

Book Reviews

D A CROWLEY, ed, *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of Wiltshire, XV*, OUP for the Institute of Historical Research, 1995. xxii + 338 pp. Maps; illus. £70.

The Wiltshire volumes of the Victoria History continue to appear with remarkable regularity. Volume XV follows only four years after volume XIV, and at 338 pages is considerably longer than the other recent volumes on the county. It contains the history of twenty-five parishes in the south and south-east of the county, mostly on the chalkland of Salisbury Plain, with Amesbury and Ludgershall the only small urban settlements. The medieval economy of the area was dominated by the lands of the two wealthy and aristocratic nunneries of Amesbury and Wilton, while there was a royal castle at Ludgershall which Henry III converted from a stronghold to an elegant country residence with an extensive deer park. Until the later nineteenth century the farming practice of the district was essentially the classic sheep-corn husbandry with very large sheep flocks, and settlement was largely confined to the valleys until inclosure when farmsteads were built on the previously open and treeless downland.

This is a downland area in which there is copious evidence of prehistoric activity, notably Durrington Walls, Woodhenge and the hillfort at Yarnbury, while the volume includes a brief account of Stonehenge, the history of archaeological interest in the site and the indignities which the monument and its surroundings have suffered during the recent past. Within each parish there are numerous settlements along the chalkland streams, each settlement arranged in a narrow strip so as to include meadow, arable and downland, while there are also numerous deserted sites and abandoned churches. In several parishes the complex common field systems were extended only shortly before inclosure in the early nineteenth century. From the seventeenth century this was also an area where husbandry depended upon early grass and abundant hay crops produced by the numerous water meadows along the valleys of the Avon, Bourne, Till and Wyllye, and details are provided about the complex workings of the systems, although little is said concerning their origins or construction.

Major changes came to the area during the early twentieth century as the War Department gradually took over more and more of Salisbury Plain for military training. Today the most prominent features include the sprawling army camps such as Tidworth, Bulford and Larkhill, military airfields

such as Boscombe Down, artillery ranges and tank-training grounds, creating employment and expansion in centres like Amesbury, Durrington and Ludgershall. Also within the area is the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment at Porton Down. On a lighter note a firm making fireworks and military pyrotechnics on the high downland above Great Durnford provides employment as well as occasional entertainment through the testing of its products.

In the established fashion of the Victoria History, this volume includes meticulously-researched detail on the descent of manors, ownership, church advowsons and architectural development, land use and parochial charities. Like other recent volumes it is well illustrated, with useful maps and plans and earlier views of churches and houses, several of them from the Buckler collection in Devizes Museum. For agricultural historians it provides a wealth of material and references for chalkland husbandry and downland farming systems.

J H BETTEY

ANN HAGEN, *A Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Food: Processing and Consumption*, Pinner: Anglo-Saxon Books, 1992, reprinted 1993. vii + 171 pp. £7.95.

ANN HAGEN, *A Second Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink: Production and Distribution*, Hockwold cum Wilton; Anglo-Saxon Books, 1995. 409 pp. £14.95.

These broad surveys ('synthesising' in the author's words) contain much fascinating information about Anglo-Saxon food and drink, mostly from a practical point of view, but with some attention given also to social considerations such as manners, morals and ecclesiastical constraints and controls. Subjects covered in the first are the making of bread, dairying, butchery, preservation and storage, cooking, meals and mealtimes, fasting, feasting, special regimens, food shortages and adulteration, and in the second cereal crops, vegetables, fruit and nuts, animals, poultry, eggs, fish, imports and fermented drinks, with attention also to food supply, theft, religious communities, hospitality and charity.

The books draw upon a wide range of primary material – principally archaeological, literary and from place-names – and upon secondary sources such as classical documents and later medieval and Tudor traditions, since these, we are told, 'are unlikely to have changed rapidly in the interim'. From this eclecticism, however, arises the principal and unavoidable weakness: that the hard facts get

lost among the speculation, with the same importance being accorded to contemporary religious and heroic literature as to documents and minute archaeological analysis. Some readers may indeed find it useful to learn that 'the ideal meal was the feast, taken in hall, with tables and seating', but the use of detailed evidence about feasting from poems such as *Beowulf* (of which the setting, after all, is pagan Scandinavia) runs the risk of fostering an unreal perception of what life was truly like in Anglo-Saxon England.

Gaps are sometimes filled by the author's own imagination, such as the assertion that 'food cooked by direct exposure to the heat of the fire, or in open pans may have had a smoky flavour'. Generally, though, claims are well referenced, and one of the chief benefits of both books is that readers have here the means of following up specific interests. However, the authority of the works referred to varies. For example, Sharon Turner's *The Anglo-Saxons* (London, 1828) is cited in support of the claim that the Anglo-Saxons may have cooked their victuals in pits, 'since *seathan* (to seethe, simmer, boil) was derived from *seath* (a pit)'. A glance at the *Oxford English Dictionary*, of which even the first edition postdates Turner's book, shows that such an assertion cannot be seriously entertained. Conversely, the detailed analyses of animal bones and human skeletal remains in the later volume are vastly more authoritative. Useful, too, are the no-nonsense descriptions of the technical processes involved in everything from making bread to brewing ale, and in this respect the author has cast her net wide in seeking advice from sources other than books, as shown by the list of 'personal communications' appended to the bibliography.

The two books are described as 'companion volumes' by the author, and they do indeed complement each other; but they also overlap in such things as the lengthy bibliography, of which the earlier is reproduced wholesale in the later volume with only about ten additional titles. The dedication is the same as before, the acknowledgements practically identical, and the wording of the introduction reproduced verbatim in places – all giving the impression of a 'cut-and-paste' job on a word processor. However, there is more discussion of the nature of the sources in the later volume, with a readier acknowledgement of the limitations of the evidence.

These are two readable books. It is unfortunate that the inherent interest of the subject and the considerable industry and scholarship of the author are undermined by the unevenness of the material.

G A LESTER

MICHAEL ASTON and CARENZA LEWIS, eds, *The Medieval Landscape of Wessex*, Oxbow Books, Oxford, 1994. vii + 280 pp. Illus. £28.

The Wessex region has several attractions for the student of medieval topography. The chalk downlands in particular have preserved good evidence of former sites, settlements and land use, the medieval dominance by the estates of the Crown and the Church provides documentation on the exploitation of the land, place-names have been studied in some detail, the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments has made a full study of Dorset and has done a good deal of work in Wiltshire, the *Victoria County History* is well advanced in Wiltshire and is in progress in Somerset, there are numerous studies of specific topics and a long tradition of archaeological and antiquarian research. Hitherto, however, there have been few attempts to produce a general account of the medieval landscape development of this remarkably diverse region. This volume brings together the recent research of more than a dozen scholars on the area between the English Channel and the Bristol Channel, stretching from Dartmoor to the Cotswolds and eastwards to the Sussex Downs.

No doubt reflecting the interests of the editors, the essays concentrate on settlement patterns, village plans, growth and desertion and less on industry, communications, ports or urban developments, but there are good, clear accounts of the subjects considered, with copious references to recent research. Between them Bruce Eagles and David Hinton survey the archaeological evidence from the fifth to the eleventh centuries, while Patrick Hase provides an important and informative account of the coming of Christianity and the development of the system of dioceses, minsters, parishes and chapelries with case-studies illustrating the creation of the parish structure which was to continue with such remarkable tenacity from the twelfth century. Della Hooke examines the emergence of the administrative framework of the region and reflects on the early creation of estate, manor, township and parish boundaries, some on the downlands possibly pre-Roman, and on the persistence of these units through the centuries. Michael Costen analyses the evidence for settlement and land-use provided by early charters, while Carenza Lewis in a closely-argued and well-researched paper outlines the patterns and processes in the medieval settlement of Wiltshire, using a combination of archaeological evidence, field-work and documentary sources. Of particular interest to agricultural historians will be James Bond's wide-ranging discussion of forests, chases, warrens and parks, and John Hare's account of agriculture and rural settlement in the chalklands of Wiltshire and Hampshire. Both of these essays

provide an immense amount of information firmly based on detailed research, both archaeological and documentary. James Bond gives an authoritative account of the origin, administration and management of the royal forests which covered so much of medieval Wessex, as well as discussing the rapid growth of private deer parks and rabbit warrens, their commercial value and the surviving landscape evidence of forest boundaries, park walls, fences, pillow mounds for rabbits, royal residences, hunting lodges and warreners' dwellings. John Hare examines the changing relationship of lords and tenants, the development of commercial exploitation of estates, and the ways in which changes in farming practice are reflected in landscape features such as sheep houses, strip lynchets, rabbit warrens or deserted villages. The volume also includes chapters on the growth or decline of towns and villages in Hampshire by Michael Hughes, on village plans in Dorset by Christopher Taylor, complementing and revising his earlier work on the landscape of the county, as well as contributions on medieval settlements in Somerset, wetland reclamation and on the problems of protecting medieval sites from destruction or damage by development, modern farming methods and even erosion by visitors.

The book is attractively produced with numerous maps, plans and illustrations, and as Professor Maurice Beresford writes in his preface to the essays, it provides 'a significant step forward in the context of English landscape studies'.

J H BETTEY

SARAH PEARSON, *The Medieval Houses of Kent. An Historical Analysis*, HMSO for the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, 1994. x + 196 pp. 158 figs. £19.95.

P S BARNWELL and A T ADAMS, *The House Within*, HMSO for RCHM(E), 1994. xii + 163 pp. 166 figs; 4 tables. £12.95.

SARAH PEARSON, P S BARNWELL and A T ADAMS, *A Gazetteer of Medieval Houses in Kent*, HMSO for RCHM(E), 1994. xii + 145 pp. 184 figs. £14.95.

Over the past twenty years, RCHM(E) has published highly-regarded regional studies of vernacular housing, largely of the post-medieval period, covering contrasting areas, Hertfordshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire. This series, to our great loss, has been discontinued, and the volumes on Kent reviewed here have a different purpose. Not only do they sample the stock of minor domestic buildings surviving in Kent from the Middle Ages, emphasizing the need for new research in this field over the rest of the country, but Sarah Pearson, in the first of the set, *Medieval Houses*, introduces to medieval studies concepts which have come to be central to work on later buildings. The new publication differs

from the post-medieval series in being divided into three volumes, the first analysing changes in house-design in their economic and social contexts, the second emphasising structural details and the third comprising a gazetteer. Houses with surviving medieval elements were sought and studied in 60 of the 319 parishes (or other administrative units) in Kent. The sample parishes were rural in the sense that they excluded those which had possessed urban characteristics in the middle ages. Nor were they a random group within the total of rural parishes, for the choice was shaped by the need to cover a range of geographical and historic influences. The result was the survey of 380 houses in the 60 parishes, with another 70 structures from elsewhere in the county, which were known to possess characteristics which would give as full a range of features as possible. The research programme made full use of dendrochronology, samples being taken from 74 buildings. Table 5 (p 148) in *Medieval Houses* sets out the 53 houses to which precise dates were given.

Medieval Houses begins with a brief account of aspects of geology, land-use and tenure which have influenced the distribution of wealth in the region. The following six chapters survey changes in structural design from the thirteenth century to the end of the middle ages. They deal with the few survivors built in stone dating from the early to mid thirteenth century, containing evidence for first-floor halls, the timber ground-floor halls of the late-thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the subsidiary accommodation and the construction of roofs in the latter period, and the evolution and construction of the late-medieval house. The trends in design and use of materials are well illustrated and are placed in their social context. The shift from the aisled to the un-aisled hall is an example: the former is shown to be archaic by the middle of the fourteenth century and to be concentrated to the north of the Downs on lands of families at the bottom end of the knight or esquire class, while the un-aisled halls of the period survive in greater numbers to the south, in areas where more land was held by the fore-runners of the post-medieval yeomanry.

The last six chapters of the book comprise an analysis of changes in form and function. The theme is the enhancement of comfort and privacy, which has been a key element in the study of the post-medieval vernacular, and is here shown to be central to our understanding of the earlier period. The difficulty of conducting an analysis of function comparable with work on the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries arises from the lack of probate inventories. Certain medieval inventories do in fact survive, but their number is small, and emphasis has to be placed on physical survivals. There is an excellent survey of evidence for what in Kent

appears to be relatively restrained decoration of walls and roof structures of high-status rooms, the open halls, and of the use of and access to the dais end of the hall. A major theme is evidence for the construction and use of wings beyond the upper and lower ends of the hall in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Evidence is examined for the movement of the parlour from the first floor to the ground floor of the upper end of the house, and of changes in location of the kitchen from a separate structure to the lower end of the main house. In Kent, the unaisled hall house, with cross-wings or end-in-line private and service rooms, developed from the end of the fourteenth century into the Wealden house, with jettied end-bays. The emergence and development of this house-type took place over a century and more, and the changes include the ceiling of the halls of early examples and the building of later Wealdens with ceiled bays throughout. The improvement of heating was significant, and the evolution from open fires to smoke hoods and thence to brick chimneys is well analysed and illustrated.

The author of *Medieval Houses* was faced with the problem of how large a sample of the contemporary housing stock survives. She calculates that over the county as a whole there exist at least fragments of the buildings occupied by about 14 per cent of the population of c. 1500. Given that in certain parts of the county, of which Romney Marsh is a striking example, very little survives, in many of the Wealden parishes up to 40 per cent of contemporary accommodation must still exist in some form. A figure as high as this shows that the survivors are not just the houses of the gentry or yeomanry, but that the smaller buildings would be occupied by a class of families who in many districts would be expected to occupy short-life houses. This suggests that multiple sources of income, from textiles and forest-related industries and trades, as well as from stock and arable farming, provided disposable incomes sufficient for the better-off husbandman to build to a good standard by the second half of the fifteenth century.

The three volumes are produced to the standard which we have come to expect from the Royal Commission, and the prices of the individual parts have been set at a level which will give a wide circulation. The one reservation concerns the three-fold split. A separate gazetteer is entirely justified, given the number of houses to be described and the quantity of plans and elevations which deserve publication. It should be noted that the gazetteer contains no half-tones, which are placed in the other two volumes. It is the function of *The House Within* that is in question. The sub-title is 'Interpreting medieval houses in Kent' and the text

contains plentiful and excellent figures, showing details of construction and adaptation. The phase-drawings, with colour-rendering of features added during rebuilding, are particularly fine. However, there is a good deal of duplication with the structural content of *Medieval Houses*, and what is unique to *The House Within* could well have been used in the analytical chapters of the other part without making the latter unwieldy. As it is, the reader has to search the indexes, the text and the illustrations of both for a full view of particular themes and buildings.

DAVID CROSSLEY

CORD OESTMANN, *Lordship and Community: the Lestrange Family and the Village of Hunstanton, Norfolk, in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century*, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, Suffolk, and the Centre for East Anglian Studies, 1994. 289 pp. 33 tables; 5 maps; 2 graphs. £35.

A picture has been built up of medieval East Anglia as a region of precocious economic development characterized by high agricultural productivity, an active market in tenant landholdings, high geographical mobility, and large numbers of hired workers. This book provides a marked contrast, describing a stable, gentry-dominated community in early sixteenth-century north-west Norfolk. Oestmann's two primary aims are to illuminate the relationship between a resident manorial lord and a village community, and to undertake a *mentalité* type study of an English village. He is aided by a rich variety of documentary sources, characteristic of Norfolk in this period, including manorial surveys, court books, wills and a parish register, as well as the household accounts and family papers of a gentry family, the Lestranges, manorial lords of Hunstanton. Armed with this material Oestmann examines a wide variety of topics under the broad headings of economic, social, and religious structures. Aspects considered include the Lestranges' family history and commercial farming activities, but the main concern is with the lives of Hunstanton's tenants: the size of landholdings, farming practices, non-agricultural occupations, demographic variables, family structures and relationships, and religious attitudes are all examined.

The range of topics considered necessarily limits the geographical and chronological scope of the study. This is certainly not a fault in itself, however it does increase the need for context within which to place the experiences of Hunstanton, and unfortunately this is only partially provided. Both the chronological and regional context are largely absent. Oestmann does not consider how the early sixteenth-century situation grew out of that of the

medieval period, and barely refers to the rich literature of manorial studies on the medieval village. The fact that *Lordship and Community* provides no information about neighbouring villages makes it impossible to distinguish between local social and economic peculiarities and the effect of the Lestranges' residency and ownership of Hunstanton. Despite the centrality of this issue to the study, Oestmann does not consider this as problematic, making the assumption that Hunstanton's social and economic peculiarities (such as the lack of copyhold tenancies, the stagnant land market, and low geographical mobility) resulted from Lestrangle policies. A brief examination of the court rolls of neighbouring manors could have cleared up this confusion and strengthened his argument. It is also remarkable that a study concerned with the lord/tenant relationship in early sixteenth-century Norfolk contains no entry for Kett's rebellion in its index. The rebellion receives a passing mention in the chapter on the Lestranges' family history, when we are told that Sir Nicholas Lestrangle was accused of conspiring with the rebels, while his brother and son were held hostage in 1549. Elsewhere in the book the rebellion is absent. A discussion of the non-participation of the tenants, if this was the case, or even of the lack of documentary evidence, would have been worthy of inclusion, especially as Oestmann argues strongly in the conclusion that lord/tenant relationships were harmonious and supportive.

The failure to provide context within which to set the experiences of Hunstanton might be excused if the local study itself was undertaken in a rigorous manner. However, this is not the case. The interpretation of documentary sources is often naive: there is a failure to consider possible biases and omissions of information, sweeping conclusions are drawn from quite commonplace findings, while it is often difficult to ascertain what evidence Oestmann actually has to support controversial assertions. To take a few examples: we are told that the communal regulation of agriculture via by-laws discouraged outsiders from settling in the village (p 74), that the absence of church court cases relating to Hunstanton indicates that there was little marital strife (p 204), that most children did not leave the village before their late twenties when they married (p 196), despite the fact that servants were numerous in Hunstanton's taxation returns (p 222), and that children often lived with their spouse in their parents' household for a number of years after marriage (p 196). We are left uncertain whether Hunstanton really was a peculiarly uncommercial, self-contained, stable community with unusually strong kinship links, or whether this is a vision imposed on the documentary evidence by

Oestmann's preconceptions of what a pre-capitalist village community should be like.

Lordship and Community tackles many topics that are worthy of greater attention, and indicates the potential of early sixteenth-century documents which, if treated with care, can illuminate many facets of life in this crucial period of transition from the medieval to the modern. Regrettably, it does justice neither to the richness of the documentation available nor to many of the interesting and important topics that it touches upon.

JANE WHITTLE

MAURO PITTERI, *Mestrina: proprietà, conduzione, colture nella prima metà del secolo XVI*, Edizioni Canova Treviso, Treviso, 1994. xviii + 230 pp. np.

ANNA BELLAVITIS, *Noale: struttura sociale e regime fondiario di una podesteria della prima metà del secolo XVI*, Edizioni Canova Treviso, Treviso, 1994. xvi + 218 pp. np.

ANNA PIZZATI, *Conegliano: una 'quasi città' e il suo territorio nel secolo XVI*, Edizioni Canova Treviso, Treviso, 1994. xvii + 282 pp. np.

MARIA TERESA TODESCO, *Oderzo e Motta: paesaggio agrario, proprietà e conduzione di due podesterie nella prima metà del secolo XVI*, Edizioni Canova Treviso, Treviso, 1995. xx + 253 pp. np.

GIULIANO GALLETTI, *Bocche e biade: popolazione e famiglie nelle campagne trevigiane dei secoli XV e XVI*, Edizioni Canova Treviso, Treviso, 1994. 166 pp. np.

These five volumes, published within months of each other, and all concerned with the agrarian history of territory of the city of Treviso in the sixteenth century, have been published with the support of the Fondazione Benetton in a series entitled *Ricerca sulla campagne trevigiane in età moderna (secoli XV e XVI)*. The area in question is in the eastern part of the modern Veneto. Mestrina (Upper and Lower) and Noale, the subjects of two of these volumes, were separate administrative districts south of Treviso, while Conegliano, Oderzo, and Motta, the subjects of two others, were administrative districts to the north and west. This research, completed under the guidance of Gaetano Cozzi and Danilo Gasparini, is based chiefly upon sets of tax registers for the years 1518-22 and 1537-42. Each assessment records, in four separate sections for each administrative district, the assessments of (1) inhabitants of the chief town, (2) the remaining inhabitants of the district, (3) taxpayers living outside the district, and (4) the clergy. Each administrative district contained two or three dozen villages. In order to compile these registers, assessors went from village to village recording details of the occupation and use of the land, so that where the books survive they make possible a detailed agrarian

survey. Another principal source for the period is a series of registers of 'mouths and grains' which surveyed available grain resources on behalf of the authorities at Treviso, who worked on the assumption that food supply was a chronic problem. The nature of the sources accounts for the relationship between the five volumes and for the scope of the studies they contain. A further source of information of great potential value is a collection of the declarations that heads of families had to make for taxation purposes concerning their personal circumstances. As a result of the aerial bombardment of Treviso in 1944 these records are at present broken up into some 50,000 loose and largely unsorted pages. Galletti uses a sample of 582 declarations of the years 1456, 1486, and 1532 to make some interesting observations about family structures, age of marriage and fertility rates, but it is clear that the thorough analysis of this source awaits a major task of archival reconstruction.

The population history of the region has its lacunae and ambiguities, but Galletti provides a reasoned survey. It is interesting to see his stress on the slowness of later fifteenth-century recovery from the crises of the fourteenth century up to about 1520; the Italian Wars are blamed for hampering growth in the later decades of this period. Rapid population growth around Treviso was restricted to the period c. 1520-60, culminating in a famine of 1559-60, after which repeated crises of mortality greatly reduced the rate of increase. The population of Venice, which was supplied in part from this region, is estimated to have increased from about 130,000 in 1540 to 170,000 in 1563.

This was a highly commercialized part of Europe whose characteristics are only partly captured by studies of landownership. However, this feature of the rural economy is reflected in the inequality of units of ownership - at the one extreme those too small to ensure a livelihood, and at the other those geared towards commercial exploitation. There were many miniscule holdings; in Conegliano 60 per cent of proprietors had fewer than two hectares. Although many units of production were in the hands of owner-occupiers, these were characteristically the smallest holdings, so that by far the greater part of the land was under various types of lease, and that proportion grew within the period under observation. Leases were commonly for rents in kind, or for a mixture of produce and money. The growth of landownership by townsmen at the expense of country-dwellers was marked throughout the region, and townsmen owned a large proportion of the larger units of exploitation. A recurrent theme is the growing importance of landholding by Venetians, both noble and non-noble, notably in Mestrina, Noale and Oderzo.

Their holdings were amongst the largest, especially in Oderzo, where in 1542 five Venetian proprietors each had over 100 hectares. In years of crisis countrymen starved as grain left the villages for Treviso and Venice.

The records do not permit the close observation of agricultural methods and productivity, but the authors supply a number of reasoned observations. The most closely described arable husbandry is that of Mestrina, where a three-course rotation was the most usual, but where a two-course scheme was employed on less fertile soils and a more intensive five-course rotation (spring-sown crops, legumes, two courses of winter-sown crops, fallow) or the better ones. Wheat yields of about five or six times the seed were apparently normal in the period 1474-1525. Cattle-rearing was an important part of the rural economy, and notarial contracts by which animals were leased for periods of years were numerous. There were also some sheep, though these were proportionately less significant a source of income. Today much of the country around Treviso is devoted to intensive wine production, and this is also a feature of the sixteenth-century scene. After wheat, wine was the product most commonly required by the landlords of Mestrina as a component of rent. Noale supplied wine to dealers in Mestre and its environs.

Though these volumes are not written to a common formula they have elements of closely related design, and they complement each other admirably in giving a detailed portrait of this interesting part of the world. They are attractively published with detailed bibliographies and indexes.

RICHARD BRITNELL

FRANCIS BRUMONT, *Paysans de Vieille-Castille aux XVIe et XVIIe Siècles*, Bibliothèque de la Casa de Velázquez, no 9, Ciudad Universitaria, Madrid, 1994. 501 pp. np.

This is a most instructive and thought-provoking study of Spanish agriculture in Old Castile, written by a French historian who is sensitive to local differences, and investigates his region in the way favoured by English historians for the same period. Francis Brumont's territory lies east and west of Burgos, the ancient capital of Castile, and embraces barren mountainous country, intersected by valleys with vines on the hillsides and cereals on the chalk floors.

The variety of landscape can readily be matched in parts of northern England, but the differences in rainfall introduce a strong contrast in the use of the natural resources. Virtually none of the land was irrigated, watermills could only work for three or four months in the year, and a two-course rotation of crops was more or less obligatory. Pasture was

not available all the year round, generous common pastures were unknown, and so the integration of grass-fed livestock and arable husbandry, which we take for granted in Britain, was impossible. Animals and crops were competitors, and the only essential livestock which could be supported were draught animals. In many places in the sixteenth century, when the demand for grain was rising (as population increased), sheepkeeping was restricted to just a few animals supplying milk, cheese, and wool for household needs, lambs were killed at twelve days old, and in one village peasants were forbidden to keep sheep altogether. Those owning any had to arrange for villages elsewhere to take their animals 'to halves'. This leasing of livestock, and vineyards too, 'to halves', a familiar practice in both Spain and France, reminds us how little interest the system arouses among English historians, though references occur in our documents (sometimes in inventories), and doubtless the system fluctuated in favour in different economic circumstances.

The whole territory studied here was dominated by peasant farms, few lords seem to have resided, and none of the documents used here shows them at the centre of events. Maintaining a sustained interest in local differences throughout, the author traces general trends in agricultural production and social differentiation through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Farmers experienced cyclical changes similar to, and often almost simultaneous with, those in England. Some of the worst disasters caused by bad harvest and epidemics occurred in the same decades in both countries, for example, in the 1560s, 1590s, and 1620s, and a striking similarity emerges in the consequences for people, and the alternative ways in which they sought other sources of livelihood. Larger farmers grew more grain, took more land and consolidated at the expense of a growing number of poor landless families. Oxen were the main draught beasts, but the use of mules, which also hastened assarting, took hold in the most fertile areas. By rearing mules, bought in young, and kept for two to three years till they were ready for work, rich farmers made use of the oat crop which they increased accordingly. The main cereal was wheat, barley coming well behind. The pastoral country of the hills preserved longest a more egalitarian social structure, supported by pastoral pursuits, and adhering to old ways. Industrial crops did not play much of a role, apart from flax which was a large crop and hemp a small one, but in suitable places vines rose to prominence in the seventeenth century as an alternative activity when cereals paid less. Cattle-rearing was the speciality of the mountains, and pig-keeping of the woodlands. Industrial occupations became an increasingly valued secondary

pursuit, seen in modest leather and textile centres, while a notable surge of steel-making was reflected at Santibanez in the 1580s and 1590s in the making of fish-hooks and needles. This is the moment when the excellence of Spanish needles was recognised in England too.

In the final discussion, Francis Brumont integrates the many factors which he has explored along the way, in an attempt to explain why this area did not receive sufficiently strong commercializing stimuli to transform its economy. It lay on a through route from the northern coast at Bilbao and Santander to major cities, and, indeed, at Burgos the large packs of goods arriving at the ports were here broken down into smaller units for the muleteers to carry onwards. But trade and industry worked their way only gently through the economy, and peasants remained content to keep their capital locked up in land through bad and good times. The author offers thoughtful observations on the effects of partible inheritance in curtailing speculative ventures; family assets had to be guarded to fulfil obligations towards all heirs. And he shows how the largest agricultural income was obtained from direct farming with family members. So the region did not display the driving energy of Catalonia, impelled by colonial ventures, but it did avoid extreme social polarization. This is a deeply-researched study, offering English historians much food for thought on general trends in the early modern economy and how to weigh the most significant operative factors.

JOAN THIRSK

XAVIER DE PLANHOL, *An Historical Geography of France*, CUP and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de L'Homme (Cambridge and Paris), 1994. xxiii + 563 pp. 92 figs. £55.

This impressive volume, originally published in French as *Géographie Historique de la France* in 1988, is based upon a series of lectures given at the Université de Paris-Sorbonne with the addition of a final chapter by Paul Claval on 'The France of Large Organisations'. The volume is translated by Janet Lloyd and becomes number 21 in the Cambridge studies in Historical Geography series. Sweeping time-spans characterize the three main sections of the book: 'The genesis of France', 'The traditional organisation of the territory of France' and 'The centralisation and diversification of the French space'.

The text is generally clear, and has been simply and boldly translated. The language is occasionally cryptic and foreshortened, but always dense and full of empirical examples. Diagrams are plentifully employed, although they are often rather small and have minor editorial slips (for example, Figure 35

is printed upside down!), and there is an excellent index. At times the listings of examples threatens to become too overpowering but the cultural and social insights rescue the text from what might otherwise have become too pedestrian. As it is, we gain sparkling insights into the evolution of French life and landscapes – both rural and urban. The transition from Gaul and the origins of France itself are handled sensitively and carefully, with ideas being drawn together in a most useful synthesis. The fundamental distinctiveness between the north-east and south-west is elaborated in great detail: the roof-types, the horizontal *vs* vertical water mills, the indoor *vs* outdoor *threshing*, and above all the open-field nucleated village of the north and east *vs* the scattered hamlets and farms of the bocage of the west and south. These variations are handled not in a static way, but through the dynamism of changes wrought by factors such as cerealisation which ushered in communal organization and large open fields. The St Malo–Geneva divide is a major organising concept throughout the volume. The north and east becomes more prosperous, better educated, better cared for, and with open fields; the south and west is poorer, less literate (at least in French) and pastoral despite the ‘maize revolution’ of the relatively more wealthy Aquitaine.

Spatial variation, at different scales, is thus at the heart of this text. The emergence of areas of specialized agriculture, for example, is dealt with thoroughly more than once: the intensive productivity of Flanders, for example, or the emergence of commercial vineyards or Parisian-led intensification of market gardens or dairying. Such intensification is dealt with in both the second and the third sections of the text, and one has to pick up the threads and start again to connect the themes to pursue agricultural change from the Middle Ages through to the present. Spatial variations in the spread of social mores or culture also receive detailed treatment – not only the spread of Parisian culture to the peripheries but also the reaction of the regions by reinforcing their own cultural distinctiveness in furniture, costume or dance. Here de Planhol uncovers a fascinating mixture of archaic survival, regional adaptation and innovation. Nothing, he continuously assures us, is simple when dealing with the historical geography of France. For one thing, both Paris and France itself are both referred to as concepts rather than material realities. Paris, we are told, existed as a concept and creation of high culture rather than as an entity in the normal life of the *paysan*. France ‘was a creation of the mind’.

Whilst not everyone might agree with such conclusions, we could certainly all agree with the author that an understanding of his country can

only be gained through ‘the light of its past’, and to that end, this thoughtful volume offers English-speaking scholars the opportunity to obtain greater insights than hitherto available to us. The final chapter, written by Paul Claval with a quite different conception of sub-headings (his tend to be whole sentences), is primarily concerned with the twentieth century and the spatial impact of modernization. This has brought a uniformity to culture and landscape which ensured that France was perhaps at its most diverse between 1875 and 1914, a fact which surely helps to explain the great flowering of the French regional academic tradition in the early twentieth century.

BRIAN SHORT

LOUISE DECHÊNE, *Habitants and Merchants in Seventeenth-Century Montreal*, McGill–Queen’s UP, 1993. xxii + 428 pp. £52.25 (hbk); £21 (pbk).

Today, the word Montreal conjures up images of a bustling city, the seat of no fewer than four universities and the home and workplace of more than a million people. This study of seventeenth-century Montreal deals with a wholly different world. The fledgling town, with its modest merchant community supplying furs to metropolitan France, is not ignored, but the book’s concern is the entire island of Montreal, much of which was rural in character. The countryside was the home of the habitants of the book’s title, the town the milieu of the merchants. The two worlds, Professor Dechêne demonstrates, were surprisingly unconnected: few merchants invested in land and there was little desire on the part of the habitants to move from their peasant holdings into town, or even to profit by exploiting urban markets.

The various aspects of this divided world are superbly and systematically analysed by the author. Population, trade, agriculture and society are all scrutinized in great detail and in measured fashion. The techniques employed in the study will be familiar to readers of journals like *Past and Present* and *Annales*. The sources used – parish registers, wills, judicial records of various sorts, deeds, seigneurial papers, tax assessments, account books and so on – also have a familiar ring to those working on European society. Occasionally, however, Professor Dechêne has at her disposal records not available to the historian of the old world. Certainly, English historians would give their eye teeth for the series of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century censuses on which the author’s analysis of the population and the social structure of the island draws so heavily.

Habitants and Merchants is not, one should stress, a new book. It was first published in French as

long ago as 1974. This English edition, however, is proof positive that the volume has not dated in the intervening twenty years. The work remains one of the finest studies of seventeenth-century colonial society that we have. Doubtless – as Professor Dechêne would be the first to admit – had the volume been written today the author's perspective would have been somewhat different. In particular, native society would not have been so lightly passed over, while the cultural outlook and the customs and rituals of the colonists – their 'mentalité' – would also have been explored. But what is here – an impeccable survey of the economy and society of the emerging colony – is of the very highest order. *Habitants and Merchants* is a study that has, without question, stood the test of time.

Of course, no book is entirely flawless, and this volume, good though it is, is no exception. Two failings in particular rather mar the study. One of these is the lack of an index. In a work that runs to more than 400 pages this is an unfortunate omission, and one that is not wholly compensated for by the exemplary and informative table of contents. The other blemish is the price. £52.25 for a volume without illustrations and printed on ordinary paper seems excessive – as does £21 for the unstitched paperback edition.

ANGUS MCINNES

MARGARET SPUFFORD, ed, *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520–1725*, CUP, 1995. xx + 459 pp. 8 illus. £50.

This collection of ten essays, which are based on the postgraduate researches of a group of Cambridge historians gathered around Margaret Spufford, are introduced by a preface and a long chapter on the importance of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, written by the editor, and are appraised at the end by Patrick Collinson, Regius Professor and leading authority on ecclesiastical matters for much of this period, in a final chapter to which the editor occasionally responds in footnotes. The reviewer is left wondering what else there is to say.

His first task is undoubtedly to praise the group for their achievement. In particular, their empirical approach has settled some arguments that have been central to the study of early-modern local societies since the 1970s. First, social historians will no longer be able to claim that class concepts can explain the incidence of religious dissent. Nonconformity was not confined to the wealthiest groups, nor to the poorest, but was attractive to a cross-section of society. Second, dissenters were not outsiders, but were full participants in the life of their local

societies. Third, the case for the continued tradition of religious dissent in certain places over the centuries is a strong one.

Bill Stevenson's study of the four contiguous counties of Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire, and Buckinghamshire, where a large variety of sectarian types flourished during the period 1660–1725, is crucial for the conclusion that religious dissent was not confined to certain social groups. He has painstakingly compared membership lists with hearth tax returns (which fortunately list the exempted poor) in order to demonstrate that a significant proportion of the nonconformist rank and file consisted of poor husbandmen, lowly shepherds and farm labourers, humble artisans and small retail tradesmen. The so-called 'bourgeois' nature of dissenting congregations does not stand up to close scrutiny. Post-Reformation dissenters were drawn from a very wide cross-section of society. Moreover, the vast majority of dissenters (like the population at large) lived and worked in the countryside. In Patrick Collinson's words, it seems that almost anyone could be a dissenter.

Being a dissenter did not necessarily mean that neighbouring, conforming families were hostile. Bill Stevenson's nonconformists are compared in this volume with earlier dissenters. Derek Plumb has studied the later Lollards of the Chiltern Hundreds, and Christopher Marsh has examined the Elizabethan family of Love, especially those members who lived in the Cambridgeshire village of Balsham. They arrive at the same conclusion: that not only were dissenting groups mutually supportive, their members were not ostracised by their conforming neighbours. Dissenters witnessed the wills and attended the funerals of conformists, and served the parish and manorial offices in their turn. They were members of a particular group, but they were not alienated from the rest of local society.

The third area of research re-examines claims about the continuity of dissent in certain types of societies. This is not a new idea, of course; readers of this journal will remember Alan Everitt's paper in the *Finberg Festschrift* of 1970. The achievement here is, again, that of empirical studies which use surname evidence and genealogical methods to demonstrate that certain families continued to hold similar religious beliefs over the generations. Nesta Evans's chapter on 'The descent of dissenters in the Chiltern Hundreds' is central to this argument. She shows an 'astonishingly high degree of stability amongst the surnames of late Lollards and post-Reformation dissenters' in the Chilterns, which is quite different from that of local society in general in the region, and unexpected given the excellent

communications of south Buckinghamshire. She reasonably concludes that 'radical dissent was a family affair'.

In his 'Critical conclusion', Patrick Collinson notes that this particular area of research is the one which remains debatable, given the large gap in the available evidence for the Chiltern Hundreds during the period between the Elizabethan Settlement and the eve of the Civil War. He points out that 'We simply do not know enough about the religious dispositions of the three or four intervening generations'. He nevertheless accepts that a case for 'a consistency and continuity of religious voluntarism, neither wholly in nor entirely out of the church, perhaps connected with particular regions, economies, occupations, and even tribes' has been made.

This book is of far wider importance than its title might suggest to readers who are not particularly interested in the history of religion. It is concerned with the nature of local societies and with comparisons between different forms of societies. The approach is that of the empiricist who uses careful, detailed investigations to answer key questions and pose new ones. As such, it is a model of its kind. The volume also shows the value of a group approach to research. The subject is too big for a single person to attempt, but the co-ordinated researches of fellow-enthusiasts have proved remarkably fruitful.

Some of the essays are peripheral to the main thrust of the book, but nevertheless contain much of interest: on the office of churchwarden, the contents of a pedlar's pack, and communications. Peter Spufford's piece on 'The comparative mobility of Lollard descendants in early modern England' is the best essay in print on mobility and stability in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. It surveys the recent literature on the subject and emphasizes the importance to local societies of the stable families that formed the core group. In certain areas, succeeding generations of these core families were religious dissenters. As Peter Spufford concludes, 'They did not need to be tolerated, for they ... were so integrated into the fabric of society that they themselves could set the tone of what and who was or was not tolerated.'

The World of Rural Dissenters is of central importance not only to historians of religion but to all who are interested in the nature of early modern societies and in how to investigate them. The group directed by Margaret Spufford have settled many an old argument and through their expertise and enthusiasm have produced a challenging agenda for new research.

DAVID HEY

T M DEVINE, *The Transformation of Rural Scotland. Social Change and the Agrarian Economy, 1660-1815*, Edinburgh UP, 1994. xiv + 275 pp. £45.

The debate over the rural transformation of the Scottish Lowlands lacks good syntheses. Tom Devine's new study of agrarian change, 1660-1815, seeks to redress this deficiency. It does so admirably. In approach, it offers a systematic treatment. Not only does it structure the analysis geographically so as to highlight regional variations in the experience of agrarian change, but it also exploits fresh documentary data to full effect, reproducing a fair sample of it in detailed appendices. Overall, the analysis emphasizes the social dimensions of change. Inevitably, this means that those aspects of rural change which had social consequences, such as the removal of runrig by tenant reduction and the treatment of cottars, find a larger place in the discussion than changes in husbandry or farming systems.

Following others, Devine 'rehabilitates' the performance of the Scottish rural economy between 1660 and the Act of Union, though his overall verdict is that the forces of continuity were still greater than the forces of change. As well as noting a greater reliability of farm output, he highlights the increasing proportion of farms in the hands of single tenants, especially in the south-east. Because this was brought about by tenant reduction rather than by the division of runrig townships, the appearance of such farms differentiated a class of farmer whose size of holding made them more dependent on hired labour and the marketing of produce. Devine's systematic analysis of these changing tenurial structures is valuable, but his text would have benefited from an equally searching analysis of regional patterns of production and marketing over the late seventeenth century.

For the period between the Act of Union and 1760, Devine uses a wide range of tabulated rental data to show how the spread of single tenancy continued and how other equally vital changes in tenure gathered momentum. Longer, written leases became more widespread whilst rents in kind were converted to cash. The latter occurred in a wide range of farming environments, and by forcing tenants to confront the market directly it produced what Devine calls a change in mentality. These were vital preparatory changes, but as he goes on to argue, they were not accompanied by adjustments in husbandry or capital-intensive improvements like enclosure or drainage. These required capital which the rural community did not yet have access to before 1760.

Though there is a sense in which Devine takes a Brenner-type view, seeing changes in the social

context of production as running ahead of the switch from a subsistence-based to a commercial system, he does not downplay the role of the market. The rapid spread of enclosure and new husbandries are seen as a response to the acceleration of market demand from the 1760s onwards. The suddenness with which these capital intensive changes began is rightly presented as a hallmark of Scottish rural change. So too is the role played by Scottish landowners in directing and encouraging change. These various themes are explored through a detailed analysis of the Hamilton Estate, for which excellent documentary data are available. There is much valuable comment here, but overall, the text needed a more extended review of the way in which farm output generally was transformed.

Devine is concerned to establish the social consequences of rural change, particularly the degree of displacement caused by the reduction of runrig townships to single tenancies. He sees it as a process without social protest, partly because it was long-drawn out and partly because reduction was achieved by 'stealth', tenants not being re-instated at the end of their lease. Though it replaced relatively small working units with large farms, he is careful to note that it did not remove small farms altogether from the farming ladder. The social group that experienced most change were the cottars, the traditional source of labour. Through well researched case-studies, he shows how many were relocated into villages, a process that freed up the farm land used by them without losing their labour. Their relocation and the rise of rural employment are seen as the reasons why cottars did not turn to social protest. In this respect, the Scottish Lowlands was a remarkably passive region. Despite being a 'grossly unequal society' (p 159), it had no tradition of social protest.

The Transformation of Rural Scotland is undoubtedly an important book. Its strong documentary basis and quality of discussion make it the most searching analysis yet of rural change in Scottish Lowlands over the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Past interpretations of this transformation are divided between those who see it as a short revolutionary phase and those who see it as a more drawn out affair. Devine is better placed than anyone to resolve this dispute but his verdict is not wholly clear. In the main body of the text, he charts both the slowly-unfolding changes in tenure and landholding that were in progress long before 1760 and the critical changes in enclosure, husbandry and technique that swept dramatically across the Scottish Lowlands after 1760. When it comes to his concluding remarks, though, he declares pre-1760 change as 'social' and contrasts it with what he declares to be the essential phase of

'agrarian' change after 1760. In response, some will argue that the preparatory nature of the structural changes that occurred before 1760 are being understated, though I would not disagree with the importance which he places on the scale or sharpness of changes in husbandry and output after 1760. Arguably, what is needed is a reading that treats both as necessary parts of a single model of transformation, the one early and slow-acting and the other, late and quick-acting.

ROBERT A DODGSHON

JOHN HABAKKUK, *Marriage, Debt and the Estate System: English Landownership 1650-1950*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994. xviii + 786 pp. £65.

F M L THOMPSON, ed, *Landowners, Capitalists, and Entrepreneurs: Essays for Sir John Habakkuk*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994. xiii + 312. £35.

Both these books were published at the same time, in the autumn of 1994, although they began life in 1985. In that year Sir John Habakkuk gave the Ford lectures at Oxford which, rewritten, form the larger of the two volumes reviewed here; in the same year he reached his seventieth birthday, and a group of his friends and former students convened a conference in London, and there discussed with him a number of papers to mark that occasion, now edited for publication by F M L Thompson. The two volumes demonstrate the enormous influence that Habakkuk has exerted over scholars of his time. First there is the massive book on English landownership, a summation of more than fifty years of work that he has carried out, in a field that he first discovered and subsequently dominated: and second the Festschrift, which demonstrates that he is not only the historian of landownership, but has also broken new ground in other fields, having written, for instance, on the Atlantic economy and on contrasting American and British technology.

The link between the two books is Habakkuk himself. The eleven essays in the Festschrift are in several different fields: five are related to landownership; three are related to Anglo-colonial or Anglo-American financial relationships; one is on the growth of government in nineteenth-century Britain (although a Celt might remark that the author treats Britain as synonymous with England); one, difficult to categorize, is J R T Hughes's article on 'The importance of starting English', which discusses the extent to which English institutions were exported to the North America colonies; the final article is on the reception of advanced technology ('The reaper and the robot'). Some of these articles arise directly from Habakkuk's own work, and test hypotheses advanced in his writings: some are less obviously linked, and three of the contri-

butions do not, even in passing, mention Habakkuk. There is an elegant introduction by F M L Thompson, recording Habakkuk's lifetime of distinguished achievement, and endeavouring to knit together the separate themes of the essays. There is nevertheless an overall impression, all too common in the vastly increased number of volumes of collective essays published on widely assorted topics, that some authors offer papers on their current preoccupations, whatever the occasion, rather than write pieces designed for a special purpose.

The essays on landownership will be the principal interest to agricultural historians. P K O'Brien and D Heath develop their enquiries into whether the large landowners of Britain or of France made the most of the particular opportunities for agricultural development open to them. On balance they conclude that the French nobility, through the centuries, have been wrongly criticized, because their initial position was much less favourable. J V Beckett's article develops that of Habakkuk on the disappearance of the English peasantry (1965), and gathers an impressive range of statistics (adding an intelligent use of directories to the *Return of Owners of Land*) to cast doubt on the extent to which the numbers of small landowners declined by c. 1873.

C G A Clay's article analyses the position of the sort of man who moved in county society and yet maintained his role in the City, an example of what Habakkuk ingeniously calls an 'amphibian' – the second Henry Hoare ('Henry the Magnificent'). Hoare created a famous garden on his inherited estate at Stourhead, but also maintained his commercial role 'with one foot placed firmly in Fleet Street, at the sign of the Golden Bottle'. This is an excellent analysis, fitting neatly into Habakkuk's discussion of the movement between merchant wealth and land. Clay's article also provides a detailed case study to illustrate F M L Thompson's theme in 'Business and landed élites in the nineteenth century', which opens with a very useful summary of the current debate (leading players being the Stones, W D Rubinstein and Thompson himself) on the 'propensity of new wealth to seek landed status'. Thompson has used a very intractable source, the Legacy and Succession Duty Registers (IR26), to provide a considerable advance in this debate, allowing us once more to believe that very rich businessmen bought quantities of land and, sooner or later, built country estates. This is an outstanding contribution to the *Festschrift*.

R J Morris examines the married women's property act of 1870; asking why, at that time, did legislators who had for centuries been content with the long decline in women's property rights come to accept change? He concludes that the main reason was the realization that middle-class women

needed separate capital to sustain respectability (in the event of the husbands becoming bankrupt): he does not discuss women in the landed classes, who were already protected by strict settlement from bankruptcy and destitution. Perhaps the determining factor was that around 1870 middle-class preoccupations had more impact on the law-makers. R M Hartwell provides an interesting analysis of the historians' and social scientists' view of government in nineteenth-century England, suggesting that government growth came from the pressure of individuals. P J Cain investigates some of the consequences of colonial dependence on capital supply from Britain after 1850; C Knick Harley analyses international capital movements and the gold standard; and Peter Temin writes on labour scarcity and capital markets in America in the 1880s. Finally Paul A David discusses the impact of automation, and specifically the robot, drawing parallels with older technologies such as that of the agricultural reaper.

The *Festschrift* is handsomely produced, but with a thin index: Coke of Holkham is indexed as such, with no additional gloss, and there is no separate reference to Holkham: of the proper names scattered down page 189, chosen at random, only one is indexed. It would be helpful to the reader if both the volumes reviewed here had bibliographies: now that most works are submitted to editors on disk, bibliographies are simple to construct.

After the assortment of the hors d'oeuvre, the main course of *Marriage, Debt and the Estate System: English Landownership 1650–1950*. The title may have survived from the earliest days of composition: for the completed volume is less about marriage than about strict settlement, the subject of the first 150 pages of the book. Marriage settlement is not synonymous with strict settlement: as Habakkuk writes, a strict settlement might be made on any number of occasions, the three most likely being coming of age of the heir, marriage, or at the making of a will. For nearly 800 pages Habakkuk traces the ramifications of these settlements: through provision for the family, marriage, debt, sales of land, the land market, and finally the decline of the landed interest. Why was this legal device, the strict settlement, of such importance as to justify a full length study with a wealth of detail? To agricultural historians the answer must be that for three hundred years or more, much land, perhaps half to three-quarters of English land, was settled in this way: it was 'the standard form of settlement' from around 1650 to around 1882 (pp 47–8, 1). Settlements hindered or helped the advance of the economy, distorted the land market, determined leases, allowed, or prevented, investment in local infrastructures, in canals, turnpikes, enclosures, drainage

and railways. The system of land ownership by which much of England was held affected agricultural progress at every point. This book underlines in every section the great significance of the strict settlement in English history.

New aspects of landed estates will undoubtedly continue to attract historians, and some developments are here already or can be foreseen. A field that is virtually untouched is that of settlement policy in the royal family. Kings and queens too had estates to settle, marriage contracts to construct, dower, jointure and portion to assign; yet in the writings on landownership so far, the position of the royals has been overlooked. Some historians are already seeking for a more balanced view of the position of women in settlement practice. Eileen Spring, in her 1993 *Law, Land and Family*, remarked on K B McFarlane's loaded descriptions of 'obstinately surviving' dowagers, of women's succession as 'a sad prospect' or 'disaster'. Habakkuk too has subliminally absorbed from his sources this view of women's inheritance: too many daughters, too long-lived mothers were disasters, as was 'the widow who survived a long time and made a bomb at the expense of the dead husband's estate' (pp 158, 259). Eileen Spring, however, has calculated that the money paid to widows as jointures was generally below the money they had brought into the family. Surely widowed mothers were not always just an infernal nuisance? They were not given to the extravagances of their menfolk, did not build mansions, keep racehorses or mistresses. Within the family circle – a circle, we are increasingly being told, of family affection – must it be assumed that the mother of the heir would insist on her rights at the expense of bankrupting her son? Some dowagers had to raise their young families after their fathers' deaths, and conserve the estate until the heirs came of age. On at least one occasion, a dowager was eulogised by the Hotham family for having saved the estates in their family's late seventeenth-century difficulties: her aim was the 'support and preservation of the family and name of Hotham' (P Roebuck, *Yorkshire Baronets 1640–1760*, 1980, p 73). Perhaps this was not unique: the role of the dowager needs further investigation.

Habakkuk's book shows the importance of settlement in more than agricultural terms; there is much here on the family, on debt, on the interchange of business and agricultural capital, and on the decline of the landed interest. It is a book containing a mass of information and detail, setting out in the clearest language the 'estate system' with all its ramifications, and illustrating the great varieties in practice by a myriad of examples. The author has, for instance, looked at all private parliamentary estate acts, the only way by which a properly

constructed settlement could be altered before it reached its allotted end; dozens of family and county histories; a wide trawl of unpublished papers in county record offices. It is difficult to see how the book could have been done better: it will provide a quarry for decades to come, and should be required reading for agricultural and indeed all English historians.

BARBARA ENGLISH

G E MINGAY, *Land and Society in England, 1750–1980*, Longman, Harlow, Essex, 1994. vii + 278 pp. £11.99 (pbk).

Any attempt which is made to cover 230 years of a major slice of English social history within the confines of one modest volume will inevitably fall short of the expectations of some at least of its readership. In this case, it is students of nineteenth-century England who are likely to find this book of most interest and value.

After a brief five-page Introduction, chapters one and two deal mainly with the eighteenth century, under the titles, 'Landed society in the eighteenth century' and 'The landowner and the village'. Chapter three, however, on 'The politics of land' moves very swiftly into the nineteenth century, and there, chronologically, the focus of the book remains for the following six chapters as well, with titles such as 'The landowners', 'Down on the farm', 'The other villagers', and 'The decline of agriculture'. Chapter five is devoted to 'Poverty and the poor law', but readers will find that very little attention is paid to the poor of England after the year 1850: in fact, consideration of the entire topic between 1850 and 1980 is briskly wrapped up in the last two pages of this chapter, with even the Union Chargeability Act of 1865 being referred to only obliquely, and not by name. Similarly, chapter four on 'The clergyman and his parish' pursues this topic only as far as the end of the nineteenth century, and indeed this chronological limitation applies to all of the first nine chapters. It is only the last two chapters, ten and eleven, which deal with the twentieth century proper, at least from 1914, with the titles, 'War and peace' and 'The Second World War and after'. But the approach taken here is very different from that adopted in the earlier chapters. In these sections the emphasis is very much on economics and statistics, and there is no return to the earlier, more socially orientated themes. The poor, the 'other villagers', and 'the clergyman and his parish' are not re-adopted here, while landowners, farmers, and laborers become pieces, moved about on an economic chessboard by the fickle hand of free market forces, until rescued by post-1945 interventionist policies.

In a broad survey such as this it is not, of course,

possible to incorporate references to all of the latest research, but even so, academic readers may be disappointed by the thinness of the footnoting here. For example in chapter three, 'The politics of land', Mingay declares, 'Taking the hundred years from 1750 to 1850 as a whole, the most recent estimates suggest that agricultural output in general at least doubled, while rents rather more than doubled' (pp 48-9). Now a good deal of recent work has indeed been done on rent movements over those years, some of it by the present reviewer, but none of it was referred to in the footnote reference that concluded the paragraph in which the above statement was made. Instead there was a reference only to our old friends Deane and Cole. *British Economic Growth, 1688-1959*, and Mitchell and Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, with Mingay citing the publication dates of the first editions, 1962 in both cases: hardly 'the most recent estimates'. Again, in chapter five on 'Poverty and the poor law', 13 of Mingay's 31 footnote references which conclude the chapter are to the works of J P Huzel, and 11 of these indeed to just one work by Huzel, his chapter on 'The labourer and the poor law' which appears in volume VI of *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*.

This book was clearly intended to be nothing more than a broad and impressionistic survey of one major tranche of English social history over a long period of time. Perhaps the time period selected was too long - these were after all years of very rapid and hectic change, which totally transformed the face of the countryside and the lives of its inhabitants - but if the work was overambitious, it is perhaps Longman rather than Mingay who should be blamed for that. At its best, it is a profound distillation of Professor Mingay's many years of study and scholarship, and a sure-footed treatment of those themes selected for his attention. For example, his general contention that 'rents rather more than doubled' between 1750 and 1850 is an entirely viable one with which most scholars working in this field would agree, even although Mingay does not cite their work in his support. The strength of this book will lie in its value as an introduction to the topic for the general reader and for undergraduates who are approaching the subject of rural history for the first time. They will find much of interest within these packed pages.

J R WORDIE

DAVID B DANBOM, *Born in the Country. A History of Rural America*, John Hopkins UP, Baltimore and London, 1995. 306 pp. £12.50 (pbk) and £35 (hbk).

This is a history book written by a man who admires rural 'survivors' yet resolutely refuses to

sentimentalize their lives. He has no time either for Hollywood representations of ranchers nor of literary caricatures of the American hick, rube, or yokel. Even the rural equivalent of 'wonder women' who raised children, managed farms, and established themselves as centres of domestic manufacture, are firmly contextualized. As a textbook in rural American history from pre-Columbian times to the present, it is exemplary.

This is not to say that it will not give readers a number of frustrating moments. The introductory potted history of rural Europe might be better skipped; statements about rural women will cause some readers to flush; and the occasional lack of precision will certainly not satisfy others. Generalizations such as 'women were always subordinate to men' will raise the rankles of many historians, even those who shun political correctness. While appreciating the difficulties of doing justice to the ambiguous complexities of gender, ethnicity, and class, more subtle differentiations could have been made. At times, the category of 'rural people' masks important socio-economic divisions. British students might also expect more about the relationships between native Americans and immigrants. We also miss any real explanation of *who* emigrated to rural America. *What* proportion of colonists were labourers and *how* did this change over the centuries? Such questions remain unanswered in this book.

What does he tell us? The book is chronological in approach. When the book begins, fewer than 5 per cent of Americans lived in places with more than 2500 people. By the end of the period, 95 per cent lived in cities. We are told how European agricultural practices changed the face of rural America. Their ploughed fields exacerbated erosion; the introduction of new plants and animals seriously affected native growth; the imposition of a completely new social system permanently altered the lives of everyone living in the continent. Danbom examines at the way early Americans benefited from the 'mercantile system' whereby the British Parliament regulated the sale of goods - and the effect of the collapse of this system after the war of independence. He carefully sets out the relative value of indentured servants and slaves. The contribution to American agricultural practices made by slaves is nicely delineated, especially with regards the cultivation of rice and indigo. Slavery had repercussions for all of agriculture - socially, politically, agriculturally, and technologically. These aspects are discussed systematically and clearly. The great disruption of the Civil War - a war mainly about slavery - is one of the most interesting in the book. Reconstruction after the war was a delicate and desperate task. There is a

clear discussion of the role of rural society in the war of independence (much later, he does a similarly thorough job with regards the First and Second World Wars). He convincingly shows how early agrarianism was crucial in the development of an American national consciousness. Between 1870 and 1900, the rural community was faced with the challenges provided by industrialization, urbanization, startling improvements in the infrastructure, and the expansion of consumer society. The prosperity of the first two decades of the twentieth century was crushed by the high level of physical mobility from the First World War and the interwar depression. It was in the early twentieth century that the image of rural American society that we are familiar with begins to emerge with the introduction of trucks, catalogue buying, massive migration, and the substitution of huge harvesters in place of hired men. A further dramatic shift occurred with the inauguration of President Franklin D Roosevelt and his New Deal programme of 1933. This chapter was the only one which caused my interest to flag – but, then, by this stage in the book, two hundred pages of fascinating narrative had been consumed. Throughout the book, political movements and technological developments are given their due.

Danbom has a lively literary style. British students who might be superbly ignorant of American geography, culture and politics will not experience any difficulties with this text. One of the great strengths of this book is its clear exposition of regional patterns. After reading it, no British student could be excused for confusing the Virginian colonies with those established in New England. It is to be regretted that because these differences are so obvious to American students, Danbom has not seen it necessary to include a map.

This is a balanced economic, social, political, and technological history of rural America. Despite the broad subject matter, Danbom's explanations are never mechanistic (although there is an annoying tendency to account for women's choices primarily in terms of emotional factors while men's choices are more frequently explained in terms of economic rationality). The book suffers from the usual problems inherent in writing textbooks – it is difficult to identify a coherent thesis throughout the book and many readers will respond by crying out 'but why?' and 'more please!'. But this is a job for others. This is a splendid book, rich with detail and complex in argument, and – with the British student in mind – a superb introduction to American history.

JOANNA BOURKE

SALLY MCMURRY, *Transforming Rural Life: Dairying Families and Agricultural Change 1820–1885*, Johns Hopkins UP, Baltimore and London, 1995, xii + 291 pp. Illus. £33.

MARY NETH, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900–1940*, Johns Hopkins UP, Baltimore and London, 1995. xiii + 347 pp. Illus. £33.

These two substantial volumes are the first of a series entitled *Revisiting Rural America*, edited by Pete Daniel and Deborah K Fitzgerald. Judging by these offerings it appears that the series will move away from interpretations of agricultural change couched in economic terms and depending mainly on the influence of markets, transport developments, and new technology. The authors here prefer to emphasize the role of the family, and especially that of women, and how their role was transformed by the changing conditions of the time.

Sally McMurry's study of dairying families is pitched in the central decades of the nineteenth century. It is highly detailed, and based on an intensive examination of dairying, particularly cheese making, in Oneida county of New York state. Of course, cheese making spread more widely over that state and over New England and Ohio, to grow subsequently in areas of the Midwest. Production was based originally on the farmhouse and family labour. The first cheese factory was begun by Jesse Williams, a large farmer in Oneida county, who in 1850 was producing from home, with the help of his wife, so large a quantity as 25,000 lbs of high-quality cheese. In the following year the scale of his business, and related family matters, encouraged him to set up a factory. By the mid-1870s the crossroads cheese factory was commonplace throughout the county, and by 1885 over 90 per cent of cheese was factory made. The typical factory of this time was small, processing the milk of some 300–600 cows, and employing between two and half-a-dozen employees. The factory paid for the milk, marketed the cheese, and returned the profits to the farmer-patrons.

Total USA production of cheese mounted rapidly from 103 million lbs in 1860 to 243 million lbs in 1880, and cheese became increasingly the product of factories. Farm women often welcomed, rather than resented, the change, since it removed a burdensome daily duty and gave them greater freedom in their family and social lives. Eventually, even those women who worked in cheese factories were squeezed out in favour of men. For these women, it is true, the rise of the factory did mean, in the end, a loss of opportunity and of earning power. In the farmhouse, the wife of a dairy farmer, liberated from cheese making, was by no means at

a loss for remunerative occupation. She might still milk cows and sell the milk, keep poultry and sell the eggs. But butter making declined, and there was less need for outside help in the farmhouse. Young women moved from farms into textile and clothing factories, or to boots and shoes, teaching and other non-farm occupations. Overall, the rise of the factory, as the author believes, may have improved women's lives 'wonderfully'.

This is where the argument is at its weakest. It is impossible to come to a conclusion of this kind without knowing much more about the availability of alternative sources of employment and the conditions of work. Was factory work, in cheese making or other kinds of manufacture, necessarily a superior environment to that of an admittedly laborious occupation in the security of the home? From the evidence here we are not able to judge.

Mary Neth deals with a bigger subject in a more recent period, and the scene shifts from New York state to the Midwest. Her approach, however, is basically similar. She concentrates on three northern Midwest states, Wisconsin, Iowa and North Dakota, which specialized in dairying, corn, livestock, and wheat. Farming was market oriented and was already becoming mechanized. For the farm family, home-produced food was still important in 1900 but new consumer goods were appearing, making for better living standards and an easier life. At the same time government policies were encouraging over-production, farm costs were outstripping small farmers' means, and rural depopulation was already under way. Government agencies helped to improve efficiency by encouraging greater use of new technology and enlarged farm units. Farm consolidation hit small farmers, both owners and tenants, and affected also hired workers as well as women and youths. The role of women and children in production was reduced, while that as consumers expanded. Small family farms existed in 1940, but their way of life had been much changed.

In particular, diversity of production, and use of family labour in order to save money, were crucial to survival in hard times, but this kind of farming ran counter to the trends of specialization and large-scale production. Before 1940, however, the rate of change was slow, consolidation was limited, and few farm people had succumbed to the lure of the city. The most prominent change was a decline in farm population, the consequence of mechanization and the abandonment of home production. And in the depression of the 1930s government policies did more for capital-intensive agriculture than it did to help small farmers to survive. Farm families were under pressure to raise their incomes so as to afford new machines, new consumer goods, and more opportunities for recreation. First farm

daughters, and then sons, sought work in nearby towns, followed after the Second World War by the wives – the crucial element in small farm survival.

Preserving the Family Farm describes small farmers' attempts to adapt to the changes, or increasingly, their failure to do so. The author's argument is that it was in the forty years after 1900, when farm consolidation and large-scale production were as yet still limited, that the basis for increased post-Second World War rural depopulation was created. In her wide-ranging study she elaborates her thesis with discussions of farm policies and the attitudes of farmers' movements, as well as with accounts of individual farm families and their experience. She also throws interesting light on the changing educational and social environment – on the influence, for example, of extension work, the literature read by farm families, the model T, radio, cinema, and even the dance hall and modern dance music. Perhaps more statistics of the trends she discusses, for example of farm consolidation and rural depopulation, would give greater solidity to the thesis, but the book is an admirable social study of a kind that has not yet appeared in this country.

G E MINGAY

JAMES R LEHNING, *Peasant and French. Cultural Contact in Rural France during the Nineteenth Century*, CUP, 1995. 240 pp. £14.95; £30.

James Lehning is known for his earlier monograph *The Peasants of Marlihes* (1980), which dealt with economic development and family organization in a village in the Massif Central during the nineteenth century, and for a suite of articles analysing demographic behaviour in the *département* of Loire. Now, after fifteen years of preparation, he has set his detailed work into a wider context by exploring a range of evidence on the transformation of peasant life and by critically examining numerous scholarly interpretations. The central argument of *Peasant and French* is that the modern nation of France has, in part, defined itself as different from its peasant ancestry. Rather than insisting that countryfolk simply lost their earlier identities and became 'French', Lehning argues that a complex and protracted process of cultural contact and negotiation took place.

The book is articulated around sets of information that are formulated at three spatial scales, namely wide representations and interpretations of peasant society in France, more closely focused documentation on socio-economic changes in Loire (on the eastern fringe of the Massif Central), and detailed qualitative and quantitative information for selected settlements within that *département*. After setting the study in its broad methodological framework,

Lehning offers a complex and highly referenced review of depictions of peasant life by novelists, artists, political scientists, historians, and film makers, with examples running – perhaps predictably – from Zola, through Emile Guillaumin and Eugène Le Roy (the so-called peasant authors), to Marcel Pagnol and the films *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des sources*. Then follows a lengthy discussion of socio-economic conditions in the countryside of Loire, deceptively entitled ‘the landscape of the early nineteenth century’ since visual elements are rarely discussed nor are sources restricted to the early nineteenth century. Much attention is devoted to demographic circumstances, which are Lehning’s forte. Subsequent changes in the landscape (to use the author’s terminology) are then portrayed from a wide range of published and often quite general information, rather than from a detailed analysis of Loire-specific statistics. I wondered, for example, why figures on agricultural production for 1902 were compared with those for 1852, but not with the results of intervening decennial surveys or those of 1838–40, and why incomplete statistical totals were compared with those for which all data sets had been obtained (pp 84–85). Matters of gender, schooling, religious life and electoral behaviour make up the substance of four chapters which draw on quite different types of information. Thus, the discussion of gender is a broad, general review which is repackaged into the framework of Loire; by contrast, the presentation of educational issues is enhanced by detailed evidence from school inspectors, and that of religious activity is strengthened by information on pastoral visits held in the archives of the archdiocese of Lyons. The chapter on electoral matters juxtaposes archival material with a distillation of argument from historians and political scientists. A brief conclusion emphasizes the case for rural studies to be undertaken in a wide, theoretically-informed multi-disciplinary framework.

My reactions to *Peasant and French* are frankly mixed. On the positive side, the book provides some valuable appraisals of perceptions of peasant life and offers an excellent bibliography. It also conveys further empirical information on rural conditions in the rather curious *département* of Loire, which is composed of emphatically rural territory on the edge of the Massif Central but also parts of the expanding economic region based on the metropolis of Lyons and the industrial newcomer of Saint-Etienne. On the negative side, the book fails to provide some essential contextual information which any agricultural historian or historical geographer would demand, and displays some particularly bizarre examples of graphical depiction. For example, the environmental resources of this

geographically complex part of France are discussed in only a cursory way and no attempt is made to map the pattern of upland and lowland, rivers, trade routes or emerging transport systems, all of which were so vital during the transitional nineteenth century when sections of Loire, and in particularly elements of its society, entered into a new set of commercial relations but others remained relatively immobile in their traditional mould. Readers are treated to complex and detailed demographic calculations, but no mention is made of the total population of Loire or of how it changed through either time or space during the nineteenth century. Some good, detailed maps of physiography, land use and population density would have been most welcome additions. The maps which are included are downright strange, being composed of *canton* boundaries with numerical values typed into the intervening spaces. Their visual impact is zero; the data could have been shown more effectively in tables. Agricultural historians will be frustrated by the relative paucity of discussion of technique, production, land use and productivity, each of which could have been explored far more thoroughly from sources in the *archives départementales*; on the other hand, socio-economic and cultural historians may be more satisfied. James Lehning acknowledges sustained contacts with American non-historians which enabled him to transform this work ‘from a monograph on population history’ (p xi). I can only presume that he did not interact with geographers or agricultural historians since they would have been able to advise him on how to produce a more rounded work. In conclusion: *Peasant and French* is well priced in paperback and contains much that will inform students and will stimulate some academics, but will irritate others.

HUGH CLOUT

KAREN SAYER, *Women of the Fields. Representations of Rural Women in the Nineteenth Century*, Manchester UP, 1995. 201 pp. £45.

‘Man for the field and woman for the hearth’. Karen Sayer begins her book with these words of Alfred Lord Tennyson. She then sets out to examine the ways such assertions about gender changed in the course of the nineteenth century. Regrettably, Sayer is uninterested in the masculine gender, so we hear very little about rural manliness (and its relationship to the feminine). Her particular focus is on women in the fields and the reasons for the major flurries of middle-class anxiety about the extent of their labour and its nature. The level of middle-class concern was out of all proportion to the number of female labourers. Although women’s employment on the land grew from the 1830s to the 1850s, from then onwards it was in decline and,

by the turn of the century, was numerically insignificant.

In subject matter and time frame, this book follows Ivy Pinchbeck's *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution*, published more than sixty years ago and still the most detailed examination of women's rural labour in England, despite the brilliant work of scholars such as Keith Snell. However, the tone of the book is very different from Pinchbeck's. Unlike many academic texts in what has been unfairly called the 'narrow specialism of rural history', this analysis has been heavily influenced by Michel Foucault, Michele Barrett and Roland Barthes. This should not discourage any readers: theory is applied sensibly and with a light touch. Furthermore, like a good empiricist historian, the book is focused around three main texts: the reports of the Special Assistant Poor Law Commissioners on Women and Children's Work in Agriculture (1843), the Royal Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture (1867), and the Royal Commission on Labour (1893). If this seems heavy going, it is not. Sayer knows what can be done with unpromising material, she wields a deft hand with visual images, and her dissection of literary texts is always lively.

This book places itself within a familiar discourse. Along with many feminist and social historians, Sayer asserts that poor women were not merely passive victims of a middle-class hegemonic culture but were active agents in the production and reproduction of their lives. Despite this, most of the book is concerned not with establishing 'realities' or even attempting to understand the way rural women themselves understood their lives, but in the construction of rural narratives of femininity by middle-class commentators. This need not sound a sour note: the words of poor women are generally silenced and (as Sayer points out in her perceptive introduction) there is no identifiable 'reality' against which 'representations' may be compared. Despite the fact that rural women themselves are only rarely heard, Sayer never lets her readers forget their presence. More impressively, Sayer discusses representations of rural women in broad terms, particularly in the context of debates about the urban versus the rural, the nature of Englishness, and the potency of evangelical religion.

According to Sayer, the English rural idyll which emerged from the mid-eighteenth century, was part of the way middling groups within society created an identity of themselves as a separate class. By linking the English countryside with peace, prosperity and tradition, the new middle class legitimated their claim to power. The mid-nineteenth century shock of discovering that the rural com-

munity was not an innocent playground for children, a secure domestic haven for women, and a site of 'honest labour' for men had dramatic repercussions. When poor law commissioners, medical officers, and journalists began probing into the 'realities' of rural life, they stimulated intense public concern which had contributed to tensions between the growth of political *laissez-faire* and state intervention into the lives of poor people. Within this political discourse, Sayer shows how the dominant middle-class images of rural women changed through the century from seeing them as children, then as prostitutes, and finally as mothers. This process was paralleled by a decline in women's economic power within rural communities as they lost most of their skilled, well-paid work once new technologies and agricultural depression rendered their traditional occupations redundant. It is the way this book negotiates discussions of 'representations' within their economic, social, and political contexts that makes it such a valuable study.

At the risk of sounding pedantic, discrepancies between the footnotes and the bibliography were disturbing and the proof-reading was careless. However, these frustrations were minor when set against the beautiful reproduction of images and the delightfully clear way Sayer has of expressing herself. The book must be added to any course in labour history and in the history of women in nineteenth-century England.

JOANNA BOURKE

RODERICK FLOUND and DONALD MCCLOSKEY, eds, *The Economic History of Britain since 1700*, second edition, CUP, 1994. 3 vols: xxiv + 484 pp; xxix + 510 pp; xxvii + 427 pp. Each vol £50 hbk; £17.95 pbk.

The first collection of essays on the economic history of Britain, edited by Flound and McCloskey, appeared in 1981. After two decades of the 'new economic history' spreading tentacles across the Atlantic, the collection, which took economic theory and model building as axiomatic, was hailed as an important turning point in the historiography of British economic history. Many British economic historians anticipated that the two volumes of the first edition would condition the approach and perception of a new generation of economic history students. Our then Head of Department at Liverpool, for example, insisted on a bulk purchase, distributed the volumes to the staff and maintained that they would revolutionise the way in which we taught. In practice, as we now know, many of the essays proved too dense and intractable for most undergraduate students. Although there was a strained attempt to link some social history to the generally economic and econometric analyses by

including three chronologically sequenced essays on social history, students missed that close integration of economic with social and cultural history which had characterised earlier British historiography in the work of historians such as, and as varied as, J H Clapham, T S Ashton, E J Hobsbawm and Sidney Pollard. Furthermore, the essays did not always knit well together in providing an overall or clear perspective on economic change. The exigencies of a multi-authored work inevitably resulted in overlaps, omissions and inconsistencies. Wide insistence upon the use of the collection as a central text may have contributed to the declining popularity of economic history courses at undergraduate level in Britain.

This new collection is hardly a second edition in the common sense of the term as there is no repetition or simple updates of the earlier pieces. Several of the 39 authors wrote in the first edition, but most wrote on different subjects or have now produced entirely different accounts. The authors are British and North American, but many new names have replaced those who wrote 15 years ago. There are now three volumes with a major expansion in content for the period from 1860 to 1992. Comparison with the earlier work is inevitable. The new edition is generally more readable and more appealing to a wider readership, though the claim in the preface that the collection is written in straight forward and jargon-free English is likely to be questioned by many. Some of the best features of the first edition are retained, such as the excellent (and necessary) glossary of technical terms included in the index in all three volumes and the survey pieces on the economy which provide a context for the more specialist essays and help to tie the volumes together into an overall account.

Some problems which attended the first edition are, however, sometimes magnified. The coverage of social, cultural and even institutional aspects of economic history is, if anything, less than in the first edition. The social history essays of the earlier work which always appeared awkwardly tagged on have been rightly abandoned, but this has not been matched by any sustained effort on the part of contributors to look at economic issues from a broad cultural perspective. Again, there is no separate bibliography for each essay and no simple guide to further reading for students on particular themes. The essays are generally of a high standard, with clear presentation of evidence and thorough, lucid discussion of, often very technical, debates. Joel Mokyr's piece on invention and innovation, Patrick O'Brien's essay on the state, Barry Supple on economic decline and Jim Tomlinson's contribution on economic policy since 1945 are models in this respect: complex yet accessible. Other essays do,

however, suffer from a somewhat elliptical approach to their subject and would be more at home in a specialist journal than in a volume directed at the student market: Larry Neal on business finance, Mark Thomas on the macro-economics of the inter-war years and Michael Edelstein on imperialism, for example. Other pieces such as the two by Alec Cairncross on twentieth-century economic performance include dense chronological accounts, very useful as a reference for the professional historian but likely to discourage student readership.

An innovation in the new edition is a list of geographic landmarks which is repeated in all three volumes. It contains very brief descriptions of British counties, economic regions and selected towns and cities which will be especially useful for overseas readers, but the omission of many important urban centres and the prominence given to Sandown Park Racecourse, to Heathrow airport and to Soho is disconcerting. Another new feature is the series of chronologies of major events for the period covered in each volume. These do assist in contextualizing the essays and provide a useful and easy reference but they are no substitute for the uneven coverage of many aspects of economic change which is to a degree inevitable in a multi-authored, essay-structured work. It is, for example, difficult to trace the fortunes of any single economic sector through the three volumes and impossible to learn much about the long-term trajectory of particular industries even with careful use of the index.

The coverage of agricultural change highlights some of the patchiness which accompanies this edition as it dogged the first. Robert Allen provides a useful survey of agriculture and the industrial revolution which relies heavily but not exclusively on his own work and interpretation and which entirely ignores the distinctive experience of Scotland, Wales and northern pastoral districts. It is, however, one of the few essays in the whole book to make a conscious effort to include the impact of changes in the lives of women and children as well as, more easily quantifiable, adult males. Cormac Ó Gráda takes up the analysis of British agriculture for the period 1860-1914, placing emphasis upon regional contrasts and surveying a range of recent and older research on the issue of agricultural decline. In the third volume there is no separate treatment of agriculture after 1914 and only one minor reference in the index. The index has no reference to the Common Agricultural Policy despite the importance of agricultural issues to Britain's EC membership and relations with the Commonwealth. Students interested in twentieth-century agricultural history will have to look elsewhere.

These volumes are essential reading for all those who wish to keep abreast of recent research and theorizing largely, though not exclusively, within a particular paradigmatic approach to economic history. As a text with wide appeal to a student readership it has serious limitations arising from the technical and theoretical nature of many of the essays, the dense empirical foundation of others and the patchy coverage of particular key themes which is inevitable in a work of this kind. According to the dust jackets these volumes provide *The Economic History of Britain since 1700* with *The* underlined! It has been superseded once by its own progeny after only 13 years and, monumental though it is as a current reference and text for the professional, it is likely to be succeeded again by new results and estimations, new debates and by new approaches.

PAT HUDSON

TIM ROTH, *British Protectionism and the International Economy*, CUP, 1992. 346 pp. £42.50.

Britain's pre-eminence in the nineteenth-century international economy sprang from export-led growth in a free trade regime, initiated in its classical form by the cotton industry with the import of raw cotton from the USA, and the subsequent export of manufactured cotton textiles. Free trade also brought with it problems for British agriculture in the later part of that century, creating a dependency on imported basic foodstuffs which the Second World War did a great deal to reverse, a reversal actively pursued by the government in the early postwar years. Not until the 1980s, however, did the Common Agricultural Policy finally undo the direct consequences of the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846.

The long agricultural crisis of the 1870s and 1880s, which was a consequence of the adoption of free trade, did not lead to a clear demand for protection, promoting instead a renewed interest in the reform of landholding and tenancy. When Tariff Reform did become a national issue in the 1890s it was linked to a perceived crisis of international industrial competition, a condition which had barely existed hitherto, since British manufactures had dominated world export markets. Britain's share of world exports in manufactures declined from 40.7 per cent in 1890 to 29.9 per cent in 1913; in an expanding market of course. This downward trend was a perfectly natural and predictable outcome for an early industrializer which embraced free trade in a world economy of industrialised and industrializing economies which might, or might not, share a faith in the benefits of open economies. British exporters responded by shifting their sights towards less industrial economies, but in the long-run it was the composition, rather than

scale or direction, of exports that was the chief problem. The export of capital might stimulate demand in new markets, but the reliance upon staples, especially cotton goods, coal and steel, made the volume of exports vulnerable to shifts in demand deriving from changes in technology and the diffusion of industrial processes to developing economies.

No unambiguous conclusion can be drawn from the pre-1914 relation of UK export performance to domestic growth and economic welfare, but the fact that the highest interwar level of exports was still 20 per cent below that of 1913, despite a growth in world trade estimated at 37.5 per cent for the period 1913-29, indicates a structural problem in the demand for British manufactures, since, unlike the prewar period, Britain's share of world trade was now declining relatively and absolutely - from 30.2 per cent of world trade in 1913 to 20.4 per cent in 1929 at 1913 prices, selling the wrong commodities in weak markets. Rooth's story is detailed and complex, piecing together major trends from the assessment of markets, product flows and the comparative manufacturing advantages deriving from international variations in location, skills and capital investment. The later 1920s, for example, saw a general improvement in world manufacturing output, an improvement in which Britain shared. Against this, however, should be placed the impact of the return to the Gold Standard in 1925, an impact which was often indirect. Rooth describes, for example, the loss of markets for British coal in the Baltic to Polish producers. This followed on from the interruption of supply brought about by the coal strike of 1926, itself an indirect consequence of the return to gold, which coincided with the exclusion of Polish producers from the German market, largely on political grounds since the coal originated in the Silesian coalfields ceded to the new Polish state in 1920.

In the Tariff Reform campaign of 1904 the most prominent British economists had favoured free trade. This was no longer true in 1930, as indicated by the cautious endorsement of protection given by a sub-committee of the Economic Advisory Council, whose members included Maynard Keynes, Hubert Henderson and Josiah Stamp. Among its recommendations was the suggestion that a reduction in imports rather than a reduction in costs was the only feasible strategy in the achievement of a trade balance; and Imperial Preference was also proposed as a possible option. The following year Britain went off the Gold Standard, and the Import Duties Act came into effect on 1 March 1932, ending the era of free trade.

The trade negotiations which followed on from this were complex, and the principal virtue of

Rooth's account is to demonstrate in detail both the strategies pursued by the negotiating parties, and the trade flows over which they bargained. Here we can see prefigured arguments over the Empire, North America, new markets and Europe which recurred after the war; although these strategic lessons of the 1930s seem to have passed by British policymakers of the 1950s.

KEITH TRIBE

SUSANNA WADE MARTINS, *Farms and Fields*, B T Batsford Ltd, London, 1995. 160 pp. Illus. £15.99.

This volume in Batsford's 'Know the Landscape' series is intended to give the general reader a broad picture of the evolution and changes to the British farming landscape from Neolithic times to the present. This is quite a tall order; although this study must concentrate on the surviving visual record, it also requires the author to give a brief survey of the underlying economic forces that lay behind the physical changes to the structure and appearance of British farms. Both tasks are fairly well accomplished even though there is an inevitable concentration on the more imposing and enduring work carried out by the large estates. The volume is divided into two parts, one covering the evolved landscape and the other the reclaimed landscape. The part on the evolved landscape contains ten chapters, each around ten pages long and with between five and ten illustrations. These are taken from modern and contemporary maps, aerial and terrestrial photographs, archaeological plans, and artists' impressions based on excavations. Some of the pictures are also taken from exhibits at farm parks and museums – establishments which will also provide important retail outlets for this volume. One of the strengths of the book is that particular attention is given to documentary sources, together with a warning on page 76 that some of them do not always mean what they say, for instance where estate maps show archaic field structures for legal purposes, whereas the land itself was actually farmed differently. The part devoted to the reclaimed landscape is much shorter, with a national listing of important reclamations followed by two case studies. One of these is the duke of Bedford's work on the Thorney Level in Cambridgeshire, and the other is the Leveson-Gower family's transformation of the county of Sutherland.

The coverage is truly a national one with sections on Wales and Scotland, including a specific chapter on them for the eighteenth century. However, for Scotland this is somewhat marred by the use for one of its sources of R. J. Brien's *The Shaping of Scotland*, which is footnoted a number of times in the text but does not appear in the bibliography.

In fact, Brien's study is rather amateurish and the author seems to lean rather too heavily on his simplistic cause and effect relationship between the suppression of the 1745 rebellion and the initiation of improvement. But some use is made of the best part of Brien's book, which is the reproduction on page 94 of William Panton's 1773 map of the run-rigs of the ferm-toun of Craigyloch in Angus, although unfortunately the reproduction here is too small to be easily deciphered and the caption is changed to 'Pant's map of Crigyloch, Perthshire' (*sic*). Usually the text and illustrations are well matched, although the discussion of aisled barns and cruck barns on pages 44–47 is accompanied by three illustrations of the former but the reader has to wait until page 60 for a picture of a cruck barn. However, these are relatively small faults and, taken as a whole, the volume can be recommended as a useful introduction for the uninitiated.

RICHARD PERREN

G. K. NELSON, *Over the Farmyard Gate: Country Life in the 1930s*, Alan Sutton, Stroud, 1995. viii + 168 pp. Illus. £14.99.

This is the latest in a series of books drawn from the author's archive of reminiscences from rural people across the country. While it is true that the 1930s are probably the years that occur most often, the book is in no sense restricted to that decade, or even particularly focussed on it, and contributions range over the whole of the first two thirds of this century.

Over the Farmyard Gate is not an academic study, but it has value as evidence. A few of the contributions are excellent and very thought provoking, especially those on Norfolk and Lancashire. The organization of the harvest in Norfolk is intricately delineated and reveals many fascinating features, especially the strong remnants of yearly hiring for the horsemen despite contracts that apparently had abandoned the practice. The Lancastrian cattle dealer gives by far the best and most detailed account I have seen of how the 'flying' dairy herds of the small Pennine farms were kept stocked with cows in milk, by an intricate exchange of newly-calved cattle from Ireland and North Lancashire for dry cows, many of them in calf but not wanted until their output returned to high levels, and others who were past milking and which were slaughtered by the dealer. More generally, insider accounts of the actual transition from horses to tractors are few, and these are the more valuable for the range of views they present. A sense of loss is always balanced by an enthusiasm for the new.

On the other hand, several accounts are too short and unfocused to be of any real value, especially the one on Suffolk which opens the book and

which has little to do with ordinary farming. The extensive use of photographs is interesting, but too many towards the end are of dubious value either because of lack of adequate provenance or from being evidently posed. Even so, the number of images of early tractor work is exceptional, and this is a subject given very inadequate coverage in most books. Generally, there is no index, no attempt to set the accounts in a realistic context, and no indication of whether they are written or oral in origin, or of what editing has been done. The general standard of proof-reading is not high, but more importantly, there seems to have been a disaster during the preparation of the text for the book is plagued at page breaks by duplications of lines, and even worse, the omission of unknown amounts of text. An interesting short contribution on dairy farming in Somerset is nearly destroyed by a series of such errors.

S A CAUNCE

EDWARD HART, *Heavy Horses: An Anthology*, Alan Sutton, Stroud, 1994. x + 214 pp. £14.99.

This book is exactly what the title says, a collection of short pieces about breeding and working heavy horses. A few take us back to the sixteenth century, but most cover the period from the late nineteenth century through to the present day, during which the famous breeds have been created and guarded by their breed societies. Edward Hart himself is the largest contributor through introductory pieces and fragments, but a variety of authors have contributed reminiscences and poems as well as descriptive sections. Photographs and other illustrations are interspersed through the text.

Considering the fascination these majestic animals exercise at heavy horse centres, at agricultural shows, and delivering beer, it is strange how little of general interest has been written about them. Considering the importance of draught horses as the more flexible half of a vital partnership with the steam engine until about 1930, it is remarkable how little has been written about them by historians. This book is obviously aimed at the enthusiast and the general reader, many of whom will doubtless be led to the more detailed work that lies behind the fragments. It is not intended to fill the second, though for anyone interested there are plenty of thought-provoking elements that suggest lines of enquiry worth pursuing.

Although there are elegiac pieces, it also gives some indication of the dangers and discomforts of working with horses that are easily overlooked by the nostalgic. It also covers the macabre 1950s when the horse population collapsed as mechanization finally exploded in agriculture. However, whereas a book of twenty years ago would have ended

gloomily, this records a dramatic revival, and even if the Shires and Clydesdales are much altered from their glory days, there is no longer a danger of actual extinction. This is of course almost entirely a hobby boom, an odd end for working horses, but at least survival seems assured.

S A CAUNCE

R A OTTER, ed, *Civil Engineering Heritage: Southern England*, and E A LABRUM, ed, *Civil Engineering Heritage: Eastern and Central England*, Telford Services Ltd, London, 1994. each 256 pp. Illus. £12.50 pbk.

These two volumes are part of four covering England and Wales on a regional basis. Each dips into the comprehensive archives which have been developed over the past twenty-five years or so by members of the Institution of Civil Engineers' Panel for Historical Engineering Works. The archive itself, which covers the whole of the British Isles, is maintained in the Library of the Institution's headquarters at Westminster. The selected site reports are presented in a clear and readable way, and are geographically related in simple numerical succession on local maps. The system as such is suitable for the armchair browser, the student and the tourist.

In the preface to the *Southern England* volume civil engineering is described as 'the design, construction and maintenance of a nation's infrastructure', and (perhaps unexpectedly) as including the 'construction of a very wide range of industrial and domestic buildings'. This is reflected in the wide range of material presented in both volumes, including prehistoric and medieval sites and monuments. The site reports themselves are generally adequate, and sometimes excellent, when describing 'mainstream' and well-understood civil engineering subjects such as lighthouses, bridges, canals and railway viaducts, but the coverage of what may be broadly described as industrial archaeology monuments and sites is much less assured, and the selection of what to include and exclude in this field appears to be quite haphazard.

In Hampshire, section 6, *Southern England*, Eling Tide Mill is featured, but the reader searches in vain for reference to Whitchurch Silk Mill, Bursledon Windmill, Twyford Waterworks or the Bursledon Brickworks Project. This is not to suggest that these require separate entries, but they are sufficiently important regionally to warrant a mention. More seriously, there appears to be no rationale for the list of windpowered grain mills featured in the *Eastern and Central England* volume. Inexplicable exclusions in Humberside, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire include Skidby Windmill near Hull, the only working windmill

north of the river Humber, Wrawby postmill near Brigg, Ellis' Mill, Lincoln, a small three-storey tower mill set between two terraces of dwellings on Lincoln Edge, and Green's Mill, Sneinton, Nottingham, which is a dynamic, avowedly-educational, 'working' flour mill. Inexplicably included is Cley towermill, North Norfolk, which is at best a picturesque house-conversion. Though externally complete with sails and a 'dummy' fantail, it is bereft of internal machinery and cannot be visited by the public. In short, the page-space occupied by this windmill would have been better taken up with something more appropriate. Generally, these windmill reports are derivative and based on secondary and out-of-date sources. In most cases more accurate historical information could have been gained from a perusal of recent editions of individual windmill guides.

In conclusion the two volumes are generally interesting and readable as a source for 'mainstream' and well-understood civil engineering subjects, and are recommended to those who wish to find out more about these in the two regions concerned. However, they are less useful for those interested in both a selective and a comprehensive view of the history of a region's built environment.

GAVIN BOWIE

LYNDON R SHEARMAN, *Portable Steam Engines*, Shire Publications, Shire Album No 163, 1995. 32 pp. Illus. £2.25 pbk.

This book is a reprint of the volume first published in 1986. It has worn well, providing a succinct

description of what portable engines were and how they worked. For the uninitiated, a 'portable' is a steam engine mounted on wheels, which can be pulled or pushed to different locations. It thus differs from the traction engine or steam tractor, both of which are self-propelling.

Shearman is concerned mainly with the technical development of these engines, which is described well and simply; this book is designed to be read by a wider audience than just the steam enthusiasts. For the agricultural historian, there is a section on the historical use of the portable, acknowledging that most of them were used for threshing. Steam threshing is included amongst the illustrations, which are a strong point in the Shire series. There is an excellent selection of illustrations (37 in all), chiefly old photographs. For the industrial historian, there is a reminder of the long history of the portable. The first intended for agricultural use (by Trevithick, in 1811) was a premature development, and the portable did not achieve popularity until the 1840s. But it was still being made in some quantity in the late 1930s, and a few were still being made in the 1960s. Since then, they (including the author's own machine) have been the subject of the steam preservationist movement, for which the historian can only be grateful. Finally, attention may be drawn to the excellent value for money offered by this book and by the Shire series as a whole.

PETER DEWEY