow, and almost legalistic a meaning that he himself is then driven to circumlocutions to avoid using it as the comfortable shorthand term for which he criticizes Postan. The tough opening chapter on these lines is, fortunately, at odds with the thoroughly realistic and practical account of breckland agriculture which follows. Mark Bailey is able to show how flexibly the arable rotations worked, how well sheep courses were adapted at first to keep the fields fertile for the benefit of all cultivators, and later were more deliberately manipulated by lords at the expense of the peasantry. Important new light is shed on gradual changes in foldcourse practices, and also on the development of rabbit warrens. It took about a hundred years before rabbits were nursed from tender weaklings into healthy, strong survivors in the landscape. Then wild colonies formed, poachers seized their unwonted opportunities, the warren became the bane of life for peasant farmers in the common fields, and the change was reflected in rabbit prices. The story is sensitively analysed and explained.

Barley was the breckland's main grain, and curiously the author, without debating the matter or defending his point of view, decides that barley was not a bread grain except in extreme circumstances. Allowing its use only for beer, he must then explain the high proportion of the land used for barley in terms of a commercial demand in urban markets near and far. This conclusion almost certainly exaggerates the brecklands' contribution to the grain market, and, indeed, the supporting evidence is not compelling. The truth is that barley was the all-purpose grain long after the Middle Ages, providing the bulk of the bread eaten by the peasantry (when not displaced in some regions by oats), supplying all the beer, and yielding livestock feed when it could be spared. Far more convincing is the author's evidence for sheep and rabbits as the richest resources of the breckland at the end of the Middle Ages.

Generous tables summarize information from the author's wide-ranging documentary sources, without oppressively burdening the text. Occasionally a longer perspective, recognizing what happened after 1500, might have deepened the discussion, but this book remains a satisfying demonstration of how shrewdly and sympathetically historians have learned to judge each farming region on its own terms. Some land may be marginal, but rarely whole regions.

JOAN THIRSK

period of sustained agricultural depression. The family's preoccupation with the exploitation and organization of their landed estates is a recurrent feature of their correspondence. Their insights provide a more graphic illustration of the difficulties and commercial dilemmas facing fifteenth-century landlords than the terse and colourless manorial accounts and rent rolls which constitute the historian's staple fare.

Bennett's work still provides a delightful introduction and general background to the Paston letters, but the earnest historian must now rely on more sophisticated and detailed studies. Colin Richmond's fascinating book – the first of a series – is principally a socio-political study of the Pastons as a gentry family, and a very fine one at that. It is appropriate, then, that he should concentrate on the legal, political and marital manoeuvring which underpinned the acquisition and then the defence of the Paston estates, for such issues are central to understanding the rise of a gentry family. As a consequence, though, the book offers few fresh perspectives on fifteenth-century Norfolk farming. The agricultural historian is still best served by R H Britnell's assessment of the Paston letters in a recent volume of this *Review*.

Richmond, however, delights in digression (indeed it is his preferred method of history), and there are some nuggets to be uncovered on various aspects of estate management. In one footnote, for example, he presents a subtle perspective on the difficulties of finding tenants in the mid-fifteenth century. It was not just that tenants were reluctant to risk arable farming in a depressed grain market: it was certainly possible for farmers to squeeze a profit from arable land already in tilth. The discouragement to many prospective tenants, particularly in a period when they could pick and choose their holdings, lay in the initial costs of 'bringing round' land that had fallen out of cultivation. Abandoned holdings soon became overgrown and dilapidated, and required prohibitively high overheads to bring them into productive use.

The Paston letters as a source of agricultural history may receive further attention in Richmond's forthcoming volumes. Perhaps one avenue worthy of his scholarship would be a direct comparison between evidence contained in the letters and that contained in any surviving manorial accounts. In this way, he could establish if the Pastons' complaints about agrarian difficulties were justified, or whether the reality was less bleak than they would have themselves believe.

MARK BAILEY

CRICHMOND, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: the First Phase*, CUP, 1990. xxii + 269 pp. £35.

H S BENNETT, *The Pastons and their England*, CUP, new impression, 1990. xiv + 290 pp. £5.95.

The Paston letters represent an exceptional source of information for historians of the fifteenth century, a

DAVID SVEN REHER, *Town and Country in pre-industrial Spain: Cuenca, 1550-1870*, CUP, 1990. xiv + 337 pp. £32.50.

Cuenca, once a centre of one of the *taifa* kingdoms in Al-Andalus, is a medium-sized hill-top town on the Castilian Meseta, half-way between Madrid and

Valencia. With its high population density, large buildings and limited open spaces, David Sven Reher classifies the town as prototypically urban. During the sixteenth century Cuenca was a vibrant and dynamic place with a burgeoning economy. Along with Segovia, it was one of the two leading producers of woollen cloth in Spain and an important point where sheep were sheared during their biannual transhumant migration. The town also maintained active trading relations with other centres in Castile, Europe and North Africa. Yet, by the nineteenth century, as Reher recounts, Cuenca was a shadow of its former self and had become a sleepy provincial capital whose meagre industrial production was destined almost entirely for the domestic market. Its demise was part of the widespread economic and demographic decline of almost all of urban Castile, with the exception of Madrid. Thus Cuenca was neither alone nor was it in control of its own destiny. Reher, in a well-written, pioneering study, incorporating a variety of hitherto unused data, analyses the socio-economic structures of the town within the wider context of the urbanization of rural Spain. Among his main findings is the town's perennial resistance to change. Family structures, basic migratory patterns, economic structures and their spatial distribution in the town, reaction to famine and disease, demographic patterns, etc. were all essentially unchanged, especially between the middle of the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. Reher discovers little evidence that, in the case of Cuenca, the existence of towns stimulated change in rural social structures and behavioural patterns. Unlike the Spanish capital, Cuenca's impact on its surrounding rural hinterland was marginal at best. Among topics covered in the book are urban systems, migration, inheritance and family ties. It will be a useful guide for demographers, social anthropologists, historical geographers and historians of early modern Spain.

JOSEPH HARRISON

E. AERTS, M. AYMARD, J. KAHK, G. POSTEL-VINAY, R. SUTCH, eds, *Structures and Dynamics of Agricultural Exploitations: Ownership, Occupation, Investment, Credit, Markets*, Leuven UP, Leuven, 1990. ii + 142 pp. 600 BF.

This collection of papers is part of an intended pre-conference series prepared for the Tenth International Economic History Congress held at Leuven in the summer of 1990. As the Preface makes clear, the original plan was that those attending the conference would have available in advance complete sets of the papers to be presented. Unsurprisingly, this proved somewhat optimistic – not only did the organizers receive a very patchy response to their efforts, but what did arrive paid little attention to guidelines laid down as to length (eight to ten pages) and format. Instead of reverting to a more realistic, and cheaper, approach, issuing those

attending with a sheaf of xeroxed typescripts lacking uniformity in either quality or language, the organizers opted for re-editing and retyping.

Whether such dedication and effort was worthwhile is an open question. The thirteen papers assembled here average less than nine printed pages each, and although dealing primarily with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they range geographically over the USA, Poland, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Italy, and England. The thematic introduction, signed by the organizers Maurice Aymard and Gilles Postel-Vinay, provides a charter for this lack of focus in their argument for an emphasis on diversity in rural economic organization. This emphasis is grounded in their belief that rural history is today marking time; that the major quantitative and comparative advances of the 1960s and 1970s have now been consolidated, but without the emergence of a new synthetic framework for the study of rural society. Some historians, they suggest, are inclined to stress the changeless nature of rural life, revolving unvaryingly around the economy of the market-place. Others have given up a search for a synthesizing vision, and have turned to an emphasis upon specificity. In response, this collection of papers restates the diversity of rural economies – hence, one can suppose, the jarring use of 'exploitations' in the title to signify that here we are not so much concerned with 'diversity', but with 'diversities'.

Without isolating any individual contributor, it is difficult to see what useful purpose is served by publishing these short papers, whose utter lack of coherence and point is boldly pronounced a methodological virtue by the editors. And if the editors do seriously believe that there was a climacteric golden age of rural history in the 1960s and 1970s, this should be put down to academic mid-life crisis, rather than to any informed comment on the state of contemporary historical research. Faced with a claim that agrarian history has been 'marking time' since the 1960s and 1970s it is difficult to know quite where to start in itemizing important theoretical and empirical contributions from Germany, France, Italy, Britain, and the United States during the 1980s. One thing is certain – nothing of value can be reflected in eight-to-ten page conference contributions unless contributors address a common, well-posed problem in a highly disciplined fashion.

KEITH TRIBE

AKIRA HAYAMI and YOSHIHIRO TSUBOUCHI, eds, *Economic and Demographic Development in Rice Producing Societies: Some Aspects of East Asian History (1500–1900)*, Leuven UP, Leuven, 1990. iv + 161 pp. 600 BF.

This book comprises abridgements of papers presented at the Tenth International Economic History Congress. Although there are, besides Tsubouchi's

overview, eight country studies; none deals with Indochina or Japan.

In his Preface, Hayami asks whether the region's development was different from that of Europe, and, if so, was rice cultivation the cause. This important question is not pursued. However, the assumption, suggested by the subtitle, of a similarity of the various peoples' experiences between 1500 and 1900, must be rejected on the evidence presented here. Tsubouchi portrays considerable variety among rice cultures and societies, and suggests that rice growing, *per se*, does not necessarily lead to high population densities or to 'oriental despotisms'. Yet in Korea, Yi considers, government was influential in the move from a highland rain-fed agriculture to lowland rice cultivation, and even if, as Lee believes, rice productivity improvements were not dependent on the state, both authors agree that the change was accompanied by population growth. Liu and Shi Zhihong describe advances in Chinese traditional agriculture. The former is puzzled as to why population pressure, small farms, and tenancy could delay industrialization in China, though not in Japan. The latter observes that population increase, unlike in Europe, preceded non-agricultural developments but fails to note that the expansion in numbers (almost seven-fold) was far greater than in Japan. The traditional rulers of the Malay peninsula and Java appear to have had little interest in hydraulic works. There, and in Thailand, rice production responded to international economic demands, backed up in Java by colonial administrative pressures.

This publication was designed for advance distribution to Congress participants. The editors, compelled to follow stringent length guidelines, excised all tables, graphs, appendices, and most references from the papers, thereby somewhat diminishing for this reviewer the value of an otherwise interesting collection of essays.

P K HALL

valuable material on its administration. The record is pretty dismal; rents, in nominal terms, remained well below their high medieval levels even in 1600. There is a fascinating account of the Duchy of Cornwall's attempt to remedy this in the early 1620s which largely failed in the face of tenant resistance. I did come to feel that County Durham was too small a frame in which to write a satisfactory account of the Crown's administration of its estates, especially when so much material is overlooked. Reid might be forgiven for not discovering the materials on the Duchy's management of its Durham estates which remains in the Duchy of Cornwall Office, but he never draws on the Exchequer Equity Pleadings in the Public Record Office (E112) and I should be very surprised if he could say, hand on heart, that there was nothing of interest in them.

The remaining chapters are more satisfying. Their main theme is really to show how Long Newton was transformed into an estate village, epitomized by the clearing of one side of the village street to make way for a great house and park in the 1660s (a matter on which I would have welcomed much more). There is valuable material on the field system before enclosure, the conversion of arable to pasture and the enclosure by agreement in 1659. Certainly Reid shows how the timing of enclosure was contingent upon tenurial matters. On completion, a refusal to accept new leases at the rents required by the lord left him with an extensive area of vacant, untenanted ground until he reduced his rents from 7s to 5s an acre. All the way through this section, I wanted to know how the Vanes could *afford* the estates policies they adopted.

The account of Long Newton is clogged with too much detail and could have benefited enormously from more comparative examples. An accident has overcome the footnotes to chapter three. No matter; this detailed study should not be overlooked by early modern agricultural historians.

R W HOYLE

D S REID, *The Durham Crown Lordships in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, and the aftermath*, Durham County Local History Society, Durham, 1990. v + 196 pp. £7.50 (+ £1 p&p, from the society, 3 Briardene, Margery Lane, Durham DH1 4QU).

Reid's title is perhaps rather mischievous. The second and third chapters of his short monograph are indeed about the Durham Crown lordships, but the second (and longer) part of the book offers a detailed discussion of a single manor – Long Newton in Barnard Castle lordship – both during its period in the hands of the Crown and after its sale to the City of London in 1627–8.

The Crown was of unusual local importance as a landowner in County Durham. Reid presents much

RACHEL LAWRENCE, *Southwold River: Georgian Life in the Blyth Valley*, Suffolk Books, 1990. 150 pp. 47 illus. £12.95.

This volume describes the history of the development of the Blyth navigation and its environs in East Suffolk. While the author adopts a purely factual account she vividly depicts the struggles and conflicts experienced by landowners, merchants, and professional men in their attempts to improve this most penurious waterway. A detailed account of the lives of a number of individuals including members of the clergy living in the Blyth Valley provides a backcloth to this story of determination, self-help, private initiative and dynamism. Perhaps the book's main contribution is in its description of the pivotal role

played by local attorneys, who both managed the local estates of landowners and merchants and acted as treasurers and clerks to local turnpike trusts and river navigations. This gave them a central role in raising finance and support for the development of the local infrastructure. (cf. Peter Jermyn of Halesworth pp 103-104).

There are twenty chapters in all, each between four and eight pages long. The text is supported by a series of clear and detailed illustrations, photographs and maps which provide a useful visual perspective to this study of East Suffolk. While the book is structurally sound it is confined to a descriptive and chronological account. It is disappointing that the fruits of such meticulous research are not related to other regional studies or to current debates on the development of the region. The evidence throws up many questions about the organization of trade and in particular the functions of those who serviced the river traffic. The nature of trade is discussed in relation to the conveyance of corn and coal and there is a brief outline of the development of rural industry and agricultural change, but more could have been said about the spatial development and pattern of transport and the role of the local road haulage industry and its interlinkages with the river traffic.

This does not mean, however, that the book fails to achieve what it sets out to do. Given the limitations of the source material, a point which the author acknowledges on p 81, the parameters of the study are inevitably restricted. Rachel Lawrence admirably reconstructs the realities of the development of a rural-based economy through the experiences of the local inhabitants in their attempts to provide a viable transport route.

This is a welcome addition to the growing number of publications on local communities, which have been overshadowed by the interest shown for more obviously glamorous areas of study of the industrialized North-West and Midland regions of England.

FIONA WOOD

IAN OUSBY, *The Englishman's England*, CUP, 1990. i-iv + 243 pp. Illus. £14.95.

Although written by an English literature specialist, *The Englishman's England* provides the historian with an interesting and unusual book which examines the development of and changing attitudes to tourism from the medieval period to the nineteenth century. Ian Ousby studies the different stages of tourism in terms of literary shrines, great houses, interesting ruins, and natural beauty. Although the book, which has the sub-title of 'Taste, travel and the rise of tourism' is wide ranging and examines places as different as Stonehenge, Jervaulx Abbey, and Chatsworth House, it is somewhat imbalanced with rather

too much space being given to a few subjects such as the Poet's Corner, Shakespeare's Stratford, and Wordsworth's abhorrence of and contribution to the 'rash assault' in the Lake District.

The author frequently draws parallels with today's visitors and makes some interesting and provocative comments. He suggests that the penchant for visiting country houses and the acceptance by the upper classes of this desire in the late eighteenth century was an English compromise to the revolutionary period. 'The continentals chopped off heads . . . while in England the lower classes were allowed to visit and gawp'. He comments that tourism, despite having developed from the pilgrims' desire to visit shrines, had become by the eighteenth century a superficial sightseeing activity and he further contends that the tourists' present-day admiration for untouched nature is influenced largely by a guilt complex concerning poor stewardship of the natural world.

The book is attractively illustrated and is well written with a flowing and easily readable style though with a rather heavy reliance on quotations. The study is useful for historians in providing a different perspective on the growth of tourism from that presented in other published works which have concentrated largely on the seaside town and the impact of railways.

CHRISTINE HALLAS

E A WRIGLEY, *Continuity, Chance and Change. The character of the Industrial Revolution in England*, CUP, 1990. viii + 146 pp. £7.95.

This attempt to enliven the study of the English industrial revolution offers a broad framework for future research. Wrigley injects the debate with an imaginative characterization of the English economy which became transformed, it is suggested, in two stages between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries. During the first stage, the pre-industrial economy expanded along traditional lines to form an 'advanced organic economy' and was replaced, when the inevitable ceiling was reached, by the 'mineral-based energy economy', which constituted the second stage. To emphasize the protracted nature of change, and to incorporate such recent findings as the persistence of traditional technologies and modes of production in many sectors well into the nineteenth century, the two stages are seen to have overlapped for several decades. The negative feedback of the earlier system, which preoccupied contemporary economists, was eventually superseded by a structure of positive feedback. Dependence on the agricultural sector that provided the basis for as well as the constraint on expansion in the first stage was reduced in the second when new industrial sectors emerged in which the consumption of organic material was minimized. So far, so unexceptionable. The breakthrough occurred, in Wrigley's interpretation, because

of the ready availability of coal and metal ores in Britain, which formed the foundation of an energy-based economy, where industrial development proceeded on the basis of increasingly complex use of inorganic materials.

The vague chronology of Wrigley's thesis and the weakness of the explanation of the replacement of one system by another comprise the least acceptable features of the work. Wrigley rejects the notion that change was implicit in the nature of the earlier system and ignores such possible avenues of explanation as the various forces of human agency. Indeed any causal relationship is undermined by the author's emphasis on the casual and coincidental character of the transformation. While the 'fluke' theory of the industrial revolution has constituted the last resort of many frustrated economic historians, it is less than satisfactory.

Elements of the industrial revolution debate are undeniably unstimulating, particularly the gradualist perspective adopted by the quantitative school (which Wrigley's approach implicitly supports), yet it is precisely the most interesting and valuable revisions of recent years that Wrigley neglects or dismisses. The proto-industrial model may have lost its early vigour (though Wrigley's complete rejection of it is poorly founded) but from it have emerged such potentially productive themes as regional transformations, the complexity of organizational forms and the importance of social relations of production. Minute local studies have provided important clues to the nature of industrialization, and social and industrial conflict have recently been revealed as important determinants of industrial change. Such an ambitious project, of which this book represents the starting point, invites criticism, yet too much of influence is omitted from this framework to allow optimism that it will constitute the 'answer' to the industrial revolution. It does, however, hold the promise of lively debate.

KATRINA HONEYMAN

SARAH WILMOT, *'The Business of Improvement': Agriculture and Scientific Culture in Britain, 1700-1870*, Historical Geography Research Series, 24, Cheltenham, 1990. iii + 130 pp. £7.95.

Sarah Wilmot's splendid little book says nothing that is really new or unexpected and presents conclusions that inevitably reflect the sparsity and tentative nature of studies in the field. But it is exactly the kind of review needed to encourage investigation where opportunities abound. Almost fifty pages of notes and bibliography provide ample justification.

It begins by establishing the growing influence of agricultural science during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in terms of the societies and publications that represented its interests. Despite the

dismissiveness of some recent scholarship, there is clearly no historical basis for omitting the agrarian improvers and their remarkable gatherings in any consideration of the scientific culture of the time.

That this interest could reflect only a new attitude to science or to the scientific method, rather than the application of new knowledge to practice, is borne out in the minimal improvements in agricultural productivity attributable to science and in the frequent expressions of a faith in the *future* of scientific progress. Yet the early acceptance of agricultural research as respectable philosophical enquiry made it attractive to a landowning élite needing to be seen contributing to public service. It thus had the effect of transforming the notion of 'a gentleman' and shifting the basis of social leadership. By the middle of the nineteenth century it also provided significant career opportunities for individuals of impeccable scientific credentials. One such was Joseph (not John) Henry Gilbert, who worked at Rothamsted for fully fifty-eight years and, for six of them, held the Chair of Rural Economy (not Agriculture) at Oxford.

But the relationship between agricultural science and social change was complex. Except for the early years of political tension after the French Revolution, agricultural improvement had a broadly stabilizing influence in society; to a significant degree it was a 'science of flattery'. From the 1830s, however, the 'feudal' system of land ownership was criticized more openly as progressive science implied a demand for change. It is no wonder that contemporary debate was so fierce and no surprise that this represents so fascinating a controversy for us today.

STEWART RICHARDS

ALISTAIR MUTCH, *Rural Life in South-West Lancashire 1840-1914*, Centre for North-West Regional Studies, University of Lancaster, Occasional Paper No 16, Lancaster, 1988. viii + 61 pp. 4 plates, £3.95.

Agricultural historians have known since the days of T W Fletcher that Lancashire is different. Here the depression bit less hard and a combination of factors protected the Lancashire farmer from the hard times experienced by his southern brother in the years after 1880, even if the years before that date had been tougher in the north-west. Similarly, to those interested in the history of the labourers Lancashire is special. The great reports of the late nineteenth century point, in some areas at least, to a very late survival of living-in service and a farming ladder which had elements of reality not found elsewhere. It was also in Lancashire that the 'new' labourers union won its first great victory in 1913.

Yet, as the author points out, Lancashire agriculture, like northern agriculture in general, remains unstudied compared with the south and east. This pamphlet, based on Dr Mutch's thesis, seeks to remedy this

by looking at that area of south-west Lancashire dominated by small, intensively farmed units. He shows how the area was developed agriculturally essentially in response to local urban demand for food and for fodder for the huge urban animal population. The society and economy that emerged was not however one of peasant agriculture but of capitalist production for the market with 'ample capital, liberal use of manure, the best seed and cattle and abundance of labour' as a contemporary account put it. Increasingly, as the century went on, the farming of south-west Lancashire came to rely on intensive vegetable production, and especially early potato growing.

However, to a southerner like this reviewer, there remain many similarities between Lancashire and the south and east. In an excellent section on game Mutch shows how preservation and shooting united rural society in rituals of reciprocity as well as dividing it on lines of class and law. Similarly before the 1880s at least landlords acted as local leaders and could rely on the political support of the tenant farmer. From the 1890s onwards this began to change under the impact of depression. Here Mutch differs significantly from Fletcher. He argues, as he has in this journal, that the depression produced real conflict between landlord and tenant in south-west Lancashire which although it failed was of central importance. He argues that out of these conflicts grew a distinct consciousness among the tenants of these interests as farmers which were 'cutting across the traditional bonds fostered by landlords'. This view, it is argued, is supported by the farmers' actions in relation to the strike of 1913 where 'the farmers took the lead' and took a much more anti-union line than the one adopted by the landlords.

Ultimately these arguments are convincing although given constraints of length there is less supporting material than one would like. Certainly it is an account which fits in with the formation of organizations like the Farmer's Federation, an openly strike-breaking organization, elsewhere in England. More than that, though, this pamphlet provides an excellent introduction to the social history of this still little studied area. One can only hope Dr Mutch is able to bring out more material from this fine thesis especially on labouring life.

ALUN HOWKINS

DAVID L ARMSTRONG, *An Economic History of Agriculture in Northern Ireland, 1850-1900*, Plunkett Foundation for Co-operative Studies, Oxford, 1989. xx + 314 pp. £40.

The publication in 1989, virtually unchanged, of a doctoral thesis written in 1952 would at first glance appear to have little to recommend it to potential readers. This is not true of Armstrong's book. Why it has not been published before is both a shame and a mystery. (The explanation may be that, until his

retirement in the mid-1980s, the author was a distinguished public servant rather than an academic, and so was under no pressure.) Still, better late than never. For despite the literature on later nineteenth-century Irish agriculture produced over the last thirty-odd years, Armstrong's book still has great merit.

The first section, on the system of land tenure in Ireland and Ulster in the period from the Famine to the establishment of peasant proprietorship in the early twentieth century, is as good as, if not better than, anything else on the topic in print. Particularly useful is its discussion of the complex questions of Ulster tenant right and the details of various land legislation enacted before the Wyndham Act of 1903 effectively solved the problem of Irish land tenure. In this section the author mines the minutes of evidence presented to the various parliamentary committees with a thoroughness that, in terms of Irish historiography, was ahead of its time and not attempted again for nearly twenty years.

The discussion of land tenure occupies about a third of the book. This proportion is about right. Compared to Britain, this subject has bulked large, too large, in the historiography of Irish agricultural history. On the other hand technical developments, such as they were, have frequently been given short shrift, or ignored altogether. Here Armstrong is particularly strong. Most of the great mechanical developments common in Britain during the period of High Farming, were, he shows, largely irrelevant to an agriculture where farms were small, labour underemployed for much of the year and which, in any case, was shifting away from arable production towards animal husbandry. In the context of Irish agriculture, technological change meant things like the replacement of the sickle by the scythe, or learning the importance of weeding properly and the effectiveness of using Bordeaux mixture in eliminating blight. Thus the undoubted rise in agricultural incomes in Ulster, as in the rest of Ireland, in the second half of the nineteenth century was mostly a result, through famine and emigration, of a reduction of pressure on the land rather than technical change: a sort of latter-day Black Death effect. Despite superficial politico/religious similarities, a hundred years after the Act of Union the pattern of farming practice in Ulster analysed by Armstrong was far removed from that of much of England.

The publication of this work, however belated, is to be commended. It should become essential reading for any student of the development of agriculture in the British Isles in the second half of the nineteenth century.

DAVID JOHNSON

DIRK PILAT, *Dutch Agricultural Export Performance (1846-1926)*, *Historia Agriculturae*, XIX, Groningen, 1989. vii + 133 pp. Dfl. 30.

'No worthwhile comment on Dutch foreign trade is

possible as the figures are virtually useless.' This was the dismissive statement made by A S Milward and S B Saul in the chapter on The Netherlands in their standard work, *The Development of the Economies of Continental Europe, 1850-1914* (1977, p 214). What a pleasure it is, therefore, to welcome Pilat's study – written in impeccable English – which is essentially a collection of time-series on export volumes by product, together with price series, and the deflated results. The methodological problems involved with the original source material are substantial, and indeed it is now for the first time that we have before us a really comprehensive set of series, although important work in certain areas had been done in the past, notably by R W J M Bos and J L van Zanden. The main text of this work is only thirty pages in length (the rest being taken up with appendices), and half of that is to do with methodology. This brevity, and the clarity of the graphs and tables, make it a useful reference tool; the analytical sections are limited to listing only the most obvious conclusions drawn from the quantitative material. One interesting point is the rapidity with which Dutch agriculture responded to the crisis of the late 1870s: Pilat sets 1883 as the turning point after which exports ceased their decline, and began rapid and extended growth right up to the First World War, especially in horticultural and increasingly in processed agricultural products. The importance of the subject matter is beyond doubt: agricultural exports accounted for some 40 per cent of total Dutch exports in the 1920s, and a large part of those exports were (and still are) bound for the United Kingdom. Pilat is part of a team working at Groningen University on the history of productivity and income in Dutch agriculture, and this set of results is published by the Dutch Agronomical-Historical Institute. It makes a string of eighty-year series available internationally, and – barring the inevitable quibbles with the methodology – allows us finally to jettison Milward and Saul's dire words of warning, at least as far as agricultural exports are concerned.

MICHAEL WINTLE

JACK RALPH KLOPPENBURG JNR, *First the Seed: the political economy of plant technology, 1492-2000*, CUP, 1988, xviii + 349 pp. £27.50.

HENRY A WALLACE and WILLIAM L BROWN, *Corn and its Early Fathers*, 2nd edn, Iowa State UP, Ames, Iowa, 1988. xviii + 141 pp. Illus. \$18.95.

First the Seed covers the history of agricultural seed production in North America and the present and possible future scientific and economic development of the seed industry in the world. Within this large topic Kloppenburg concentrates on three areas which he succinctly sets out in the preface:

'(1) progressive commodification of the seed, (2) elaboration of a social division of labour between public and private plant breeding, and (3) asymmetries in global patterns of seed commerce and exchange between the less developed countries of the South and the advanced industrial nations of the North.'

Farmers can save part of many harvested crops as seed for next year. The author shows how US commercial seed firms have overcome this 'biological obstacle' to commerce and forced farmers to buy new seed each year by promoting hybrid varieties (whose seed is not worth saving), product differentiation and brand names, successful lobbying for patent legislation covering seeds and recently, by using biotechnology to engineer seeds capable of commercial exploitation.

The declining importance of public institutions in developing and producing agricultural seeds in the present century is discussed; at one time the distribution of free seed by them was a major hindrance to commercial production in the USA. Public bodies have been pushed into basic research, leaving the development of commercially exploitable seeds to private enterprise.

Surveying the global distribution of, and commerce in, germplasm, Kloppenburg highlights the paradox that commercial organizations and governments in the developed North wish to regard plant life in germplasm-rich areas of the underdeveloped South as a 'common heritage' to be sampled for research purposes. But the North needs to sell, as a commodity, the new seed strains created by such research. He concludes that the underdeveloped nations should seek world-wide agreement to a system of compensation on a national basis for any commercial use of their germplasm resources.

The author traces recent advances in biotechnology and notes the growing interest of large chemical firms in seed production. He foresees a danger that, if governments allow large multinational firms to take the lead in biotechnology, profit, not the best interests of mankind, will dictate development. The success of the chemical industry in promoting the use of herbicides and pesticides on farms in recent years demonstrates the danger of leaving the environment at the mercy of the market.

Kloppenburg uses Marxist economic and social theory as the framework of his discussion and this works well, allowing his argument to flow smoothly from the past to possible future developments in plant technology. The product of much detailed research, this well-written book is a convincing argument that society must determine the direction of scientific research.

Following chapters on the nature of corn (ie maize) and corn breeding, much of *Corn and Its Early Fathers* consists of short biographies of men who have bred corn in the USA, from the eighteenth to the twentieth

centuries. Although the final chapters do show some concern about modern research methods this is not a critical work: corn breeding is here depicted as steadily progressing over the years, culminating in the production of hybrid corn as an unmixed blessing to US and world farmers. This is a lightweight book, by no means as erudite as Kloppenburg's.

MALCOLM THICK

WARREN DEAN, *Brazil and the Struggle for Rubber. A Study in Environmental History*, CUP, 1987. xv + 234 pp. 1 map; 9 plates, £25.

This is a fascinating book, and certainly one of the most interesting that this reviewer has read for some time. In it Warren Dean examines the curious fact that the world's commercially successful rubber plantations were established in South-East Asia, and to a lesser extent in West Africa, whilst all attempts to cultivate it in estates in its native South America failed abysmally. This was because a pernicious fungus, *Microcyclus ulei*, or South American Leaf Blight, rapidly infected any large stands of the main commercial rubber tree, *Hevea brasiliensis*, which were planted in or near its native habitat. Many attempts were made to breed fungus-resistant strains, or graft fungus-resistant canopies to high yielding stems, but still the fungus invaded and reduced the flow of latex to non-economic levels. Indeed, high yield and high resistance seemed to be mutually incompatible.

Yet in Asia, by luck, the tree flourished. Unwittingly, those who carried the tree to Asia had removed it from the environment in which the fungus flourished. There the tree grew disease-free, and the plantations produced copiously. Although commercial plantations were really only established from the 1890s in Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, and their rubber was only used in tyre manufacture from 1910, so successful were they that by the 1920s overproduction was evident, and prices began to fall. This led to the rubber-control schemes of the inter-war years. Incensed by this price-rigging, Henry Ford attempted to plant estates in the Amazon basin, but his scheme turned into a gigantic fiasco, and after thirteen years, during which \$10.5 million was spent, and 3,650,000 trees had been put in, there was almost nothing to tap. The blight had won again. Goodyear, Firestone, and others all tried to beat the cartel in the same way, but failed. Mostly these schemes were laughably mismanaged and misinformed – one promising plot of supposedly resistant stock was burned down in a fire started by an outdoor barbecue! Where the commercial companies failed, Government did not do better. Repeated attempts by the Brazilian Government to grow rubber collapsed, again due to incompetence and ignorance. The fungus remained the real problem, and it became clear that it was

useless to try to grow rubber in South America until a cure had been found. Yet mercifully, and puzzlingly, the blight had not found its way to the South East Asian rubber groves, even despite jet air-transport. If there had been attempts to sabotage the Asian plantations with diseased material from South America, and how can there not have been, they had not worked. So Henry Wickham, who had first brought the seed from Brazil in 1876, had succeeded where many others had failed. He was encouraged by Clements R Markham of the India Office, later head of the Royal Geographical Society, and they, together with rubber-mad Henry Ridley of the botanical gardens in Singapore, laid the basis of the world's rubber supply. If they succeeded because they had the luck to try growing it where the fungus was absent, it was still a tremendous achievement to which the author gives grudging credit. Wickham's seeds provided the genetic stock for the world's estate rubber, and even if he was a garrulous old dog who had used the seeds to get himself and his family a free passage home, he still deserved the knighthood which Dean so much disparages!

A J H LATHAM

MICHAEL WILLIAMS, *Americans and their Forests: a Historical Geography*, CUP, 1989. xxii + 599 pp. £40.

Known earlier for his *The Draining of the Somerset Levels* (CUP, 1970), Michael Williams has now turned his sojourn in the American Midwest into a massive volume. His account of American forests falls into four parts. His first section on the forest before 1600 shows how the Indians used fire as a tool to manage the land and to promote their welfare. As a result, the nature of the landscape was radically changed so that when Europeans came they found a forest whose characteristics were man-made and not natural. In the next 250 years, with the expansion of settlement, the ravages of fire were suppressed and controlled but the frontier of the forest was pushed back through settlement, with timber required in America's wooden age for houses, fencing and for fuel. As the population grew, more land was required for agricultural production. Timber, produced by a growing number of sawmills, was also needed for the construction of ships to provide material not only for the hulls, the masts and spars but also pitch, tar and turpentine for British as well as for colonial shipping. An export trade grew up in staves, shingles and planks while in the colonies the expanding iron industry had a growing appetite for charcoal whose provision left a deep imprint on the forest. The pace of agricultural expansion grew as did the industrial demand for timber. To cope with these needs, the location of milling shifted and its organization altered. In the

third section which carries the story from 1860 to 1920, three case studies are considered: the depletion of the forests of the Lake States; the lumberman's assaults on the southern forest and the Pacific Northwest, the last lumber frontier; together with a discussion of the enormous impact of the railway. And with the pace of deforestation (140 million acres before 1860 and a further 50 million between 1860 and 1910), concern about this problem was expressed. Dr Williams' fourth section is largely an expansion of his chapter in Richards and Tucker, *World Deforestation in the Twentieth Century* (reviewed in *Agricultural History Review*, 37, 1989) where he charted the reforestation of America with the large-scale abandonment of farmland made possible by the intensification of agriculture. This long historical story is discussed with the aid of a number of illustrations, over forty tables and more than 100 maps and diagrams in the context of the place of the forest in American culture. Given the expanding forest resources of the USA, this book, though published by an English publishing house, was appropriately produced in America.

WALTER MINCHINTON

SUMIT GUHA, *The Agrarian Economy of the Bombay Deccan 1818-1941*, OUP, Delhi, 1985. xi + 215 pp. £10.95.

For those interested in the development of Indian agriculture, Dr Guha's book provides much of interest, but it is also a deeply flawed work. It works best in its discussion of the nineteenth century, and Guha in general seems more comfortable dealing with the fragmentary evidence from the period. He is especially good on such issues as the British distrust of Indian officials, which contributed to an overly oppressive tax regime (pp 31-8).

Unfortunately, when considering the period from the 1880s onwards, Guha's account increasingly lacks conviction, despite having a prominent central idea. Following the Malthus-oriented ideas of Michael Postan, Guha argues that the technological development in the agriculture of the Bombay Deccan was virtually stagnant throughout the period, and indeed was further rendered ineffective by environmental degradation. As a result, the rise of population in the

nineteenth century led to an agrarian crisis of the type predicted by Malthus, which the introduction of such factors as railroads and the development of the world market did little to alleviate.

While this idea has some plausibility, it would certainly have worked better if Guha had marshalled his evidence more effectively. His population figures (ch VI) highlight recurring episodes of high mortality from the late 1890s to the early 1920s, but it is never shown convincingly whether these were due primarily to declining resources relative to population or to extraordinary conditions of climate and disease. In particular, Guha declines to explain why these crises did not return in the 1930s and early 1940s, when the population squeeze on land seems to have been greater than at any time previously.

It is in his treatment of the question of technological stagnation (Ch IV), however, that Guha is least convincing. His two main case studies – for sugarcane and cotton – provide as much evidence for the effectiveness of new technology as against it, despite his claim that this appearance of progress is illusory. The more generalized figures supplied for crop acreages, crop yields, and the availability of bullock power present a better case for the stability of agricultural production at least, but these figures are extremely broad and do not take into consideration regional variations. In particular, the rural-urban interaction that was becoming increasingly important throughout the period is unreflected in this material and is summarily dismissed by Guha based on a very sketchy analysis of real wages.

Because of these and other deficiencies (such as the vagueness about why the technological response should have been so weak in the first place), Guha seems at a loss in dealing with the latter part of his period. As a result, statements defending aspects of his thesis became increasingly debatable if not contradictory (cf. his comments about the importance of town-country relations on pp 138 and 141). In short, by tying himself too rigidly to Malthusian economics, Guha in the end signally fails to do justice to the complexities of Indian agriculture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

JOHN LANGDON

Notices to Members

I Changes to the Constitution

The Executive Committee will recommend various changes in the Constitution of the Society to the 1992 Annual General Meeting.

Proposed change 1

Paragraph 2: replace 'the history of agriculture and rural economy.' with 'agricultural history and the history of rural economy and society.'

This change merely broadens the formal aims of the Society to match those printed on the cover of the *Review*. It will make no change to what the Society actually does.

Proposed change 2

Paragraph 3: delete the sentence 'Candidates for membership shall be nominated by any member of the Society and all such nominations shall be approved by the Executive Committee'.

The practice of nominating candidates for membership died out many years ago and not even the longest-serving member of the Committee can recall having a list of names of the Society's new members put before it for its approval. We think this anachronistic item is reminiscent of the age of the gentlemen's club. For many years the Treasurer has immediately accepted as a new member anyone who pays the subscription, and simply presented the Committee with a list of those who have joined over the past year.

Proposed change 3

Paragraph 4: delete full point at the end of second sentence and add 'who may set a lower subscription for those who are registered for a degree and not in full-time employment.'

This will allow us to set a student subscription rate lower than that charged to those in full-time employment. In this way it is hoped to encourage a lifetime interest in and commitment to the Society among those registered for a degree. The Committee believes that today's students will be tomorrow's ordinary members, so it is important to help them at this stage. The Treasurer will suggest a current student rate at the 1992 Annual General Meeting.

Proposed changes 4 and 5

Paragraph 7: replace 'sixteen' with 'twelve'.

Paragraph 8: add a sentence to the end of the paragraph 'The retiring ordinary members shall not be eligible after eight successive years of office for immediate re-election.'

In paragraph 7, which deals with the size of the Committee, we wish to reduce it from sixteen to twelve, and in paragraph 8 we wish to exclude members who have served eight continuous years on the Committee from standing for immediate re-election. These are important changes and revert back to the situation in the original Constitution of 1953. The Committee was enlarged in 1979 because the Society's membership had grown considerably from its early years. But since then numbers in the Society have shrunk and fewer new people are now coming forward for election to the Committee, so that sometimes vacancies are uncontested. When there is a contest the natural tendency of members who attend the Annual General Meeting to vote for names they know means the turnover of Committee members is very slow; so much so that at the present rate there is almost a danger of places on the Committee becoming life appointments. The Committee regards this with anxiety, because it is only by a continuous infusion of new (and younger) members that fresh ideas can be brought onto the Committee to help maintain the vitality of the Society. We believe that the reversion to the pre-1979 practice of an enforced sojourn in the wilderness will encourage more newcomers to seek election to the Committee. We also believe that a smaller Committee of twelve (plus President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Editor) will be more effective than one of sixteen.

Proposed Change 6

Paragraph 9: replace 'the consent of the nominee' with 'the signed consent of the nominee'; replace 'seven days' with 'ten days'; add to the end of the paragraph 'Those nominating candidates for the Executive Committee should provide a statement of about twenty words about each candidate at the Annual General Meeting where the election takes place.'

Changes to paragraph 9 of the Constitution affect the conduct of elections, and are intended to make both the candidate and the person proposing that candidate think about the election. The candidate and the proposer must both sign the nomination form. In addition the proposer should supply a statement of about twenty words about each candidate they nominate at the AGM where the election takes place.

This means that the proposer is required to act more as an election agent, rather than regard their duties as a mere formality. The change from seven to ten days will give the Secretary more warning of nominations for the Executive Committee.

2 Changes to the Conferences

The Committee have decided to introduce a number of changes to the residential Spring Conferences. These have been held since the 1950s and they provide members with the main opportunity to hear papers and meet together in comfortable surroundings. They last from Monday afternoon to Wednesday morning and are held early in April. They will continue to be held at this time and although it is not intended to alter this, we will make some changes to the way the conference programme is structured. We have decided to move the official Conference Dinner from the Monday evening to the Tuesday evening, and the excursion from the Tuesday afternoon to the Wednesday morning. This will leave the Monday evening free for a more serious paper to be given than hitherto. It is planned that this should be presented by a 'big name' in agricultural history talking on a major theme. Society members are encouraged to suggest any names that they may have for this spot to the Secretary who will pass these on to the conference organizers. The removal of the Tuesday afternoon excursion will leave the bulk of that day free, after the Society's Annual General Meeting, for papers. We normally expect to have six papers over the whole conference and one will be a debate with a number of speakers under the guidance of a chairman. It is intended that this will again be on a key topic or issue in agrarian history, and once again the Secretary will be glad to receive suggestions.

A further change we intend to introduce from 1992 is to put aside a single half-hour slot where non-professional agricultural historians who attend the conference can talk about their own research. This will allow them to tell a predominantly professional audience about their work. It is hoped that this will provide an opportunity for the amateur engaged on a project, who is perhaps stuck or uncertain how to proceed, to obtain help and advice to further their researches.

We do not intend to change the arrangements for our one-day Saturday December Conference, held at the Institute of Historical Research jointly with the Historical Geography Research Group of the Institute of British Geographers. This will continue to be centred on a theme with papers given by members from both societies. In addition we are introducing a new one-day conference held in September. It is intended that this will also be a Saturday one, jointly run with a different local institution each year, with predominantly regional themes. The first of these was arranged for 21 September 1991 and was held in Oxford at Rewley House, the headquarters of the Oxford University Department of Continuing Education, on woodland communities. Members who have suggestions about locations, themes and speakers for either of the one-day conferences are encouraged to give these to the Secretary who will inform the appropriate organizers and the Executive Committee.

These changes have been made in response to the replies received to the questionnaire on conferences that was distributed at the end of 1990. There were 64 responses, which compares favourably with an average attendance of 50 at the Spring Conference over the last twenty years. The Executive Committee wishes to thank all who replied.