

## Book Reviews

GRITH LERCHE, *Ploughing Implements and Tillage Practices in Denmark from the Viking Period to about 1800, Experimentally Substantiated*, Poul Christensen, Herning, Denmark, 1994. 322 pp. Illus. 800 DDK.

'Your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body', according to the Prince of Denmark's gravedigger (Hamlet, act 5 scene 1 line 167), but wet Danish bogs have preserved not only Iron Age bodies, but also the wooden parts of medieval ploughs. It was the realization that the Danish National Museum was perhaps unique in possessing the material remains of the implement which was instrumental in the expansion of cultivation in temperate medieval Europe, together with her contacts with experimental archaeologists and those responsible for full-scale reconstructions of Viking ships, which persuaded Grith Lerche to construct a functioning copy of the wheeled mouldboard plough, and use it in a series of trials to find out how it worked and what traces it left in the soil.

'Agricultural technology should be, but seldom is, treated as one of the dominant themes of medieval history', according to M M Postan, in the opening quotation of this book, and agricultural historians have long been familiar with the association of the heavy plough, cultivation in common, and the expansion of cultivation on to heavy land, or land which was not permanently cropped. But was it really possible to plough an acre a day, did it really need eight oxen to pull it, did it produce a better seedbed than an ard, and how did it wear, how long did it take to produce the ridges and furrows associated with medieval fields, and what did the individual furrows look like? Might it, for example, be possible to distinguish between ard and plough furrows in archaeological contexts? These were the sort of questions which it was hoped to answer by reconstructing a plough modelled on the parts found in the bogs of Jutland and then using it over several seasons.

The remains of soles, sheaths, a beam, shares, coulter, wheels and axles, on which the reconstruction was based are carefully dated (they were mostly thirteenth to fifteenth century), described, and copiously illustrated. The business of making it is also exhaustively described and illustrated, and there are detailed instructions on how it could be set to plough deep or shallow by changing the positions of its various pegs and wedges. The two oxen originally harnessed to the plough pulled it for less than 10 metres and then refused to go any further. They were replaced by two large Jutland cart horses (and their drivers) provided, free, by the Carlsberg

Brewery. Thereafter ploughing went on for several seasons, and produced an immense amount of data on the draught power required (measured by dynamometer), the speed of work, (and the way they were both affected by soil and tilth conditions), furrow widths and depths, the best way of driving and setting the plough, and the effect of ploughing on the land surface and the wear on the various parts of the plough itself. Everything that could be measured was measured, it seems, and the rest was photographed. For comparative purposes, Dr Lerche also describes her work on some fossil fields, covered by sand dunes since the early medieval period, and recently revealed after the removal of the sand by wind blow. After replicating medieval ploughs, she also produced a copy of an improved wheeled plough of early-nineteenth-century design, and carried out comparative experiments with it. The book ends with appendices on nineteenth-century ploughing trials, ards, land reclamation, and radiocarbon dates, and a bibliography on ploughs, ploughing and fields in Europe of over 400 items.

Here, therefore, is a detailed and well-produced record of many years of careful and thoughtful work. Was it worth it? Does it tell us anything that we might not have learned from the archaeological finds or the documents? The author explains that she 'wanted to learn by experimenting how [a plough] would *function* (her italics) in practice, how its working parts would be worn, ... the whole question of the connection between the forecarriage and the draught equipment and team. The range of problems is seldom imagined before they have to be solved in practice'. And indeed, even the things that went wrong produced some useful data. During the third season's work, and again during the fifth season, the plough hit a boulder and broke. This happened, she surmises, because the horses she was using were stronger than medieval oxen, and so kept going after hitting the obstruction, but also because she had made some parts *too* strong. Had there been a weak link between the horses and the plough, it, and not the plough, would have broken, and this explains why, in the often-reproduced picture of a plough pulled by four oxen in the Luttrell Psalter (c 1340), the beam of the plough is linked to the draught-rope by what Lerche convincingly interprets as a ring of twisted osiers. The importance of this simple device, when one considers the labour cost of a plough and the likelihood of the assarting ploughman hitting hidden rocks and tree roots, becomes clear. This, argues Lerche (p 271), was the whole point of the heavy (difficult to pull, as she demonstrates) wheeled

plough: the ard was well adapted to permanently cultivated land, but was no good for land reclamation or alternate husbandry. Therefore it is important, and, as Lerche demonstrates, possible, to distinguish between ard and plough marks in archaeological contexts. And there are other examples of such practical points: the documents suggest that nineteenth-century ploughs were easier to pull than medieval ones, and that spring ploughing might have been easier than autumn ploughing, but here are the dynamometer readings to prove it; plough beams are likely to last longer than other parts; a mere five seasons of ploughing will indeed produce a marked ridge and furrow effect; pebbles were inserted into the sole of the plough, and although they increased its draught, they also cut down the wear and tear so that it lasted longer.

This reviewer does not feel competent to pronounce on the extent to which Lerche's results are vitiated by her employment of two strong horses instead of more, weaker, oxen or horses, but presumably the question is worth considering. No matter what the answer, this is still a book for the shelves – assuming they are large and well-made shelves, because the book weighs over 5 lbs and each page is 14 inches wide – of anyone interested in ploughs and the effects of ploughing, fields, and archaeological reconstructions.

PAUL BRASSLEY

JANE COX, *Never Been Here Before?: A First Time Guide for Family Historians at the Public Record Office*, PRO Readers' Guide No 4, PRO Publications, 1993. 108 pp. Illus. £4.95; MARY ELLIS, *Using Manorial Records*, PRO Readers' Guide No 6, PRO Publications, 1994. viii + 110 pp. Illus. £6.95; RICHARD HOYLE, *Tudor Taxation Records: A Guide for Users*, PRO Readers' Guide No 5, PRO Publications, 1994. x + 67 pp. Illus. £5.95.

These three publications, which are part of the new series of guides issued by the Public Record Office, are to be warmly-welcomed, offering well-written, authoritative information, attractively produced and at reasonable prices. Jane Cox has written an introduction to the PRO for family historians making a first visit either to Chancery Lane or Kew. This could be read with advantage by any student beginning research in what she describes as 'the finest archive of its kind in the world'. The complexities of the PRO system, from obtaining a reader's ticket to finding the appropriate references and ordering documents, are explained clearly, with numerous charts, plans, check-lists, suggestions and lively cartoons. Naturally, much of the specific guidance is concerned with genealogical sources, and for family

historians this will be very useful, since they are provided with many lines of research, answers to problems they may encounter, lists of potentially-fruitful sources, the location of other records in London, and even the suggestion of a pub to visit when all else fails. This provides a good, easily-understood introduction to the PRO, and many experienced readers will wish that it had been available to aid their first faltering attempts to use the collections.

The guide to *Using Manorial Records* has been published jointly with the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, and Mary Ellis has produced a useful introduction to the subject, setting out clearly and with good illustrations the varieties of manorial records and their value for local or family historians. Inevitably, not all the intricacies and local variations of this complex subject can be explored in a short guide, and there is always a danger of over-simplification and of suggesting that the extraction of useful information from these sources is an easy task. Generally these pitfalls are avoided. There is a good introduction to the manorial system, its origins, working and the records which it produced, while common terms and usages are clearly explained. The guide provides a good general survey of the subject, offering encouragement to inexperienced researchers, warning against unrealistic expectations and providing advice on locating material and using the various finding aids. It also includes information on the Manorial Documents Register maintained by the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts.

Richard Hoyle is well known for his work on Tudor taxation and for his editions of the taxation records of Yorkshire and Gloucestershire. In this clearly-written and useful guide he explains the various forms of Tudor taxation including the much-used 'lay subsidy rolls' of 1524-25, the methods of collection and the records produced, as well as describing the ways in which these sources can be used in studies 'of place, people and prosperity'. The records generated by the various methods of assessment and collection are far from straightforward, either to use or to interpret, but the subject is clearly explained with interesting examples drawn from many parts of the country. Researchers will find the explanations of the coverage of taxes, the categories of wealth assessed, the procedures followed and the officials involved helpful in clarifying the complexity of local disputes and documentary sources as well as of the national records, and will also be greatly assisted by the guidance on finding the required returns, using the finding aids, and making sense of the fragmentary or confusing returns which exist for some counties. Particularly useful are the references to local sources

and printed lists, and the bibliography of tax returns in print and to sources for the Military Survey of 1522 and the Loans of 1522-23. Excellent practical advice is given on finding and using the records, and on their potential value for local studies, including the initial warning to 'be prepared for disappointment', the exhortation to look for printed editions before making an expensive journey to the PRO, and the final comment 'Like all documents, the lay subsidy returns are a tease from which the historian can (sometimes) tease the truth'.

J H BETTEY

STEPHEN CAUNCE, *Oral History and the Local Historian*, Longman, 1994. 227 pp. Illus. £11.99. (pbk)

Despite the many examples in recent decades historians have frequently remained suspicious of spoken rather than written documents, although it is difficult to see why. Perhaps the sheer volume of reminiscence which might be released, and the difficulty of ordering it, has led to a barely concealed fear of being overwhelmed by trivia. This book faces that bravely and makes a strong case for the adoption of oral history as a tool in the traditional apparatus. The inspiration comes from the author's own postgraduate work on agricultural labour in the East Riding some twenty years ago; yet how many of the stream of theses on recent history since have tried to follow his example? It has to be said that there have been few readily available guides for research students and this book will help to fill that gap. Its expected audience is, however, much wider – the army of local historians who have emerged in active groups since the late 1960s, most of whom are amateurs in the best sense of the word.

Initially the work is a handbook in methodology and there are very useful chapters on technology and techniques. But it is far more than that and at times the case Caunce makes for his enthusiasm rather exceeds the needs of its intended audience. That oral history has come largely out of a 'people's past', 'history from below' and so on, cannot be doubted but Caunce is not always critical about this. We are told here that the offerings are 'genuinely democratic', with no real examination of what that means. At times the book becomes rather lost in the wider arguments for the methodology's existence and the illustrative material is chosen for this rather than its claimed immediate audience. Drawing on the author's own experience, much of the book is illustrated by photographs from the north; a pity, since the value of what is being said far transcends such regional limits. Discussion of the relationships between interviewed response and

iconography in photographs would have helped considerably – the two are often bonded together rather indiscriminately. There is a salutary warning against over-romanticizing and 'heritage' production, although the work is itself producing a variant on that.

Perhaps the most surprising omission in a work aimed at the 'local' historian is the use of interviewing in the process of reconstructing place. It is, after all, the fact of and concern for locality that starts many of Caunce's intended readers off on their paths. In much of England since the farming changes of the 1960s, the very identifying of fields and farm patterns before hedgerow removal needs the material which the author praises so fully. The book's value is that it asks the local historian to look beyond an over-concern with the particulars of immediate surroundings but perhaps it assumes too much too soon. And there is one problem which this book shares with almost every text on oral history I have read. When people are interviewed as carefully as the author suggests their spoken responses are often accompanied by significant shifts in body language, yet these are rarely recorded in the end-product. Given the widespread availability of the cheap video camera, should we now be preparing students for visual as well as sound records? And that leaves an interesting ethical problem. How do you express and analyse, 'Respondent X squirmed with embarrassment when Mr Y was mentioned'? Yet so many of us have seen it and it is often crucial to understanding the tensions in local life which Caunce portrays so well.

JOHN LOWERSON

H E JEAN LE PATOUREL, MOIRA H LONG and MAY F PICKLES, eds, *Yorkshire Boundaries*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Leeds, 1993. 165 pp. 52 figs; 6 tables. Illus. £14.95 (pbk).

This is the product of nearly twenty years of documentary research and fieldwork by members of the Yorkshire Boundary Survey into the external and internal boundaries of the historic county. In appendix II the secretary, May Pickles, has listed the 125 boundaries successfully surveyed and recorded and the names of the army of fieldworkers who carried it out. The results of their work are stored at the YAS headquarters in Leeds.

The volume is divided into two parts each with an introduction by Jean Le Patourel. In the first introduction the circumstances surrounding the start of the project and the logistical problems of carrying it through are described, together with a survey of the literature on boundaries and a discussion of their early forms and their survival.

Part I has seven chapters, starting with one by Phil O'Hare in which the early county boundaries, the various attempts to divide the county which culminated in the Ridings, and the further subdivisions into wapentakes and hundreds and parishes and deaneries are discussed. The question of the stability of boundaries is also considered. Themes from this chapter are taken up in the next four. K Mary Hall uses the Domesday Book mainly as a basis of a discussion of pre-conquest estates and their relationship to the boundaries of wapentakes, hundreds and 'shires'. A strong correlation between wapentake boundaries and Anglo-Saxon multiple estates was found in the North Riding, much less in the West Riding, and a very complex relationship between hundreds and estates in the East Riding. Ann Alexander looks at the written evidence of perambulations and the nature of boundary markers, and chapters four and five develop this theme further. The development of boundary stones from unmarked natural stones to the erected stones of the nineteenth century is traced from the field notes of the late J Howard Davies, and, in chapter five, May Pickles argues persuasively that roads do not serve as boundaries because they pre-date them as rivers or watersheds do, but because there is a coincidence of requirements for both the road and the communities which share the boundary, and that where this coincidence is found, as in the Vale of York, both road and boundary are very ancient.

M Ecclestone considers the natural factors which have produced townships with detached parts in some wapentakes in modern South and West Yorkshire. Three distinct types of detachment are found and related to the density of Domesday villis. Finally in part I, D A Spratt has studied prehistoric and medieval boundaries on the North York Moors; these are discerned by reference to ancient remains and are related to medieval and modern township boundaries.

Part II consists of an introduction and six chapters which examine in detail the boundaries of estates with surviving early descriptions. Jennifer Kanen deals with the interesting case of Crayke, a detached part of the Palatinate of Durham, the editors, singly and in pairs, deal with the boundaries of Amounderness, Sherburn, Howden and Old Drax, Newbald, and Patrington.

This is a volume which will prove fascinating to all with an interest in the county and of great value to all concerned with regional history. It is well illustrated with line drawings and photographs. The editors are to be congratulated on their work, as are the members of the Yorkshire County Survey.

DAN BYFORD

JOHN CHANDLER, ed, *John Leland's Itinerary: Travels in Tudor England*, Alan Sutton Publishing, Stroud, 1993. xxxvi + 601 pp. £25.

Between 1539 and 1545 John Leland made summer journeys through the north-west, the west country, the west Midlands, the north-east, and around Bristol. His record of these journeys is best known by L T Smith's five volume edition (1906-10), reprinted in 1964. This beautifully printed and lavishly illustrated edition provides the first alternative to Smith's.

Dr Chandler begins with a learned and readable introduction, which includes a useful bibliography. The volume is well-indexed, vital in a work of this kind. He has limited his edition as far as possible to topographical material (excluding Wales and the Channel Islands) and has reorganized it into county entries, material dispersed through the original being drawn together for the first time. Chandler's other major change is to render Leland's antique prose into modern English. Given that this edition, although abbreviated, still consists of some 200,000 words, one is filled with admiration for Chandler's labour. The following short extracts from Smith's original edition and Chandler's modernizing illustrates his approach which is 'to grasp the meaning of Leland's words and then to express that meaning in straightforward English'.

The ryver of Severne brekethe into 2 armes in the meowes a litle above Glocestar, whereof the principall arme strikethe hard by Glocester towne syde, the other goithe thowrughe a great bridge at the west ende of the cawsey at Glocester and a litle benethe Lantony Priorie they meete togethere. This isle or *mediannis* berwixt these 2 armis is al very goodly meadow ground, and that about Lantony, for cheese there made is in [great] price (Smith, vol 2, p 63).

The River Severn divides into two channels in the meadows a little above Gloucester. The main channel turns to flow right beside the town and the other passes through a large bridge at the western end of Gloucester causeway. This island or middle ground between the two channels is all excellent meadowland, as is the area around Lanthony: cheese made there commands a high premium (Chandler, p 176).

Here Leland's 76 words have been reduced to 65, but more importantly the meaning of the text is now made clear. This is Chandler's great achievement, to make Leland accessible and understandable.

Was it worth the effort? That is problematic for Leland remains as infuriatingly opaque in modern as in antique English. How one wishes that he had added more topographical and less historical information. His best descriptions are of the towns; the agrarian historian *per se* can gain little from his rural descriptions. Indeed what is striking is his absence of feel for the countryside compared say with later writers like Norden. From the rural historian's point of view, perhaps his most interesting recurring theme is his commentary on bridges which are one

of the few features of the rural landscape to be regularly described.

Should we then abandon Leland as a topographical source? Surely not. His town descriptions are invaluable, and even where he only hints as to the countryside, his is often the earliest description since Domesday Book. And for most purposes this edition, because of its clarity and readability, supplants all earlier editions. No local historian should be without Chandler's edition of Leland.

C J HARRISON

C J CURRIE and C P LEWIS, eds, *English County Histories, A Guide [and] A Tribute to C R Elrington*, Alan Sutton Publishing, Stroud, 1994. 484 pp. 26 plates. £35.

'I allow no man for a judge who hath not done something of this nature himself': thus one county historian, Robert Thoroton, in his preface to *The Antiquities of Nottinghamshire* (1677), and the unspoken motto of all editors of book reviews. In that light this reviewer will immodestly drop hints of his qualifications to judge a *Festschrift*, the class into which this volume strictly falls, but first satisfying the impatient by the briefest of summings up, not difficult on this occasion since this very substantial and generously illustrated book is a triumph in its conception, its organization and its execution.

The editors and publishers, it will be noticed, have refrained from using the Teutonic term in their title. 'Festschrift' is indeed a word of dread for booksellers and readers alike, the best of the class being generally the sort of book that one might recommend libraries to buy without feeling that the demands of respect and piety will bring one to buy it oneself. But not here, for respect and piety have produced not a *Festschrift* but a real book and a permanent work of reference.

The saddest *Festschriften* are those which are a miscellany of unconnected pieces with no editorial direction set. A symptom is an invitation to contribute but no indication of a general title nor the names of other contributors: it was a mistaken kindness many years ago for me to join the Perroy *Festschrift*. If contributors cannot be harnessed to a theme the best solution, as in the Postan and Finberg tributes in the *Economic History* and this *Review*, is surely to dedicate a special issue of a learned journal, a place with a secure sales but where no one expects the contents to be other than a ragbag but at least ensuring a few more readers than for the pseudo-book *Festschriften*.

The relevance of these remarks is the brilliant innovation of the editors and publishers of this Elrington tribute. They have become the patrons

of a collective work of scholarship and reference which could be divided among different authors, here as many as forty-eight, without artificiality and with a discontinuity that is as natural, given the number of English counties with historians, as Bach arriving at forty-eight for the preludes and fugues in the *Welltempered Klavier*.

The very variety of the historiography of county histories also lends itself to multiple authorship and, it must be said, to a degree of readability not usually associated with authors drawn from the VCH stable, making it much more than a bibliography with commentary. It is full of information, made the more accessible by another evidence of the breeding in the Senate House stable, a fine thirteen-page index. Which county record series was the first to publish a twentieth-century archive item? How many (deceased) county historians have finished up in (a) bankruptcy, (b) lunacy or (c) both? How many county history projects (in our own time or the past) have run to completion? (Fig 7 is an interesting map of the progress of the VCH to 1993.)

Again, the tribute book would be outstanding among its kind if only for its prompt appearance. Planned in September 1991 in advance of the retirement of the General Editor of the *Victoria County History*, it appeared three years later – the more astonishing when no fewer than forty-eight contributors had to be marshalled. It is thus an exemplar for anyone editing future marks of respect from juniors in our trade to their seniors. I much regret that Eric Sigsworth did not live long enough to read what I had written (some three or four years earlier) for his *Festschrift*, and it was a near thing with the Tawney *Festschrift*. Its editor left the galley proofs dawdling so long on his desk under a pile of unanswered letters and other delayed commissions that one contributor, fearing that an obituary would precede the tribute, risked burgling the editor's room and setting the printing process in motion. The editor appeared unashamed, even shameless.

Perhaps a thicker skin than normal is an essential attribute of a *Festschrift* editor, especially when (as must have happened even with VCH contributors under the Elrington whip) there are laggard contributors who, like the tolerant reviewer of Baker's long-delayed history of Northamptonshire (quoted on p 298) thought that a 'topographical manuscript, like wine, is generally the better for keeping'. There is a current *Festschrift* that has been some nine years in an unopened bottle, one contributor (not myself) inadvertently advertising it in a footnote reference to his 'forthcoming' article.

When a thesis on the historiography of the academic *Festschrift* comes to be written, as it surely

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will, its author will be sure to hear some strange stories if he knocks on the door of editors and contributors still living. I myself suffered many years ago as an editor-designate who found that the potential recipient was so detested that too many declined to contribute for even a slim volume to grace the shelves.

Here, on the other hand, the contributors have clearly relished the part of their lives spent under their erstwhile taskmaster. The plates in this tribute comprise portraits of twenty-four county historians and in the frontispiece Christopher Elrington joins the pantheon, surrounded by a mountain of *VCH* volumes but clutching *Middlesex* to his bosom, perhaps recalling Macaulay (quoted p 270): 'An acre in Middlesex is better than a principality in Utopia'. A utopia indeed would be the completion of all the English counties, in which time they will be supplemented but not supplanted by a new sort of county history which deals with a county rather than the sum of its parishes; or perhaps by regional histories in the fashion of the Cambridge *Agrarian History of England and Wales*.

MAURICE BERESFORD

R W DUNNING, ed, *The Victoria History of the Counties of England. A History of Somerset: Volume VI, Andersfield, Cannington, and North Petherton Hundreds (Bridgewater and Neighbouring Parishes)*, OUP, 1992. xxiv + 372 pp. 44 illus; 35 maps. £60.

This volume is concerned with three hundreds in west Somerset, the fourth topographical volume since the county's *Victoria History* was re-established. It adopts the usual contemporary practice of the *VCH*, with discrete parish sections on manors, economic history, mills, fairs, local government, religion, education and charities. There are lengthy parish introductions, with coverage of inns and taverns, national events, social and cultural activities and for Bridgewater, the centrepiece of the volume, sections on overseas trade, industry and population. Coverage of issues and events is comprehensive and illustrates perfectly the incremental drift which has characterized recent *VCH* volumes. Particularly noteworthy in this volume are reviews of settlement patterns, generously and usefully illustrated by redrawn tithe maps, and architectural descriptions which draw on the county's strengths in the recording of vernacular buildings.

The account of Bridgewater rejects the traditional etymology of the first place-name element, arguing that the bridge was not constructed until c. 1200 and that the name is rather to be derived from ON *bryggja* 'quay or jetty' or an unattested OE *brycg*, a 'plank between ship and shore'. The place was thus

in origin a trading settlement on the west side of the river Parrett. The argument, attractive though it is, has not thus far persuaded local reviewers and is not helped by the necessity of having to follow it in four separate places (on pp 192a, 193b, 195a and 217b). This illustrates the tensions between significant narrative and encyclopaedia, and the excavations which often face the user. Bridgewater remained a small market town embedded in its local agrarian landscape, with a greater role as a port town in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The format of parish accounts, however, leave little room for this symbiotic relationship to be explored.

The wider territory covered is that of the lower Parrett valley between the Quantock ridge and Sedgemoor, bounded on the north by the Bristol Channel and to the south by the river Tone. In one parish account after another the evidence of a shift from arable farming to a growing emphasis on livestock from the seventeenth century is adduced, but the single page of introduction to the volume is a miserly contribution to synthesis. Detail is included for each parish, as befits the effort at universal history, but the general user faces real difficulties in trawling the indices when inequality of evidence is not always reflected in equality of treatment. Seaweed, collected and burnt at Stogursey between the fifteenth and early nineteenth centuries, described under 'Stogursey, Fisheries', indexed under 'Crops, less usual', was one of the monopolies claimed by the lords of Cannington Hundred. Who knows whether it was a significant part of local farming. Of clover, we learn that it features in seventeenth-century inventories in North Petherton, Padnoller, Spaxton, that it was a 'new crop' in Pawlett in 1711, that 'small farmers' grew it in Wembdon in the 1670s, that its growth featured in tenancy agreements at Broomfield in 1660, that it was introduced at Chedzoy by the mid-eighteenth century and tithed at Goathurst in 1789. Can one trust the trends which are seemingly reflected?

These are the endless mixtures of reward and irritation that must be borne when using the *VCH*. The considerable scholarship which can unravel the tenurial history of North Petherton, with its thirteen pre-conquest and over fifty post-conquest holdings, is drawn also to the authentic voice of the antiquarian in those sections which chronicle local connections with the good and the great. Geoffrey Chaucer, one learns, was forester of Petherton Park after 1391. A company of Bath comedians rented the Bridgewater assize hall in 1736, see 'recreation, comedians', the only entry. Did market and fair activity in Lyng really end when neither cattle nor farmers turned up in 1907, replaced by apparently

competing ginger bread stalls at the two local pubs until 1939? See 'Economic activity, car boot sales' perhaps.

PHILIP MORGAN

MICHAEL ZELL, *Industry in the Countryside: Wealden Society in the Sixteenth Century*, CUP, 1994  
xv + 257 pp. £35.

Michael Zell's *Industry in the Countryside* is an extensively researched and well documented study of rural cloth-making in the Weald of Kent in the sixteenth century. The study is set within a broad social and economic context, examining not only the distribution, structure, output, and market destinations of the Wealden textile industry (and to a lesser extent those of the Wealden iron, metalware, and leather industries) but also the prevailing inheritance customs, pattern of landholding, farming practice, occupational structure, and demographic development found in the region, all of which are shown to have influenced – or been influenced by – the expansion of textile production. Zell explores the origins, charts the progress, and analyses the short-term consequences of rural industrialization in the Weald, and in addition utilizes the impressive array of social and economic data he has collected and analysed to assess the validity of a number of historical theories of industrial growth and organization, including 'proto-industrialization'.

Despite numbering among Britain's second rank clothing regions in terms of size and output, the Kentish textile industry made a significant contribution to national exports of high quality woollens during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and provided employment – albeit frequently part-time or seasonal – to a large proportion of the Wealden population. High quality, heavyweight, 'dyed in the wool' broadcloths were produced in six Wealden parishes in and around Cranbrook and low quality kersies in the northern Weald. The organization of the broadcloth industry was dominated by self-financed capitalist clothiers operating the putting-out system while kersey manufacture resided in the hands of independent petty clothier-producers. Many clothiers combined cloth-making with farming and landownership. Zell argues convincingly that the substantial investments made in land and property by leading entrepreneurs from the Kentish textile industry during the sixteenth century were motivated more by business acumen than by social ambition. He asserts that such investments not only served to combat the effects of inflation and high taxation but also enabled clothiers to extend credit to overseas merchants and thus obtain the best prices for their cloth on the London

market. It was not until the late sixteenth century, Zell points out, that the sons of successful Wealden clothiers began to desert trade and set up as gentlemen. Dual employment was common throughout the Kentish textile industry and undoubtedly contributed to the low wage levels found among spinners, weavers, and clothworkers.

Though the study is essentially confined to the sixteenth century Zell provides a brief examination of the demise of cloth-making and the onset of deindustrialization in the Weald in the seventeenth century. There is clear evidence to support his view that the major cause of the decline of Wealden cloth-making was its failure, through lack of investment and entrepreneurial leadership, to respond to the changing pattern of supply and demand for woollen cloth in domestic and continental markets by developing lighter woollens or new drapery products, but the contribution made by a number of other – often inter-related – factors should not be underestimated. Whilst Zell acknowledges the detrimental effects of the growth of native woollen production in central and northern Europe and the disruption of continental markets during the Thirty Years War, he does not take into account the comparative dearth of English high quality woollens, the result both of the heavy burden of taxation imposed at home and abroad and of the limited scope available for prime cost reduction in high quality woollen production, which prevented the Wealden textile industry from maintaining an adequate share in the contracting market for heavy woollens. The effects of national commercial policy, the self-interest of the regulated trading companies, changes in the quality and availability of wool supplies and the disruption of trade during the Civil War period might also have been considered in his overview of the decline of Wealden cloth-making.

Zell's assessment of 'proto-industrialization' is limited mainly to the first stage of the theory of pre-industrial economic development advanced by Mendels and other writers, and particularly to those aspects relating to the origins of proto-industry and to demographic trends. His research confirms that in many ways the Weald of Kent was a model proto-industrial *pays* where peasant manufacturers combined farming with handicraft industry to produce woollens for international markets. Almost all of the preconditions associated with the development of proto-industry were present in the Weald, and demographic growth and high population density, caused by higher rates of family formation and immigration, display similar trends to those found in other sixteenth-century centres of cottage industry. He does not, however, explore in detail the stimulus provided to commercial farming by rural industrialization or the relationship between

Wealden towns and their rural hinterland. Zell concludes that the proto-industrialization model is most convincing as a comparative model describing the social and demographic impact of rural industrialization and has little value as a predictive model for the development of modern factory industry.

Michael Zell's *Industry in the Countryside* is well written and highly readable, though some readers would doubtless have welcomed the use of subdivisions within chapters. The index is well organized but brief and could usefully have included significant personal names. Throughout the book Zell makes good use of tables and figures to support and supplement information provided in the text. Surprisingly, the standard of cartography is rather disappointing. The usefulness and interest of the maps provided is much reduced by the absence of reference data such as the names of major clothing and urban centres.

In conclusion, one is reminded yet again of D C Coleman's comment that we should be grateful more for the research encouraged by 'proto-industrialization' than for the concept itself. Michael Zell's study of Wealden industry and society is a welcome contribution to the study of industrial development, organization, and achievement in the sixteenth century and to the historiography of the wool-textile industry.

CHRISTINE JACKSON

N W ALCOCK, *People at Home: Living in a Warwickshire Village 1500-1800*, Phillimore, 1993. xvii + 238 pp. £19.95.

The long-running study of Stoneleigh and its buildings is a key source for the vernacular architecture of midland England, and for the debate on the chronology of post-medieval rebuilding. It is based on three exceptional sources. These are, firstly, the surviving houses of Stoneleigh and Ashow, secondly, a series of 559 probate documents, 55 of which are of direct relevance to the houses under discussion, and finally a body of records which serve to set the houses and their occupants in the context of their holdings and of the incomes which the latter could provide. It is indeed this last topic which has frequently been lacking from research centred on vernacular buildings, and the significance of the author's approach to the relationships between the farm and the farmhouse needs to be stressed. Apart from the probate material the key archives consist of a pre-Dissolution survey of Stoneleigh Abbey lands dating from 1533, maps, surveys and rentals for the post-Dissolution Stoneleigh estate, and Hearth Tax assessments over the years 1662-74. This is an exceptional collection,

the only weakness being the lack of parish registers earlier than 1634.

Dr Alcock's book is introduced by a statement of the extent and potential of the archival and physical evidence, followed by a detailed examination of the houses surveyed, with matching records, divided by period and by social grouping. The sixteenth-century houses which derive from medieval traditions of construction are set apart from the more comfortable houses erected from the late sixteenth century onwards. Attention is given to the standards of comfort of economic groups, differentiated by evidence drawn from the probate records. There is a brief discussion of the demographic and economic changes encountered in the village as a whole, with indications of farming systems and of village trades. Finally, Stoneleigh is placed in a wider context, of Warwickshire and beyond, in a chapter which is tantalizingly brief. Within the central sections, houses are dealt with in a systematic yet flexible pattern. Typically, the measured plan and elevation of a house, sometimes with a photograph and with a brief digest of the structural features, is placed adjacent to a historical outline. Relevant documents, notably probate inventories, are reproduced with comment. For some houses there are few documents, while for others which do not survive there are inventories which are valuable for evidence of structural form or for portrayal of typical ranges of belongings. An outstanding feature from the archaeological viewpoint is the attention given to the houses of the poor, which have been identified in numbers sufficient for Dr Alcock to ask whether there has been under-recording elsewhere. He is able to demonstrate the survival of structures recognizably the documented two and three-room houses of the seventeenth century and to identify archive references to squatter cottages, finding a pattern similar to that seen by Trinder and Cox during their work on Telford. The Stoneleigh estate map of 1766, re-drawn to identify waste land but reproduced here at too small a scale for easy reference, shows this extension to the village housing stock. A wider consideration is the contribution which research on Stoneleigh makes to the national picture of change in housing standards. It is now a commonplace that the time-scale suggested by Hoskins for his 'great rebuilding' was too short. It has been shown by Dyer and Wrathmell that there is evidence for late-medieval improvement, as per capita incomes rose in the fifteenth century. By contrast, some areas, particularly in the Pennine uplands, were late to change, with improvements in comfort a seventeenth- rather than a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century occurrence. In Stoneleigh, there are houses which can be shown on stylistic grounds, reinforced

by tree-ring dating, to have been built in the fifteenth century, so further consideration of the extent of late-medieval change, prompted by Dyer's work to which the author refers, might have been appropriate in chapter 4. Overall, Alcock's evidence adds to the traditional view of change in the housing stock of the midlands: whatever may or may not have been happening to standards before the Dissolution, there was a significant improvement from the latter decades of the sixteenth century onwards, with a series of developments in the style and size of houses stretching through to the eighteenth century, the time when conventions of polite architecture began to affect the appearance of the more substantial farm houses.

The book is well produced, although there appear to have been some cost-constraints: more photographs would have been helpful; there is no bibliography; the index, which separates persons and topics, has no entries for places. One disappointment is that the book appears to have been completed at an early stage in the gathering of dendrochronological dates from the midlands, for the determinations for houses at Stoneleigh are mentioned only in passing.

DAVID CROSSLEY

COLUM GILES and SUSANNA WADE MARTINS, eds, *Recording Historic Farm Buildings*, Historic Farm Buildings Group, 1994. 44 pp. Price not stated.

A conference on the recording of historic farm buildings was held at the Kings Manor, York, in January 1994; the papers which were presented are reproduced here in a publication co-sponsored by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. They reflect the growth of interest and of field survey in the twenty-five years since Peters' pioneer study of farms in Staffordshire awakened archaeologists and economic historians alike to the potential of the subject. The contributors are Susanna Wade Martins on documentary research in the recording process, Eurwyn Wiliam on methods of recording with reference to north-east Wales, Edwin Course on recording farms in Hampshire, Susan Denyer on documenting National Trust farm buildings in the Lake District, Jeremy Lake on problems of listing, Jane Wade on recording farm buildings in Kent, and John Shaw on identifying farming systems from building evidence in Scotland. The papers, and the digest of discussion, highlight current matters of interest: stress is given to complementing field and archive research, to problems of sampling and of access, and to the use of building-detail to show the kinds of equipment and the systems of farming formerly in use. Reading these contributions raises

the question of the extent to which the archaeological recording of farm buildings has assisted in their preservation and sympathetic re-use. It is true that these studies have aided the provision of guidelines for list-revision, but for the majority of listed buildings, at Grade 2, securing protection has relied on attitudes of local authority planning departments and the vigilance of local observers. There is a diversity of official reactions to threats or to proposals for conversion: it is the minority of planning officers who are prepared to help applicants for listed-building-consent towards sympathetic remedies to problems of making use of awkward or redundant buildings. The circulation of this brief and easily-read set of papers may add to their numbers.

DAVID CROSSLEY

J V BECKETT and J P POLAK, DOROTHY RIDEN, DAVID KIERNAN, eds, *A Seventeenth-Century Scarsdale Miscellany*, Derbyshire Record Society, XX, 1993. vi + 191 pp. Illus. £20.

While the editing and publishing of primary sources is always welcome in the interests of greater accessibility, such works frequently do not provide their readers with a clear context in which to place the primary material. However, in this admirable book such a pitfall is generally avoided by different editors providing a lengthy, but clear introduction to each of the three sections. The items in the miscellany – the Scarsdale Surveys of 1652–62; the Autobiography of Leonard Wheatcroft, 1627–1706; and Lawrence Oxley's Accounts, 1672–81 – present varied and interesting insights into seventeenth-century life in north-east Derbyshire.

All the introductions provide some details of the nature and disposition of the source and the conventions used in the editing. They also highlight deficiencies within the source and set it in a local or family context. In addition, the first introduction ranges further and presents a fuller perspective. The reader is given a clear national, regional and local context in which to place the four Scarsdale Surveys. Detailed endnotes are provided and an appendix contains a useful analysis of the 1652 and 1662 surveys. As with most surveys of this period, the information collected varies from township to township and over time. However, the introduction provides a commentary on the sources enabling even the non-specialist to make sense of the accompanying documents. The surveys presented in the book are deposited in three record offices, Sheffield, Nottingham and Derbyshire. In bringing them together, a readily accessible source book is provided, giving information on local methods of taxation (including soldier ratios) and on many

aspects of the local economy (farming, mining, metal trades, etc).

The Autobiography of Leonard Wheatcroft which includes the narrative of his son, Titus, provides an insight into the life of a man who was, among other things, a teacher, a parish clerk and a gardener. It is a useful addition to similar work which is available for the period, by capturing the attitudes of such people and their relationships with family and community. It also shows the extent of mobility and the importance of kinship networks with Leonard and his family travelling great distances, sometimes on foot, to visit each other. The introduction to the section provides a wealth of detail about the family and the provenance of the document but it would have been helpful if the source had been placed in a broader context. There is, however, a useful glossary accompanying the Autobiography.

The final source, Oxley's Accounts, provides information on a lead merchant's *modus operandi* in the seventeenth century, particularly in terms of shipping lead to London, dealings with merchants and methods of payment. For example, the settling of bills frequently involved complex transactions. To avoid sending cash long distances, bills for payment due for lead sold in London were often offset against purchases in the capital by Derbyshire lead merchants, and this invariably involved a chain of debtors and creditors. The introduction includes an interesting analysis of the Derbyshire lead industry, but some reference to both the industry nationally and developments in other areas in the period would have provided a clearer context for understanding the source.

The three documents are very different, which makes their inclusion in this miscellany all the more fascinating. Material is provided here which gives a broad perspective and helps the researcher to feel the pulse of the Scarsdale community in the seventeenth century.

CHRISTINE HALLAS

D R HAINSWORTH, *Stewards, Lords and People: The Estate Steward and his World in later Stuart England*, CUP, 1992. xx + 278 pp. £35.

This study of the estate steward is based on estate papers from counties as far apart as Northumberland and Cornwall, which Hainsworth has studied on periodic visits to England from his base at Adelaide. It grew out of his original work on Sir John Lowther in Cumberland during the 1690s, which was published by the British Academy in 1983 and it is based, inevitably, on the enormous correspondence kept up by the more efficient stewards (and owners!) when they were physically separated.

First and foremost the steward managed the estate, and that gave him a critical role in the relationship of landlord and tenant. He had to serve locally as his employer's voice, eyes and ears, and as his local ambassador mediating between 'otherwise irreconcilable extremes' (p 5). Hainsworth dissects the roles. He looks at how men became stewards, how they carried out the duties involved, including those of election agent, dispenser of charity, defender of the landlord's interests, and clerk of the works for building projects. He examines the relationships they developed with their employers, and the numerous problems they encountered, as, for example, in making financial returns to their master in London.

Hainsworth has written a useful guide. My main reservations are first that the limited time span (broadly defined as 'later Stuart') gives little opportunity for him to show how the role changed and developed; and second that there is not really enough attention paid to the problems encountered by landlords when it came to disciplining and controlling the steward. A couple of references apart, Hainsworth's stewards are all upright and honest. Perhaps they were, but given the literary emphasis on how to chose an honest and trustworthy man one is forced to wonder whether they really were such paragons.

J V BECKETT

PETER WADE-MARTINS, *Black Faces: A History of East Anglian Sheep Breeds*, Norfolk Museums Service in association with Geirgns of Ashford, 1993.

xvi + 204 pp. £12.95.

This is an attractively produced book on the history of sheep in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, from Domesday Book to the present day. It is accessible, profusely illustrated, and should appeal to a wide readership. At the same time it is a scholarly work with sound academic credentials. It embodies much new research, has considerable quantitative information on the spread of new breeds in the nineteenth century, and has a good bibliography.

Before the nineteenth century the dominant sheep breed in the region was the Norfolk, a 'black faced, horned, leggy animal suited to ranging over wide areas of heath and stubble'. This was the animal at the heart of the East Anglian foldcourse, valued for its fine wool and its dung, rather than for its mutton. The Norfolk survives today, although not in a pure-bred form, and the later chapters of the book are devoted to a discussion of the few breeding flocks remaining in the twentieth century.

From the late eighteenth century onwards the

Norfolk was eclipsed by new breeds more suited to the new husbandry involving the cultivation of turnips and clover in enclosed fields. A more docile animal was required for these conditions, and the availability of better fodder meant that the production of mutton became a much more important part of farm enterprises. The first of these new breeds was the Southdown, probably introduced by Arthur Young in the 1780s, and the second was the New Leicester, which appeared in the region about the same time. Both were extensively promoted through the famous sheep-shearings under the patronage of Thomas William Coke.

As the nineteenth century progressed a number of crosses or half-breeds developed, such as the 'Leicester and Down', but the most successful was the 'Down and Norfolk', which was to achieve lasting popularity as the Suffolk, a cross between the Southdown and the Norfolk. The Suffolk was developed in two regions of Suffolk in the mid-nineteenth century, but it was not until 1886 that the Suffolk Breed Society was formed.

Twenty-six pages of the book are devoted to a meticulous analysis of the spread of new breeds from 1790–1860 by Susanna Wade-Martins. By using the evidence of farm sale particulars she is able to map and graph the diffusion of Southdowns, Leicesters, and half-breeds, while also tracing the 'disadoption' of the Norfolk. Curiously, farm sale particulars are described as a 'little-used source' and the bibliography book excludes the work of John Walton who pioneered the use of this source for the study of the diffusion of new sheep and cattle breeds in the nineteenth century.

The original work here on the diffusion of sheep breeds would have benefited from explicit comparison with Walton's. This failing is symptomatic of the book as a whole, since, despite its bibliography, it does not engage with the existing literature on English agriculture in the nineteenth century. But there is much new information here for the agricultural historian to quarry, and the background story to the most popular sheep breed in Britain today.

MARK OVERTON

REX C RUSSELL, *Three Lincolnshire Labourers' Movements*, Workers Educational Association, 1994. 116 pp. £7.50 by post, from the author, 11 Priestgate, Barton on Humber, DN18 5QP.

Mr Russell is the veteran social historian of Lincolnshire. When Professors Hobsbawm and Rudé published their now classic *Captain Swing* in 1969, Russell protested that they had virtually ignored the revolt's extension to his county, and the paperback edition of 1973 candidly admitted what was more than a mere oversight, to include

evidence of Swing's activities in Lincolnshire. The principal purpose of Russell's volume is to publish documents collected in his lifetime's work under the auspices of the WEA and the Adult Education Department at the University of Hull. Most, but not all derive from the local press, and historians will no doubt quarry this material. Russell's principal argument is that farmworkers' energies behind the incendiarism which dominated social protest between 1830 and the later 1850s, were increasingly channelled into the numerous Friendly Societies which developed from the late 1830s, and into Dissent, notably Primitive Methodism. If the Friendly Societies were somewhat eclipsed by farmworkers' trade unionism and the 'Revolt of the Field' in the 1870s, Primitive Methodists played an important part. Both organizations survived the collapse of unionism in the late eighties. Lincolnshire farmworkers' unionism is also documented in these pages. The period from the mid-1840s to the early 1870s remains the dark age of English agrarian labour history. Russell's thesis deserves systematic analysis throughout the English regions, though historians who engage in such an exercise and aim to lighten the darkness, should not overlook the importance of multifarious criminal activity, whether categorized as social protest or not. Nor should they ignore especially the temporary combinations and strikes over harvesting contracts which also characterised the golden age of farming in the mid-Victorian years. Violent protest against itinerant Irish labour – periodically virulent in Lincolnshire and elsewhere – also warrants more than token acknowledgement.

ROGER WELLS

K D M SNELL, ed, ALEXANDER SOMERVILLE: *Letters from Ireland during the Famine of 1847*, Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994. 219 pp. IR£12.95; DONALD E JORDAN, JR, *Land and Popular Politics in Ireland: County Mayo from the Plantation to the Land War*, CUP, 1994. 369 pp. £21.

The commemoration of the Great Irish Famine of 1845–50 is bringing to light previously unknown or underutilized sources. This is evident in the publication of diaries such as Robert Whyte's and this reviewer's editing of John J Laird's account of Famine passengers to Grosse Isle, which will shortly appear in *Breifne*. These and the recent analytical works of Christine Kinealy, Donal Kerr and Cormac ÓGáda are important in that they help us re-evaluate our approach and understanding of this great catastrophe. Alexander Somerville's letters during 1847 are another source in this process. The situation in 1847 is more significant than the other famine years, being called 'Black '47'. The crises of

1845 and 1846 resembled the periodic potato famines of the 1820s and 1830s and did not create the widespread panic that was aroused in 1847, when the potato crop was a total failure.

Alexander Somerville came to Ireland to report for his newspaper, the *Manchester Examiner*, and the letters were written between February and April. Coming from a Scottish agricultural labourer's background he had a certain sympathy with the Irish and the poverty and destitution that they endured. He had been to Ireland in 1843 and was able to see the catastrophe that was about to descend on Ireland because of its rising population, subdivision of holdings and dependency on the potato. Blaming the landlords, he stated that they were 'at the bottom on the scale of honourable men'. Somerville was as scathing of Catholic landowners as he was of their Protestant counterparts; the nationalist politician, William Smith O'Brien coming in for particular condemnation. He criticized them because they contributed little to the relief efforts. However, others, like George Henry Moore and the Marquis of Sligo, got into financial difficulties because of their benevolence. While he was critical regarding the landlords, he does not attack the British government for its response to the Famine. His argument was that if it was not for the generosity of the British people the situation in Ireland would be worse.

Somerville's account differs from many of the other tourists who visited Ireland before and during the Famine in that he used different contacts and sources to secure his information. Not surprisingly, the landlords, their agents and the local clergy were not his main source. Throughout his writings he compares and contrasts the regions he visits with areas in Britain as to agriculture, size and population. He realized that changes were needed and advocated a system which would facilitate the easy transfer of land: which came into being with the Encumbered Estates Court in 1848. However, he called for the transfer to commercially-minded landlords, not to the tenants. Unfortunately, he gives few graphic accounts of the effects of the Famine itself. There are hardly any descriptions of the suffering and despair which are evident in the contemporary writings of poverty and distress in post-Famine Ireland. One would have thought that as he was reporting for a newspaper that graphic illustrations of hunger would have been included. Nowhere is this more startling than in Strokestown where no information is provided of the conflict between the tenants and the principal landowner, Denis Mahon. Somerville was more inclined to provide background information and make suggestions as to how the situation could be improved, as with how the power of the river Shannon could be used. He

was trying to cover as much of the country as possible and thus confined himself to those centres which were accessible by public transport. Consequently he never came into contact with those areas where the hunger and distress were greatest: Connemara, West Cork, West Mayo and West Kerry.

While the letters informed English readers of the background situation in Ireland during the Famine, they did not tell of the level of destitution in the country. While the letters will inform to-day's readers of what the English were being told, the book does not rank as being of major significance for those wishing to know the day-to-day events during this great catastrophe.

During the Famine an Irish emigrant on arriving in New York was asked where he was from and replied, 'Mayo, God help us!'. This attitude prevails to the present day and in the opening analysis to his book Donald Jordan states that Mayo was the poorest county in Ireland. When the Famine occurred there were nearly 400,000 people in the county and it had the highest rural population density in Ireland. Mayo was plagued by the subdivision of small, poor holdings and an unhealthy reliance on the potato. It was therefore inevitable that the Famine of 1845-50 had such a major impact, with the population declining to 274,000 in 1851.

The book is based on a thesis which was centred round Mayo between 1846-81, and while the first one hundred pages deal with Mayo up to 1846, the main core examines the county after the Famine. Unfortunately, this unbalances the overall approach and one must question the publisher's insistence to pursue this course. While the post-1856 sections are analytical and incisive, the earlier sections are primarily narrative. Nevertheless, Jordan provides an important insight into the economic, social and political situation, as is exemplified with his treatment of the growth and decline of the linen industry – the mainstay of the Mayo economy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He also argues that the agrarian radicalism on the 1870s and 1880s had its origins in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Before the 1790s there was little protest or agitation against authority or landlordism because of strong economic activity. It is correctly pointed out that the 1798 French invasion had no lasting impact on the county, but declining economic factors and the continuing threat of famine produced the agrarian agitation. Unfortunately, the excellent work of Desmond McCabe on crime and society in pre-Famine Mayo was not consulted to indicate the people's attitude to law and order in this period.

Over the last two decades the study of the county

unit has been gaining prominence, starting with James Donnelly's study of nineteenth-century Cork, followed by Mary O'Dowd's work on seventeenth-century Sligo and Thomas P Power's more recent analysis of eighteenth-century Tipperary. The county approach has much to recommend it as it examines the community from the bottom up, rather than the more traditionalist approach from the top down. At times, Jordan fails to utilize this approach, as some of his conclusions are transposed from the national scene onto the county unit, as with his treatment of the Famine, the Ladies Land League and the rise of the urban groups within the boards of guardians. He was not aware of the work of many of the researchers who have completed and published work on Mayo over the last ten years. There is also the failure to consult the Murray Papers in the Dublin Diocesan Archives on the Famine in Mayo and the Mansion House Relief Committee Papers in the Dublin City Archives.

Jordan divides the county into a periphery and core, the latter being in the Ballina, Westport, Castlebar and Ballinrobe region, comprising large farmers who were agriculturally more progressive. Unfortunately, he tends to over emphasize the significance of the zones, for it is incorrect to state that parishes like Glenisland, Islandeady, Addergoole and Kilmeana (in the core) were different from Carracastle, Mulrany or Glenamoy (in the periphery). Subdivisions, involvement in seasonal migration and the wholesale destitution of the 1840s and 1879-83 were common to all of them. However, he is correct in his assertion that parts of the county, and especially those in the extreme east and west, continued to have a pre-Famine existence until 1881, largely due to the importance of seasonal migration remittances from Britain and the selling of eggs. One of the strengths of the book is an account on the pre-Famine social background, and detailed maps and charts are provided. The analysis of rents in the county is an example of how the local and national situation are often at variance, as he points out that the Marquis of Sligo and the Earl of Lucan, among the largest landlords in the county, extracted rents which were well above the national level. This indicates that further research needs to be carried out on other localities before the national picture that W E Vaughan has argued can be accepted.

The section on the Land League is well focused, bringing together the theories of Clark, Bew and Feingold on the land question within Mayo. The reader is provided with the political, social and economic backgrounds, and the national and local analysis complement each other. Detailed surveys are provided of the Irishtown and Westport land meetings, the clergy's role, the Boycott affair, the

1880 general election and the divisions which beset the local movement from the summer of 1880. There are also excellent accounts of the contributions of James Daly, John J Loudon, J W Nally and others, which highlight the significance of local individuals. While there are faults, mainly brought about by the publisher, this is a book which will be an essential text for anybody interested in researching the Irish Land War at a local or national level. More importantly, it is an important contribution to the growing volume of material on nineteenth-century Mayo.

GERARD MORAN

OWA BOONSTRA, *De waarde van een vroege opleiding: een onderzoek naar de implicaties van het alfabetisme op het leven van inwoners van Eindhoven en omliggende gemeenten, 1800-1920*, AAG Bijdragen 34, Wageningen NL, Landbouwniversiteit, 1993. xvi + 464 pp. 67 tables; 21 figures; 2 illustrations. No price stated [Also published as a doctoral dissertation for the Agricultural University of Wageningen, and commercially by Verloren (Hilversum), Hfl 50].

This is a study of the disappearance of illiteracy in the Netherlands, one of the most literate nations of Europe. By 1890 only 5 per cent of Dutch bridegrooms and 10 per cent of brides were still unable to sign their names in the marriage registers. The decline of illiteracy is dealt with in a wide sweep covering the general trends in the whole of Europe (chapter 2), but Boonstra also has his own particular approach: he wants to investigate the relationship between increasing literacy and the process of modernization in the Netherlands. To that end he takes a substantial dataset from Eindhoven (an industrializing town in the later nineteenth century, and home of the electronics giant Philips) and five surrounding administrative localities. The data document some 20,000 individuals, sampled from households recorded in the population registers for the years 1850, 1890, and 1921. Each individual has a host of variables attached (including of course whether he or she can produce a signature), which are designed to inform us about the individual's and household's social mobility, and demographic and migratory behaviour. These data are all fed into a series of computer packages, in order to 'investigate whether those who learned to read and write chose a more modern behavioural alternative' (p 6). The results tell us, generally speaking and with reservations, that they did.

There are inevitably problems with this subject. The theoretical debate engaged is that surrounding 'modernization', which has been very well aired over recent decades but which is by no means

resolved, and indeed it is back with us more than ever because of the whole post-modernist debate now current. Boonstra maintains – reasonably – that economic, social and cultural ‘modernization’ in the nineteenth century went together with a decline in literacy, and that there was an interdependent mutuality between literacy and modernization, each facilitating a little more of the other in turn. At a local level, certain illiterate parents caused their children to learn to read and write, while others did not. Boonstra seeks to document that difference and to explain it. The idea seems fine, but it is the exposition which is problematic. How do you operationalize or measure ‘modernization’, even if it can be agreed that the concept is a valid one? Boonstra opts for three sets of variables, covering reproductive behaviour, migratory behaviour, and social mobility. Essentially, the hypothesis to be tested is that literate people will be more likely to conform to ‘modern’ demographic patterns (like a lower marriage age and lower child mortality), will be more prepared to travel further from their birthplace in search of economic opportunity, and will tend to work in a profession different from those of their parents. The problems are twofold: on the one hand the hypothesis hardly needs proving, in that one would expect ‘modern’ people to behave in a more modern way, but on the other hand there are unresolved issues about the direction of causation, and whether a particular kind of behaviour is essentially ‘modern’ in the first place, as opposed to any other kind.

Given these problems, Boonstra does very well. He is masterly in dealing with his quantitative material. Not only is he enviably at home with advanced statistics and computer packages (he has authored several guides to the methods and sources of quantitative history), but he appears to be something of a specialist in the methodology of this kind of multi-variable analysis. His prose style is by no means the archetypically alienating one of the ‘hard’ social scientist, but is varied and even intimate – on occasion almost verging on the ‘Dear Reader ...’. His dataset is second-hand, collected some time ago by armies of volunteers under the supervision of two senior demographic historians, Henk van Dijk and Ad van der Woude. This was done back in the days of punch-cards, and could have been a nightmare to use, but Boonstra views it as a virtue: why do all that work if the dataset is sitting around just waiting to be used? One of the most complicating aspects of social history in the Netherlands is the question of religious denomination, but by choosing a monolithically Catholic area (which was well behind the Calvinist north in its advance towards the literacy of the masses), Boonstra neatly sidesteps the problem without invalidating the analysis.

The subject under investigation is an important one: the economic transformation of Europe in the long nineteenth century was probably dependent more than anything else on the social modernization of rural and small town populations (Milward and Saul, *Development of the Economies of Continental Europe 1850–1914*, 1977, p. 529), and it is especially for that reason that this book is important to historians of agriculture. It is also falls squarely in the tradition of the ‘Wageningen School’, with its easy mastery of complicated quantitative data about a single region over a long timespan. Partly because Boonstra did not collect his own data, the material is not always capable of providing the answers required of them (chapter 8 on migration), and sometimes the answers are contradictory (chapter 7 on social mobility). There are problems with the whole concept of what is ‘modern’ behaviour, and the ways in which it is linked to the development of our own world today. But this meticulous study (with a well translated English summary) goes some way to sorting out the issues at stake.

MICHAEL WINTLE

NIEK KONING, *The Failure of Agrarian Capitalism: Agrarian Politics in the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands and the USA, 1846–1919*, Routledge, London, 1994. xii + 292 pp. £45.

This book is a complex mixture of political history, but employing an agrarian base, in which a sharply critical gaze is cast over neo-classical views on the role of the market. In addition it is written by a rural sociologist. In consequence, for a book of fewer than 180 pages of actual script, an awful lot of reading has gone into it. Some scholars may think their views have been distilled too radically. The author is concerned with the dilemma which faced late nineteenth-century governments in reaction to the agrarian crisis of depressed prices. This dilemma was the confrontation in choice between the maintenance of free market forces against calls for increasing state intervention. In political terms an important focus is on the strength of the landed interest in domestic political affairs. The analysis is in three parts: it opens with two thought-provoking introductory chapters in which the conventional historiographical account of the rise of agrarian capitalism is laid bare; a series of four chapters follows on the phases of agricultural development from 1846 to 1919 and beyond (1846–73, 1873–late 1890s, 1890s to WWI, WWI and beyond); and it closes with a short chapter of ‘Discussion’.

The author starts from the modern European system of price support which interferes with the market and encourages unnecessary farm surpluses. Furthermore, the persistence of price support may

be related to the political strength of the agrarian sector. This starting point is easily transferred back to the late nineteenth century if it is thought that agrarian protectionism was at the beck and call of hegemonic landed elites in many European states. If this was the case then protectionism as a reaction in some countries to price collapse precisely displayed the continuing influence of landed society. In doing so, amongst other things, it stultified an agricultural system which demonstrably was undergoing change. The author believes, however, that any understanding of the role and reactions of late nineteenth-century states to the crisis facing agrarian capitalism can only be understood if at first the characterization of the rise of agrarian capitalism is correct. The author maintains that there is a false understanding of that prior rise. Historiography has placed too much emphasis on the power of landed society relative to the rising commercial interests of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and too little emphasis on their interlocking development. Nevertheless, the crisis for agrarian capitalism was brought to a head in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when the free market and agricultural overproduction resulted in a prices depression, squeezed profit margins for the landed interest, a resurgence of family farming in some places, and a fear in the minds of some European states of a future dependence on external supplies. The culmination of the crisis was the call for protection.

The four countries employed to investigate the politics of this dilemma are well chosen – they are good representatives of the general evolution of industrial capitalism, but in terms of political evolution they exhibited a great deal of variation, as they did also in the development of agrarian capitalism and agricultural structures. Britain is characterized as the classical country of agrarian capitalism, the Netherlands as a country where family farms were more common, and the mixture of larger estates and smaller farms encountered in both Germany and the USA placed those countries somewhere in the middle. Given this mix of situations with their divergent histories and rates of economic change, it is little wonder that the reaction of the individual states to the agrarian crisis of overproduction was as it was, different. To this extent the author, in my opinion, comes to no startling conclusions. He does so by giving a very standard, but nevertheless very good agricultural history of the period 1846–1919, but in which attempts at revisionism and counter-revisionism are not always convincing. The way that the changing situations in the four countries are crafted into the story is very clever and the range of reading is immense, but the promise which was held out in

the introduction is never brought back into focus in what is a rather short chapter of final discussion.

Perhaps where this book begins to make a worthwhile contribution is the fact that it comes in the wake of Avner Offer's thought-provoking study of 1989 of the agrarian interpretation of the First World War. The extended agricultural base of Britain into its empire suggested that protection was not necessary, in contrast to the narrowness and therefore vulnerability of the agricultural base of the central European powers, whose empires were small and ill developed in terms of new and expanding agricultural resources, and who never envisaged such a long campaign. The virtues of a high degree of self sufficiency in food production, and also of stock piling and access to external supplies, was exposed during the four years of seemingly interminable conflict. In this thesis Britain survived because of the strength of its agrarian base overseas, through its empire and trading affiliations: it survived in spite of a continuance of liberal agricultural policies during the preceding decades of agricultural distress. But the German war effort might have ended earlier if it had not been for protection during those same decades. Apparently therefore, protection for her did not guarantee anything except in delaying the outcome.

MICHAEL TURNER

ROBERT TRACY MCKENZIE, *One South or Many? Plantation Belt and Upcountry in Civil War-Era Tennessee*, CUP, 1994. x+213 pp. £30.

This study makes a careful, painstaking examination of agricultural changes in the state of Tennessee between 1850 and 1880. It is concerned with analysing the character of the farming before the Civil War and as changed by that conflict, and is based on a sample of eight of the state's counties. This is a small sample, but the counties are chosen to illustrate three different farming regions, the mountain and valley district of eastern Tennessee, the more fertile middle region of the state, and the south-west, which was the home of cotton and the plantation system. Although the author emphasizes the diversity he finds, he is concerned also to stress the existence of certain fundamental similarities, in the scale of the farming, the extent of self-sufficiency, and the distribution of wealth. He argues that self-sufficiency, so far from supporting an admirably independent way of life, was associated with poverty, and the greater the remoteness from markets the greater the poverty.

The effects of the war and abolition of slavery were necessarily most felt in the south-western plantation region, but the author finds that in some respects similar changes were experienced

over all three regions. All showed a fall in the size and value of the farms, an increase in the numbers of farm units, an increased role for tenancy, and a decline in food output and self-sufficiency. One effect of abolition was to bring about a massive redistribution of wealth (slaves making up a high proportion of pre-war wealth), resulting in a reduction in the pre-war disparities in wealth across the regions.

It is interesting, however, that factors other than the war, abolition, and post-war agricultural reorganization, were also influential. Tenancy increased, in part, because of a rise in the white population and a movement of landless whites to become occupiers of farms. The majority of the freed slaves, however, remained despite some exceptions at the bottom of the social ladder as wage labourers, rather than becoming sharecroppers or tenants. The post-war decline in self-sufficiency, also, was in part due not only to the increase in tenancy, and consequently cash crops, but also to the falling proportion of land and livestock to farm population.

Dr McKenzie is modest on the implications of his research. As he remarks, there is no guarantee that his eight counties are typical of the vastly larger area of the whole state, nor that Tennessee is itself typical of the South as a whole. But he certainly points to directions in which further research might proceed, and his findings will make historians of the South more cautious in framing broad generalizations which neglect the true diversity of agricultural experience.

G E MINGAY

JEREMY ADELMAN, *Frontier Development: Land, Labour and Capital on the Wheatlands of Argentina and Canada 1890-1914*, OUP, 1994. 322 pp. 14 figs; 66 tables. £40.

In the course of the two decades preceding 1914 wheat production in Argentina rose by 100 million bushels, and in Canada by over 150 million bushels. Argentina came to produce 12.6 per cent of world wheat exports, and Canada 14.2 per cent. In Argentina the wheat acreage rose by more than 12 million acres, in Canada by well over 7 million acres. In both countries expansion of wheat production was affected by the growth of the world market and by world prices for wheat; it was affected also by the large flow of immigrants wishing to make good, and the availability of imported capital.

There, however, the similarities end. The theme of this book is the need to shift the emphasis away from external influences, and to draw attention to the internal factors which resulted in markedly different structures of land-holding and land exploitation.

In Argentina, despite political and social sentiment in favour of creating a class of owner-farmers similar to that of the wheatlands of the United States, arable farming came to be dominated by tenants of large estates. Liberal, indeed excessively liberal, land laws failed to plant communities of owner-farmers, primarily because the large-scale ranchers were already there, and in the absence of government controls ranchers and speculators were able to obtain an even more extensive grip upon the land. Over much of the country arable farmers leased their land from the *estancias*, and since the object of the farmers was to make money quickly and then move on, it suited them to have short-term leases which did not commit them to large investments in fixed capital.

In Canada, by contrast, the future wheat lands were unoccupied, and settlement came later than in Argentina. Canadian farmers became owner-occupiers primarily because land was freely available and was cheap, partly because buying land, if only for speculation, was seen as the avenue to wealth. Shortage of labour, intensified by the ease with which farmworkers could convert themselves into farmers, meant dependence on the family unit, and on machinery, to a greater extent than in Argentina, while Canadian policy discriminated in favour of immigrants from northern Europe who intended to establish permanent farms. Argentina, on the other hand, adopted a more open policy which attracted southern Europeans, especially Italians, whose objective was to accumulate savings in the countryside and then either return to Europe or move to the cities. For these migrants high wages and low rents were the attractions; for Canadian migrants cheap land and the prospect of enjoying a more prosperous life as independent permanent farmers in a new country;

Eventually it was the continued inflow of migrants which undermined the prospects for achieving success in both countries. In Argentina the excessive inflow pushed up rents for those wanting to farm, and pushed down wages for those intending to make good as farmworkers. In Canada land worth farming was not unlimited, and in time land prices rose. The farmers' need of capital for establishing their farms put them at the mercy of banks and other lenders, and especially so when wheat prices plummeted in 1894-5; they suffered again in the financial crisis of 1914 and again in the depression of the 1930s. With less capital at stake as tenants, Argentine wheat growers were not so exposed to such risks. In any case, they found it difficult to borrow from banks and had to rely for what capital they needed on merchants and other informal lenders, while with lower debts and more short-term operations they suffered less from falls

in prices. Ultimately it was the different pattern of land exploitation in the two countries that determined the nature and success of the farming enterprise.

The highly detailed exposition of this theme is embedded in a discussion of the historiographical background to frontier development in the two countries, and more widely. Apart from his own researches the author has delved deeply, and thoughtfully, in the great expanse of relevant literature. The result is a work of greater depth, scope, and significance than the title might suggest.

G E MINGAY

SALLY H CLARKE, *Regulation and the Revolution in United States Farm Productivity*, CUP, 1994. xiv + 310 pp. £35.

The central issue here is the shift to continuously higher rates of productivity increase in American agriculture in the middle 1930s, a shift which coincided with the introduction of New Deal regulation of farming. The significance of the change may be judged from land productivity figures for the corn belt. In the years between 1918–19 and 1928–29 the number of bushels per acre rose by only 0.9 per cent; but in 1928–29 to 1938–39 by 27.0 per cent (and continued to rise thereafter). Labour productivity also rose, the number of hours required to raise an acre of corn falling by 11 per cent in the 1920s, and by as much as 17.8 per cent in the 1930s.

What lay behind this remarkable move to greatly higher levels of productivity? The answer in this book is that the effects of New Deal intervention in the market changed the investment climate for farmers and encouraged them to take up the tractors and other machines which had been neglected previously because of fear of incurring excessive financial outlays. The new regime of stable prices and new sources of credit, together with lower interest rates, caused manufacturers to extend the length of their loans and induced farmers, despite the depression, to make new initiatives in investing in machinery. In the corn belt the number of tractors roughly doubled between 1930 and 1939, and at the latter date as high a proportion as 80 per cent of some types of farms had tractors.

Ultimately, the rapid growth in productivity, falling prices after the Second World War, and changes in government support, led to a thinning out. The more efficient and aggressive farmers invested in more land and more advanced technology; the smaller and weaker ones gave up voluntarily. The proportion of foreclosures by lenders remained very low until the middle 1980s. By then, however, the prosperity of the 1970s had encour-

aged farmers to further extend themselves, and now, in the 1980s, the markets failed them: a combination of reduced exports, falling farm incomes and higher interest rates led to a collapse in land values, with many heavily-indebted farmers unable to service their loans.

This is merely the bare bones of an intensively-researched and highly detailed exposition. Agricultural regulation in America has long been a much discussed subject and is a complex story in itself. What is important here is the integration of the effects of farm policies with farmers' investment decisions and the changing character of the farm structure. Despite enormous injections of taxpayers' money, farming remained an uncertain and risky business, the more so when, in the late 1970s, a third of the farm acreage was devoted to export markets, leaving farmers heavily exposed to the consequences of unforeseeable fluctuations in the value of the dollar.

G E MINGAY

JOHN CHARTRES and KATRINA HONEYMAN, eds, *Leeds City Business, 1893–1993: Essays Marking the Centenary of the Incorporation*, Leeds University Press, 1993. xiii + 291 pp. Illus. £15.

The Centre for Business History at the University of Leeds was founded in 1992 as a multidisciplinary regional research centre. With commendable speed it seized the opportunity of the centenary of the city's incorporation the following year to publish ten essays on the histories of leading Leeds businesses, ranging from such well-known names as Burton's, Tetley's and Waddington's to the locally famous, such as 'Soapy Joe's', the soap manufactory of James Watson and Sons Ltd. Each of the individual histories has been presented in the wider context of the city's economic development over the last hundred years. Leeds is different from most of its northern neighbours in not being too reliant on a single industry; instead, its varied structure has served it in good stead during the economic downturn of the 1980s and '90s. Diversity is the most striking feature of the Leeds economy that is revealed by these studies. That, and the way that the city has successfully adapted to change in the later twentieth century. The strong local roots that were so characteristic of early Leeds industry are no longer as evident, now that the clothing firms have declined or disappeared, while other firms have expanded into national or international businesses. The diversity of the local economy is still clear, however, from the estimate that over 20,000 companies now operate within the Leeds Metropolitan District, 89 per cent of them employing less than 25 people.

Agricultural historians will find chapter 5 of most interest. There, John Chartres traces the history of Joshua Tetley & Sons since its involvement in the tied-house trade from 1890 until its merger into the Carlsberg-Tetley plc group and Allied-Lyons Retailing Limited just over a hundred years later. Joshua, the third son of William Tetley, maltster, wine and spirit dealer, of Armley, had purchased the brewing business of William Sykes, at Salem Place, Hunslet Lane, in 1822, which Sykes had already run for thirty years as one of the six common breweries of Leeds. By the third quarter of the nineteenth century Tetley's was the sole survivor of this early group and the largest brewing enterprise not only in Leeds but probably in Yorkshire. It remained extraordinarily dominant in and around Leeds. Until 1890 Tetley owned no public house property, but then, somewhat belatedly, it switched policy and followed the pattern that was already well established in London and the other leading cities. Another major change in 1892 saw the adoption of bottling in response to competition from nearby firms in Burton and Tadcaster. The consequent growth of the business led to improvement of the plant and the demolition of outmoded buildings. The twentieth-century history of the firm is related here to national developments, culminating in the giant mergers of the 1960s onwards and the enforced severance of the tie between the brewery and the public house estate in 1993. The history of the national brewing history is encapsulated in this illuminating history of a single firm, a Leeds business that has grown from a regional supplier to a household name.

Other chapters deal with the histories of the Yorkshire Post Newspapers, the Leeds Permanent Building Society, the public supply of gas, John Waddington, Montague Burton, Joseph Watson, and Charles Thackray, with an introduction, and a concluding chapter on the economy of Leeds in the 1990s. This collection of essays makes business history accessible to a wide readership. Each one tells an interesting story in a readable manner, while at the same time being scholarly and well-documented. The illustrations are often striking and unusual and add much to the appeal of the book. The generous financial support provided by several local businesses has enabled the price to be set at a very reasonable level.

DAVID HEY

RICHARD W LACEY, *Hard to Swallow: A Brief History of Food*, CUP, 1994. 340 pp. £16.95.

Richard Lacey's book is certainly interesting, informative, and entertaining: it belongs to the genre of 'popular science' rather than history, eschews academic stuffiness, and is nothing if not easy to

read. But it is not what its title suggests – it is not a history of food. Apart from a few sketchy backward glances at farming in remote antiquity, there is very little on how food was produced or what people ate in the past.

Instead, the author, professor of clinical microbiology in the University of Leeds and a well-known media critic on food issues, takes the reader systematically through the frequently unsavoury details of modern food production and processing, consumption of food, and retailing and cooking of food. One learns a good deal about cholesterol and polyunsaturated fats, the alarming number and variety of food additives (often of uncertain long-term effects), and the not inconsiderable risks of suffering food poisoning. Some dangerous practices of popular take-away establishments are pointed out, while the housewife's management of her refrigerator does not escape censure. Professor Lacey considers, among many other matters, the disturbing nature of modern intensive rearing of livestock, the hazards of cook-chill catering, and the potential risks of modern food production methods.

He is also less than enthusiastic for the present fad of bottled water which, he says, is

not much more risky than tap water ..., the price is not more than that of lager, the plastic bottles are not less biodegradable than any other plastic bottles, the weight of carrying them around must surely be good exercise, and they must provide good employment for thousands of people and help use up some of the world's excess natural resources to provide energy needed for their distribution.

By contrast, the author finds not a single instance of poisoning from contamination of commercially produced beer. Indeed, since, as he notes, beer kills salmonella bacteria, it may be regarded as an antiseptic.

The old-fashioned kinds of breakfast cereals are described as 'one of the major successes of the food industry'. Slimming diets, however, though generating large revenues for their producers, generally fail – primarily, he argues, because they involve eating. And the author is lucid and informative on the importance of vitamins, medicinal herbs, sugar, salt and fibre. He concludes with an extended discussion of 'the ideal diet'.

Perhaps the major point which is of special relevance to agricultural historians is Professor Lacey's telling argument against the divorce of arable from animal husbandry in modern agriculture, and the current obsession with efficiency and high output. Mixed farming systems, and the traditional role of livestock in maintaining soil fertility, have become obsolete, leading to excessive use of fertilizers, over-production, and the absurdity (long part of farm policy in the United States) of paying farmers for not farming. Public insistence on cheap food fosters high production and cruel methods of

intensive rearing of livestock, while the power of supermarket demand for unblemished produce of standard sizes necessitates heavy use of chemicals and appalling methods of livestock production. The nub of the problem is the overriding influence of market forces. But, asks Professor Lacey, is the public willing to make the changes, and pay the price of having more environment-friendly, safe, and humanely produced food?

G E MINGAY