

## Book Reviews

E A WRIGLEY, R S DAVIES, J E OEPPE and R S SCHOFIELD, eds, *English Population History from Family Reconstitution, 1580-1837* CUP, 1997. xxii + 657 pp. £60.

Of all the funded research projects into economic and social history during recent decades that of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure has surely been the most fruitful. When work began in the 1960s the study of historical demography was in its infancy, its basis marked by uncertainty and its methodology primitive. The publication of E A Wrigley and R S Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: a reconstruction* in 1981 marked the completion of a new era of rigorous enquiry and firm answers to basic questions. Meanwhile, numerous books and articles and the creation of a flourishing society and a journal had placed historical demography at the forefront of research into British economic and social history. The publication of the present book reinforces the sense of massive advance in the subject. It uses the technique of family reconstitution to obtain accurate and detailed information about fertility, mortality and nuptiality in the period before civil registration, when Anglican parish registers were the prime source available.

*The Population History of England* was based on the aggregative analysis of 404 parish registers. If that seems a small proportion of the 10,000 or so ancient parishes, then the sample of 26 parishes for this companion volume will seem tiny indeed. They are scattered widely but do not cover the Welsh border counties and only three are from northern England. Agrarian historians who are accustomed to regional variety will naturally question this distribution, but the problem is one that is discussed at some length in Part I and the authors reasonably argue that their results are consistent not only across the sample but with the findings of their previous work. They take the view that their parishes are 'broadly representative of the country as a whole'.

Part II, which forms the core of the book, deals in turn with the detailed findings concerning nuptiality, mortality and fertility. The evidence confirms the previous conclusion that average ages at marriage were fairly high in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries but fell sharply in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. The extent of the fall was about three years from peak to trough. This resulted in a marked increase in overall fertility. A steep rise in illegitimate fertility and a surge in general fertility occurred at the same time. The importance of nuptiality change in influencing population trends is clear. It appears to have been

remarkably uniform both geographically and according to social and economic grouping. The authors claim that 'the timing and extent of the fall in marriage age was not greatly different between, say, agricultural parishes and small market towns, nor between different regions'. There is a hint that the fall in the age of marriage was greater in parishes with a growing rural handicraft industry than elsewhere, 'but uniformity rather than variety of experience is the predominant impression'. Their sample of 26 parishes does not, however, include any of the industrial towns which grew so quickly from the end of the seventeenth century. This growth was not entirely due to immigration; the age at marriage in places such as Sheffield, Birmingham, Nottingham and Manchester may have fallen a generation or two before the country at large. The sample used in the present work relates only to rural parishes and small market towns.

The prime role of nuptiality change in determining population trends seems certain. Another earlier finding that has been confirmed is that early-modern England 'was largely free from devastating brief mortality shocks of the kind that occurred in some countries until a much later date'. The 1550s, 1680s and late 1720s were the worst decades. The broad picture, however, masks the fact that infectious diseases were likely to strike particular places at any time. Death rates do not appear to have altered much, except in brief periods of crisis, until they began to fall steadily in the 1740s. The contribution of this fall to the general rise in population was not as great as that of lower ages at marriage.

The family reconstitution approach that is employed here does far more than confirm previous findings. For example, it is particularly useful in charting the relative changes in infant and child mortality. In the early seventeenth century first month mortality was substantially higher than mortality between the third month and the end of the second year, but by the early nineteenth century it was less than half as high. Such patterns were invisible when aggregative analysis was used. The present volume therefore provides new insights and (in the Conclusion) suggests further avenues of research. The foundations of the subject have been firmly laid, but much interesting work remains to be done.

The section on fertility demonstrates how 'apparently small changes in the mean age of marriage could result in substantial swings in fertility', especially as many marriages were cut short by early deaths. The authors again stress 'the remarkable homogeneity of the patterns to be observed in the

data for individual parishes'. The insignificant differences between regions and economic and social groups can be explained as random variation. This leads to the interesting conclusion that as fertility was heavily influenced by social conventions local cultural differences were more muted in England than on the continent. This thought clearly poses challenges to agrarian historians. The whole tenor of the work of the CAMPOP group has been to stress broad similarities throughout the country and to play down local and regional differences. How can local societies be so different in some ways – work, speech, religious allegiance – and yet be so similar in others? The unique role of London and the integrated nature of the national economy are part of the explanation of England's relative homogeneity, but the question is a perplexing one that probably has many answers, all hedged with qualifications. Wrigley *et al* are adamant that the marked differences in fertility patterns on the continent are not observable when comparing say Yorkshire and Devon. Their findings are so consistent and so rigorously tested that they must command respect.

DAVID HEY

BRUCE A BAILEY, ed, *Northamptonshire in the Early Eighteenth Century: The Drawings of Peter Tillemans and Others*, Northamptonshire Record Society, 1996. 221 pp. Illus. £17 + £4 p and p. Northamptonshire is a fine county and is doubly fortunate to have had a historian, John Bridges, and an artist, Peter Tillemans, to describe and illustrate it in the early eighteenth century. Though Bridges's *History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire* was not published until 1791, the drawings, of which few were engraved, have only now been brought together in this handsome volume by the Northamptonshire Record Society.

There is a wealth of material here for the historian and the antiquary. Although the focus of Tillemans and others was on the buildings and their contents, the countryside played an important part in Tillemans's prospects. He shows us landscapes of enclosed fields (eg Rothwell) with, here and there, survivals of ridge and furrow (Boughton House and Clifford Hill). However, the figure in the landscape is not his concern and the seasonal tasks of the farming and gardening year are not portrayed. True, we see the shepherd with his flock before Oundle and the local hunts outside Aynho and Northampton, but these vignettes are only foreground fillers.

The tree planting and the avenues around the country houses help us to focus on their Dutch-style gardens of terraces, topiary and vases – a style well known to Tillemans, a citizen of Antwerp. He

allows us to enjoy the past glories of Barton Seagrave, Drayton House, Horton, Lamport and Easton Neston. Apart from this formality, the garden historian will view with interest the more ragged way that fruit trees and shrubs were encouraged to cling to the very houses themselves. Steane and Stoke Bruerne provide good examples. Inside Easton Neston and in the gardens the artist provides us with a superb record of the Arundel Marbles which then adorned the place and now grace the Ashmolean Museum.

The fine prospects of Northamptonshire's towns – Higham Ferrers, Rothwell, Oundle, Kettering, Northampton and Peterborough – give a wealth of topographical information, since lost or stranded in urban sprawl. Windmills are especially notable. The townscape of Peterborough is accompanied with excellent drawings of the exterior and interior of the cathedral. How much more texture and intimacy is achieved in pencil and wash! Finally, there are the delights of the county's lovely parish churches, with their fittings, monuments, heraldry and stained glass – a joy to every ecclesiologist.

All the drawings have an illuminating commentary by Bruce Bailey, a native of the county. Occasionally he could be clearer in describing what has been lost and what survives. The introduction is also useful in tracing the development of Bridge's *History* and the eventual passage of Tillemans's illustrations to the British Library. An appreciation of Tillemans in an art historical context would have been welcome. He was among the last in a line of visiting topographical artists, from Hoefnagel and Hollar to Siberechts, Knyff and Kip. He and they strongly influenced the Buck brothers and the subsequent English landscape artists.

The book is a credit to the Northamptonshire Record Society and a worthy tribute to the late Sir Gyles Isham who initially inspired it.

TREVOR BRIGHTON

TOM BARRY and DOUGLAS HALL, *Spottiswoode: Life and Labour on a Berwickshire Estate 1753–1793*, Tuckwell Press, East Lothian, 1997. xxiii + 180 pp. 21 plates. £14.99.

This informative local study is centred on the John Spottiswoode who lived from 1711 to 1793, the owner of the Berwickshire estate of the same name, standing on the southern edge of Lammermuir. The book falls into two equal parts, and the first part by Douglas Hall traces the history and background of the Spottiswoode family down to the break-up of the estate in the inter-war years. The mansion itself, built in 1834 but incorporating an older house, was demolished in 1938. The John Spottiswoode who is the main subject of the book was trained in the law, exhibited scholarly tastes,

and showed a strong interest in the architectural and agricultural improvement of his estate.

For agricultural historians the second part of the book, by Tom Barry, may hold the greater interest. It consists of an extended commentary on a surviving diary-cum-ledger which covers the years 1753 to 1793 and which, Mr Barry argues, justifies giving Spottiswoode a place among the leading Scottish improvers of his time.

The commentary traces the work which was carried out for the laird by a number of craftsmen and farmworkers who were employed for varying periods of years. Their terms of employment included payment partly in cash and partly in kind, including such benefits as a house, grassing for a cow or some sheep, meal, and even a pair of shoes – evidently an item of importance – or cash in lieu. Some were described as masons and executed various types of stone work and building, as well as other tasks. The cash payments were often made infrequently, and fairly substantial sums might be accumulated by the time the employee left the estate or died.

One of the most interesting features of the record is the numerous transactions entered into between the laird and his men. Evidently he purchased items in bulk which he retailed to them, such as herrings, barley for meal, nails, wool, and even snuff. But some transactions moved in the opposite direction with the laird purchasing goods which his people had produced on their holdings or in their workshops. There is much incidental information on such matters as the coins and weights and measures in use, as well as on farm implements and equipment.

Spottiswoode was clearing waste land or stones and bringing it into cultivation, but although James Small was developing his new light plough in the 1760s at Blackadder Mount, not far away, there is no mention of its early adoption by Spottiswoode. Indeed, from the surviving evidence produced here it is difficult to assess Spottiswoode's status as a progressive landlord and farmer. Mr Barry emphasizes the backwardness of the Scottish economy and farming environment at this time but we need to have some details of other comparable estates to come to a firm conclusion. At the least, however, we have here a very interesting and worthwhile study which throws much light on the conditions in the district in the later eighteenth century.

G E MINGAY

A F J BROWN, *Prosperity and Poverty: Rural Essex, 1700–1815*, Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, 1996. vii + 203 pp. £9.95.

A F J Brown's name is synonymous, of course, with the history of modern Essex, and with this

volume he adds further to his accomplishments in this field. His new book is wide-ranging and informed by formidable local knowledge based on a wide variety of sources. While not lacking in the essential background of economic circumstances and population growth, his main features include discussions of the social structure and variety of occupations in Essex villages. Major changes resulted from the decline of the county's cloth industry and the expansion of farming from the middle eighteenth century. The depression of the 1730s was relieved in Essex by its proximity to the London market, which extended its influence to the processing of agricultural produce, as evidenced by the spread of large-scale milling and malting.

Successful farmers had interests in these trades together with others, and the farming prosperity of the later eighteenth century influenced a variety of crafts and trades as well as the growth of shop-keeping. Farms got larger and small farms declined as the biggest men came to occupy groups of separate large holdings; correspondingly, the numbers of farmworkers grew as farming became more large-scale and more intensive. Farm servants were in decline by the later part of the century, at the same time as labourers' incomes came under pressure, with consequences for food riots and resort to the poor law. The picture is a well-rounded one, with material on housing, clothing, fairs and sport, as well as many other aspects of the period.

The Essex gentry are shown to be fluid in composition, and in their entering and leaving the county. Among the many families brought to our notice is one of those who sprang from local origins, the Strutts of Terling (later to be leading exploiters of the London dairy market and eminent cattle breeders). Many, however, came from outside the county, from London and elsewhere, like the redoubtable Bamber Gascoyne, described in his obituary as 'plain, rough, and impetuous', while another was the Revd. Henry Bate Dudley, an improving landlord and active magistrate, who claimed to have once killed a fox on the roof of Creaksea church.

The book is rounded off by very interesting accounts of the Church, tithes, and nonconformity, the work of parish officials, and the variety of ways in which Essex was affected by the French Wars. The Church was not very active in promoting schools, and the majority of the county's children were catered for in Sunday schools the briefly fashionable schools of industry, and more largely numerous private schools which in 1810 had some 7000 pupils). The affluence of the larger farmers in the late eighteenth century was reflected in their patronising relatively expensive boarding schools. Although the Wars exerted their well-known effects

on prices, harvests, and labour supply, the military precautions, particularly evident in the coastal districts of the county, seem to have had relatively little impact on rural life.

To sum up, Mr Brown's new book is more than a general history of his county's countryside: all those interested in the period will find much that is enlightening and will appreciate the insights, the detail and the numerous examples and quotations as revealing the enormous variety of country life and its people.

G E MINGAY

RAFAEL DOMÍNGUEZ MARTÍN, *El campesino adaptivo: campesinos y mercados en el norte de España, 1750-1880*, Universidad de Cantabria/Asamblea Regional de Cantabria, Santander, 1996. 333 pp. no price given.

IÑAKI IRIARTE GOÑI, *Bienes comunales y capitalismo agrario en Navarra, 1855-1935*, Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación, Madrid, 1997. 495 pp. no price given.

Spain is truly a fertile land when it comes to the publication of detailed and original monographs on just about every aspect of that country's rural past. Thanks in no small part to the generosity of the Ministry of Agriculture, the seventeen regional governments and the universities, a remarkable amount of high quality research keeps finding its way to scholar's bookshelves. Much of this new material first saw the light of day as a doctoral thesis in Spain's burgeoning university system. And, not surprisingly, given Spanish academia's latterday penchant for local studies in agricultural history, in common with other disciplines such as geography and social anthropology, a sizeable portion of recent publications have gone to fill many a gap in our defective knowledge about a particular region of the Iberian Peninsula. In addition, the growing tendency among Spanish doctoral candidates to survey the literature far and wide in search of the most useful theoretical approach usually leads to a full frontal assault on any lazy preconceptions we might have about such old chestnuts as Spain's much trumpeted rural 'stagnation' or the perennial ignorance and inertia of peasants south of the Pyrenees in the face of constantly changing market conditions. In the case of the two books in front of me, the two young researchers in question also set out to challenge any tired old beliefs I might have on the atypicality of agricultural life in various parts of northern Spain by comparison with generally accepted national trends.

Rafael Domínguez Martín's account of peasants and the market in Cantabria covers the period from the final years of the *ancien régime* down to the agricultural crisis at the end of the nineteenth. In a

well researched and genuinely interdisciplinary study, he shows how peasant proprietors in Galicia, Asturias, Santander and the maritime provinces of the Basque Region – a region largely characterized by its plethora of tiny uneconomic plots of land – were nevertheless far from blinkered their outlook and responded surprisingly well to increasing market opportunities for their products. Rejecting traditional views of rural self-sufficiency, which portray peasant farmers as eking out the most miserable of existences based on meagre yields of maize, potatoes and vegetables supplemented by a few scraggy pigs or cattle, Domínguez Martín confirms the rise of both dairy farming and stock rearing for domestic consumption and international trade. Perhaps his most significant contribution to the debate on the extent of rural change south of the Pyrenees at this crucial moment in the evolution of capitalist agriculture is to place Cantabrian peasants in the vanguard of integration into the evolving market for agricultural products.

In similar vein, the insertion into the growing market for landed property of the communal forests of Navarre is the subject of Iñaki Iriarte's exhaustive study. This tidily constructed work extends from the famous Madoz Act of 1855, which allowed for the disentailing of common lands, down to the Spanish Civil War. Ultra-catholic Navarre – a prime focus of opposition to the new Liberal order in nineteenth-century Spain – is often considered by legal historians and many geographers as a case apart. Yet, thanks to extensive archival research, Iriarte is able to demonstrate a much more complex relationship between public and private property than has been hitherto suspected. In essence, he argues, the varied agents of the centralising Spanish state showed a surprisingly flexibility in their approach to land sales. Many recent synthetic approaches to the economic history of modern Spain have tended to heap blame on the agricultural sector for its supposed abject failure in almost all of the modernizing tasks assigned to it by conventional economic theory. Yet these two detailed and innovative studies do much to reject some of the more 'heroic' assumptions about immobilism and stagnation in the Spanish countryside – even in those regions where we might least expect it.

JOSEPH HARRISON

A D M PHILLIPS, ed, *The Staffordshire Reports of Andrew Thompson to the Inclosure Commissioners, 1858-68: Landlord Investment in Staffordshire Agriculture in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, Staffordshire Record Society, 1996. viii + 158 pp. £15.

The Inclosure Commissioners of the latter half of the nineteenth century, though initially set up to

pronounce upon the acceptability of proposals to enclose land, gradually acquired other responsibilities as time went on, and this book by Tony Phillips arises from one of these. When government loans were made available to landowners to underdrain land or rebuild farms, responsibility for ensuring that schemes were properly devised, and the money properly used, fell upon the Commissioners, who employed local agents to investigate. Andrew Thompson was one such agent, and his reports on schemes in Staffordshire take up approximately half of this volume.

These reports give a significant insight into the agricultural state of the county in the second half of the nineteenth century. Thompson appears to have been a careful observer and, unlike some agricultural writers of the time, a cautious and hard-headed judge of both the value of the land and the potential benefits to be gained by 'improvements'.

Tony Phillips is described as the editor of the work, but this seems unduly modest, for a good half of it consists of his own commentary and context, which for the general reader is the most interesting part of the book. He uses the reports as a basis for comparison with other sources, and provides a liberally-illustrated discussion of the agriculture of Staffordshire before and during the period when Thompson was operating. By using the tithe material, the Ministry of Agriculture's Annual Returns, and a range of other sources, he integrates the material contained in the reports into a more general picture, showing the overall trends, and the need for the improvements upon which Thompson was making his judgements. Phillips concludes that Staffordshire agriculture was in a markedly less healthy situation in the period 1850-70 than other commentators would suggest, and had made less progress in adapting to the economic situation of the second half of the nineteenth century. As a consequence, the improvements were much needed. He demonstrates that smaller estates, in particular, provided little of their own capital for these improvements, and that even substantial landowners may have done relatively little over the earlier part of the century.

As with any source, however, one must ask questions. Phillips himself points out that Thompson emerges from the reports as a man with very clear views on what constituted a proper scheme of drainage, or what formed the best plan for a farm-house and its buildings. It is also clear that he was quite prepared to use his position as, effectively, the judge of whether the loan should or should not be made to impose his views on the applicants, who had little choice but to comply. One wonders whether his judgement was always

so good, and what some of the recipients of his 'advice' thought of him.

The series of which this forms part is described as 'Collections for a History of Staffordshire', but this study of the source and its use may stimulate researchers to make use of it in other counties, and to look for survivals of similar material elsewhere. Thompson's reports appear to have been preserved by accident, as copies amongst his personal papers, but his work alone stretched far beyond the county to include much of the Midlands, with occasional forays as far afield as Durham and Essex. There must be a good deal to be gained from Thompson's papers for other areas. If similar papers survive from other reporters they could be of significant value elsewhere. A full picture of how these men influenced the types of schemes which were accepted, and hence what was and was not done in the way of drainage and farmhouse building would be a most interesting one. Tony Phillips has provided a useful service in drawing attention to the survival and utility of this material.

JOHN CHAPMAN

EWEN A CAMERON, *Land for the People? The British Government and the Scottish Highlands, c 1880-1925*, Tuckwell Press, Phantassie, East Lothian, 1996. x+221 pp. £25.00.

This volume is the second in a series sponsored by the Scottish Historical Review Trust which aims to publish works of scholarly research covering all aspects of Scottish history. Ewen Cameron's study has already gained the distinction of being joint winner of the Hume Brown Senior Prize in Scottish History in 1995. It focuses on a period noted for important policies and legislation on landholdings and settlement in the Highlands.

The introduction emphasizes that previous studies have tended to be highly emotional accounts and have concentrated on events associated with the Crofters' Act of 1886. The period between the mid-1880s and the inter-war years have largely been neglected. Considerable weight is also given to criticism of the limited range of sources that have been consulted and so it is not surprising that the introduction includes a detailed critique of sources. This section and the comprehensive and well-organized bibliography will leave the reader in no doubt about Cameron's commitment to producing a monograph based on a thorough investigation of the widest range of source material available.

The eight chapters are concerned with the policies of the various governments of the period - Liberal, Conservative and Coalition, the views of Highland landed society, the aspirations as well as the agitation for land from among the tenantry (crofters and cotters) and the achievements of bodies

such as the Congested Districts Board (CDB) which were set up to create larger holdings in those areas where population pressure was particularly acute. The chapters examine the impact of four major pieces of legislation: The Crofters' Holdings Act (1886), The Congested Districts Act (1897), The Small Landholders Bill (1911) and The Land Settlement Act (1919).

The simplistic view that this legislation was the outcome of a consistent strategy aimed at tackling fundamental problems of Highland agriculture is roundly dismissed. While the 1886 Act was intended to provide a solution to over-crowding, it and subsequent statutes each seems to have created political tensions rather than facilitated a collective will among the different parties to constructively debate and seek solutions to common problems. Consequently, while the objective of land redistribution remained central to policy making, the administrative structures, the methods of achieving this goal and the priority of Highland land in the national political agenda changed at fairly frequent intervals.

Chapter 1 deals with the background of the personalities and events surrounding the Napier Commission and the 1886 Act, a piece of legislation which attempted to satisfy the majority of crofters and persuade moderate landowners to make voluntary concessions particularly, the provision of more land for small tenants. The difficulties encountered by the Crofters' Commission is the focus for chapter 2. Its early years were spent grappling with a heavy workload and it was under pressure to visit as many estates as possible to review rent levels. Yet once this backlog was cleared, it became apparent that it lacked a clear-cut role and by the 1890s much of its work was consultative and in the first decade of the twentieth century it was investigating social conditions in Lewis and Uist.

The different policies of the Liberal and Conservative administrations of the 1880s and 1890s are highlighted in chapter 3. Between 1888 and 1892, the Conservative strategy for Highland development embraced the fishing industry and transport improvements at a time when crofter agitation for further land reform had died down. The author notes how little was achieved by these non-agrarian initiatives, however the record of the Liberal administration that followed was equally disappointing. Better economic conditions meant that pressure from amongst the crofting community remained at a low level, but more telling was the failure of the Scottish Secretary to prioritize Scottish issues and the distraction of the Irish Home Rule issue pushed the Highlands down the political agenda. In chapter 4, Cameron notes that the Conservative election campaigns in 1895 and 1900 embodied strong criti-

cism of the Liberals neglect of the Highlands. The creation of the CDB in 1897 to purchase landed estates for sub-division among crofters and cotters can be seen as one attempt to redress the situation. Unfortunately, the Board lacked powers of compulsory purchase while notions of aiding crofters to migrate from the most overcrowded districts founded on the attachment of the people to the land and the belief that migration was too similar to the clearances experienced at the beginning of the century. Chapter 5 continues the review of the Board's work, this time under a Liberal government (1906-1911). It focuses on efforts to persuade the crofters of the Kilmuir estate in Skye, acquired in 1904, to purchase their lands and the consequences of a land raid for potato ground by crofters from Barra on the small neighbouring island of Vatersay. Both episodes demonstrate the difficulties faced by the CDB while operating under a different administration. Kilmuir highlighted the unpopularity of the concept of land purchase among the crofters, and landed disapproval for liberal policy persuaded the owner of Vatersay to sell the island and its problems to the CDB.

In chapter 6, the House of Lords opposition to the Small Landholders Bills in 1906 and 1908 are contrasted with the passing of a private member's bill in 1911. This act abolished the Crofters Commission and the CDB whose rules were taken over by the Board of Agriculture for Scotland (BoAS) and the Scottish Land Court. The following chapter deals with mechanisms by which small holding schemes could come into operation and it goes on to explain that the low success of the scheme can be attributed to a lack of suitable farms, wartime staff shortages and the all too familiar lukewarm political support for the BoAS.

The 1919 Act (chapter 8) is notable for having cross-party backing. The new act also embraced elements of previous legislation notably the creation of new holdings and the opportunity for crofters to become the owners of their holdings. The author notes more activity coupled with more demand articulated by local activists to put pressure on the authorities. Although the 1920s are shown to have been something of a golden age in terms of achievement, more land would have been re-distributed but for the Treasury's disquiet over expenditure. The board displayed considerable skill in emphasizing the potentially volatile situation that existed in the Highlands if the aspirations of crofters were frustrated.

The story of land in the Scottish Highlands and Islands is certainly a complex one. Ewen Cameron's account is lucid, meticulously researched and robustly argued. He strikes a balance between the national political debate and what was happening

on individual estates and in particular islands. The parts played by the different actors: national political figures and Highland MPs, propagandists, administrators, landed proprietors, crofters, land raiders and policemen are skilfully addressed. His conclusions are an admirable assessment of the contribution made by each phase of legislation and what was achieved in a temporal and spatial context. Finally, the bibliography, like the text, is comprehensive and clearly structured. Ewen Cameron's study has set a very high standard indeed and deserves to be widely read. It is to be hoped that further authoritative volumes on the Scottish countryside will be published in the Scottish Historical Review Monograph Series.

DOUGLAS GRANT LOCKHART

HUGH CLOUT, *After The Ruins: Restoring the Countryside of Northern France after the Great War*, University of Exeter Press, 1996. 300 pp. Illus. £35.

The modern visitor to north-eastern France, whether bent on visiting battlefield sites or not, may sometimes wonder at the contrast between the smooth landscapes seen through car or train window, and the jagged hell excavated by men and high explosives which is preserved in memory and film. How was the latter transmogrified into the former? This is Hugh Clout's concern, and the result is a fascinating exercise in historical research.

The dimensions of the task at the Armistice were enormous. The ten invaded and battle-torn *Departments* constituted 12 per cent of the total land area of France, and, according to the *Ministère des Régions Libérées*, 3.4 million hectares were devastated. To be sure, a large part of this (some 1.7 mn ha) needed only simple clearance of shells and military installations to be more or less usable as farmland, but this in itself would be an enormous task; by 1922, 20.8 million tonnes of munitions had been destroyed (at the cost of many lives).

The reconstruction which Clout has unearthed did not have a grand plan at its centre. Although the state had early (in 1914) assumed the unprecedented responsibility for compensating those suffering wartime loss, it was never intended that the state or official labour should play a long-term role in the process of reconstruction. Accordingly, the process divides into two: state involvement in clearing and levelling land, restoring drainage, and providing temporary accommodation for the worst cases, which phase was largely over by 1922; and subsequently leaving the task to private initiative, either by individual *sinistres* (those who had suffered loss), or by reconstruction cooperatives who provided a more coordinated and probably more efficient effort.

The first phase had its critics; much of the labour employed seems to have been inefficient, and sometimes lawless; the *sinistres* were plagued by an excess of paperwork, occasionally falling prey to freelance advisers, who, for a fee, would negotiate with the state on their behalf; much of the temporary accommodation erected was of very inferior quality (roofing made from tarred cardboard was used to excess); and in the winter of 1919-20, many farmers were living in cellars or in makeshift shelters dug into the ground. But state help included such things as setting up light railway lines for the clearance of war material and the shipping of building materials, the use of some 2000 motor tractors, and the restoration of some of the livestock and implements stolen by the invaders. Above all, much of the land clearance had already been achieved; by the start of 1921, some 2.5 mn ha (three-quarters of the final figure, in 1931) had been cleared of shells. Apart from state aid direct, much had been achieved by the amazing energy and ingenuity of individual farmers, so that some 1.0 mn ha of devastated land was reported to be ready for cultivation at the start of 1921.

From the early 1920s until 1931 (when reconstruction was adjudged complete), the field was left to private and local community initiative. In this phase, unfinished business from the emergency period was concluded, and the long-term task of rebuilding houses and farmsteads tackled. Much was done by cooperatives of *sinistres*. Some of their rebuilding stories were very impressive (eg, at Ancerville, near Luneville, p 219), although progress was uneven in the devastated regions as a whole.

Two notable features of the rebuilding were the persistent pressure on local government to minimize the total of land declared beyond reclamation, and the success of the *sinistres* in ensuring that the rebuilding restored the environment to its former state, as near as possible. There was little desire to take the opportunity to modernize, in the sense of evolving some town-planned form of commune, although a few *cités-jardins* made their appearance, and the rebuilt farmsteads were more hygienic, since they separated humans from animals. It was also notable that the opportunity to consolidate the scattered French farm holdings was resisted: *morcellement* continued, and *remembrement* was rarely tried. The reasons for this are not clear; fear of losing out in land exchanges and impatience to restart cultivation seem to have been the most powerful forces.

The story told by Clout is full of detail, yet never loses sight of the main themes. It is the product of considerable research in national and *departemental* archives, and fills a notable hole in the history of rural France. It should be added that the

quality of both print and illustrations, is excellent, and the University of Exeter Press are to be congratulated on producing a high-quality book at a reasonable price.

PETER DEWEY

PETER DEWEY, *War and Progress: Britain 1914-1945*,

Longman, 1997. xvii + 377 pp. 4 maps. £17.99. This book is the second to appear in an intended seven-volume general economic and social history of Great Britain. As it is a general study, the space given to agriculture reflects its importance within the economy and society. In 1911 only a very small proportion of the labour force were employed in the sector – as is clearly shown on the first map (pp 2-3) – and after twenty years of peace-time depression and eleven of war-time disruption accompanied by the processes of economic development and structural change, it was even less important by 1945. As a result it is mainly the important landmarks, many of them institutional or legislative, that are noted, such as the sale of agricultural estates after 1918, the Agriculture Act of 1920, its repeal the following year, the difficulties of the 1920s and 1930s, the Agricultural Marketing Acts of the 1930s, and the increased role of British agriculture's contribution to food supply in both world wars. The reasons for these changes are made clear so that the reader can see how these events were driven by forces at work in the wider economy. The most important were the repercussions of changes in world prices for primary products upon British farming, and the emergence of tariff protection after 1930. However, it would be misleading to suggest that only economic factors were operating, as Dewey also mentions the manner in which links between rural society and the land were reduced with increased mechanization on the farm. Other factors were the rise of the tourist industry in some areas, and the increasing use of the countryside as a dormitory area for town workers. As it is a general study, the amount of space given to agriculture is about right, and therefore it is only fair to review this book as a general study, in spite of Peter Dewey being best known to many readers of this journal for his specialist work on British farming in the First World War.

From well before 1914 the daily lives of most were largely affected by developments within the international economy and their impact on the great export industries, as well as changes in the service economy. The coverage of these is good, as it is for the other important topics, such as the enhanced role of government, shifts in social policy, changes in income distribution and the advance of urban society. There are seventeen chapters, beginning with a survey from 1900 to 1914, one chapter

on the First World War, eleven on the interwar years, two on the Second World War and a concluding chapter that takes the form of a national balance sheet for the years 1900 to 1945. The conclusion is that in spite of structural decline of some industries and a worsening Britain's international position, most people experienced an improvement in living standards. This is a thesis that is hardly revolutionary, and it is supported by the preceding chapters.

The 1914-1945 period is not an easy time span to handle as the main part of the book is focused on two decades of peace sandwiched between two major conflicts that proved to be watersheds. Wars are the major discontinuities of the twentieth century, immensely important because of their sudden transformation of the British economy and society, partly accelerating the pace of previous change but also introducing fresh elements into the process. In his treatment of these conflicts Dewey certainly stresses the links between wartime and peacetime conditions and the dual effects of the war on relationships within Britain, and also upon its role and position within the international economy are explored. However, the war economy itself could have benefited from more detailed discussion. Under this heading are the forces behind the development of the inflationary gap in wartime. Inflation is of course mentioned in the context of both wars, as is the rise of government spending and the decline in civilian consumption, but the nature and extent of the unsatisfied demand created by wartime conditions is never fully developed. It is this phenomenon – the shift to the left in the supply curve and the shift to the right in the demand curve – which brought together all the aspects of a wartime economy and made necessary the multiplicity of controls that had to be imposed on civilian consumption and social life and which figure prominently in Dewey's accounts of both wars. Elements of the inflationary process are dealt with in isolation such as 'the large gap between [government] revenue and expenditure' (p 30), but mention of this by itself is likely to cause students to incorrectly identify the budget deficit as the inflationary gap rather than a contributor to it. In the Second World War planners were better informed on such processes, and in March 1941 the cabinet's economic section estimated the likely increase in incomes in the coming financial year at £100 million and the probable reduction in consumer goods and services at £400 million, thus creating an inflationary gap of £500 million. Again, the more efficient control of inflation in the Second World War is described; a process that was presumably helped by the lessons learnt from the First World War. Here it would have helped had the parallels and divergence of economic policy in both wars been contrasted more

strongly, although there is an attempt in the final chapter (pp 330–1) to compare the financial impact of the two wars, largely in terms of government spending.

The whole format of the book, with sub-headings every 1000 to 1500 words or so and punctuated with frequent tables, gives it the appearance of having been written to a design tailored for modular courses. This is a structure that is likely to make it a popular book for students with essays to write, and for those engaged on such enterprises there are enough references to follow up topics in greater detail. With this end in view the bibliography is also helpful as it is divided into over thirty sections, but the quite reasonable decision to have no duplicate entries means that the one on crime contains only three items and E Smithies's study of crime in wartime is to be found in the section on the Second World War. The balance between social and economic topics is equal, although the frequent sub-headings might invite some to conclude there is no need to make any formal link between economic and social history. This would be a pity because the coverage of both is good, and there has certainly been no attempt to neglect the economic factors that underpinned the social changes. Although there are a number of other texts that cover the whole or part of this period of British history, Dewey has produced a text book that has enough substance to capture a good share of this market.

RICHARD PERREN

PETER MANDLER, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*, Yale University Press, 1997. 531 pp. £19.95.

The heritage industry, like it or loathe it, is now an established part of our national life. Every year we individually and collectively visit hundreds of houses, museums and other 'sites' which enjoy protected status of one form or another from the state. Country houses are a particular attraction, many of them lovingly conserved by the (aptly named) National Trust. But why? How has it come to be that these houses, great and small alike, built for and by private owners, are now happily accepted as part of the national heritage? In turn this raises a further question of why and how the English aristocracy – quintessentially rural and agricultural to the core – has so successfully persuaded a dominantly urban and industrial state to take over and finance the upkeep of many of its otherwise redundant houses.

Mandler enters this debate at two levels. The core of the book is simply the story of country house visiting since the early nineteenth century. From his reading in the periodical press, together

with archival material drawn from a range of sources, Mandler constructs a compelling argument which shows that country house visiting has gone through several phases rather than enjoying an exponential rise. The first period of mass interest was in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Houses and gardens were opened to an increasingly wide audience, but this phase did not last and by the late nineteenth century interest in the stately home was in rapid decline. Through the interwar years visitors dwindled to a trickle with only a couple of dozen houses regularly open to the public. The revival began only in the 1950s and 1960s, and then from about 1974 turned into a veritable renaissance which has in turn spawned a minor media industry pioneered by *Brideshead Revisited* and symbolized by BBC Television's *Antiques Roadshow*.

Mandler tells his story well, but he has a wider agenda which is to make a contribution to the modern debate opened up by Robert Hewison a decade ago on 'the heritage industry'. Mandler argues that the fall and rise of the stately home reflects movements and trends in English history more generally. Thus the initial rise in country house visiting reflected an opening up of the market for cultural products, and a particular romantic interest – fuelled by Sir Walter Scott – in houses from earlier times such as Haddon and Hardwick in Derbyshire, Knole and Penshurst in Kent. The decline in interest towards the end of the nineteenth century he attributes to a mixture of political radicalism, anti-aristocratic sentiment expressed particularly through the back to the land movement, and a shift of interest towards seaside resorts and rambling with the growth of the excursion and the holiday. The absence of interest during the inter-war period is difficult to explain, while the modern resurgence of visiting and the growth of the National Trust offers Mandler a challenge to which he does not fully respond. Throughout the book he is handicapped by knowing very little about numbers of visitors, and about their motives, but in the recent past this is surely less so, hence the surprise when he relies on nebulous ideas about anti-urbanism rather than correlating the increase in visits with private car ownership. Mandler's long discourse on government policy and taxation may tell us why the country house has enjoyed a renaissance but it tells us little about the visitors – why, one longs to know, have so many people joined the National Trust since 1970?

It would be churlish to end this review on a negative note. In general this is a splendid book, it tells a fascinating story in a lively and interesting way, and it asks pertinent questions about why such houses – many of them built in European styles of

one sort or another, and filled with artifacts plundered on numerous grand tours and similar journeys – are now being protected as part of the 'national heritage'. Along the way, Mandler raises other interesting questions about the aristocracy generally. In the 1890s W T Stead imagined that they would soon be handing over their houses to successful businessmen and financiers. He was wrong; although many have gone, the majority of those who have survived with their houses intact are a tribute to a group which has successfully struck out against the tide of English history, even if only a few have done so without financial help from the government. Perhaps the last word on this book should be the illustration on the back cover, an 1858 watercolour by E Adveno Brooke of Alton Towers, one of the earliest houses to be opened regularly to the public. In the mid-nineteenth century visitors came to enjoy the landscape features, the fountains and the conservatories: today they come in their thousands to a place every modern child wants to visit, but few of whom associate with a stately home and an English aristocracy!

J V BECKETT

GORDON E CHERRY and ALAN ROGERS, *Rural Change and Planning: England and Wales in the Twentieth Century*, E & F N Spon, 1996. 206 pp. £39.50.

This book is the latest in a long line of distinguished contributions in the *Studies in History, Planning and the Environment* series, jointly edited by Gordon Cherry and Anthony Sutcliffe; it is all the more sad to record Gordon Cherry's death since the completion of this volume. What they have in common, as this amply demonstrates, is a lively historical sense, with which to present and illustrate the work of geographers and planners. This book thus sets in historical context the evolution of planning as it has affected the countryside in the present century.

The story starts with setting the rural context in the early years of this century. At this time, the future fate of the countryside seemed to be predictable; it would be one of continuing decline, in economic importance, in population, and in political influence. 'Ill fares the land' well describes what many felt about things rural. On the other hand, there was an immensely romantic yearning for what were seen as the simplicities and eternal verities of rural life; *Merrie England*, by Robert Blatchford (1894), had sold over a million copies.

Between the wars, the growing concern of government, at all levels, was with urban planning only, with a view to the effective and hygienic

layout of planned urban development; the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1919 was the result, and it did little to influence rural conditions. But outside the towns controversy was growing in a variety of ways, as the modern age obtruded on what many (usually in the towns) felt should approximate to Arcadia; the spread of housing in the urban hinterlands; 'ribbon development'; unregulated housing and industrial or tourist enterprises in beauty spots and seaside areas; the march of electricity pylons; the continuing conflict over walking and access (the Ramblers' Association being formed in 1935).

After 1945, government intervened decisively to influence rural development. The main presupposition of policy was that farming should be protected as it went about its business, since it provided the best means of securing the countryside from unwanted development. Thus the Agriculture Act of 1947, which assured farmers of financial support, was complemented by the Town and Country Planning Act of the same year.

While the first couple of decades thereafter saw this policy largely accepted, there came a time around the 1970s when the political climate changed, and farming was increasingly seen as having a deleterious effect on Arcadia, through the use of pesticides, the removal of hedgerows, the erection of unsightly buildings, and the pollution of watercourses. However, the basic planning structure still remains intact, and agriculture is still largely immune from the attentions of the planners. The new concerns have been met by the creation of a raft of special bodies and mechanisms for the 'designation' of areas in which development (agricultural or other) may be challenged. Mechanisms have been adopted to compensate farmers financially for lost potential profits. The policy of designating certain areas for certain purposes has grown up piecemeal, and along with it many different institutions – Green Belts, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, Nature Reserves, and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. But even these do not provide a cast-iron protection against development if an alternative case can be made sufficiently strongly.

In sum, the record is one of continuous policy adaptation, with a strong democratic element (the planning authorities are elected bodies), and a fair measure of success. At present, the greatest question is whether the planning system will move further in the direction of intervention in the business of how farmers farm their land. The authors are to be congratulated on presenting the history and the issues in such a clear and cogent form.

PETER DEWEY

## Shorter Notices

MAURO AMBROSOLI, *The Wild and the Sown: Botany and Agriculture in Western Europe, 1350-1850*, CUP, 1997. xxiv + 460 pp. 27 plates. £50.00.

This short note is to welcome the English edition of Mauro Ambrosoli's richly textured study of the diffusion of forage-crops in early modern Europe which was first published in Italian in 1992 and reviewed in this journal by S R Epstein two years later (volume 44, part I, 1994, pp 91-2). The author's central concern is with the convoluted history of lucerne. Known and revered in classical times, it disappeared from Italy to be reintroduced in the sixteenth century from Spain; but it never gained much of a following in Britain despite growing publicity. Why this should have been the case is not fully explained. Nevertheless, Ambrosoli reveals in enormous detail the process - both literary and by personal contact - by which botanical knowledge was transmitted from area to area within Europe. For British historians the message is clear: native botanists and agricultural writers owed a great deal to their classical forefathers and to their contemporaries on the Continent; until the eighteenth century the British were followers rather than leaders.

DONALD WOODWARD

F MOUNTFORD, *Heartbreak Farm: A Farmer and His Farm in Wartime*, Sutton Publishing, Stroud, 1997. viii + 144 pp. Illus. £17.99.

This is essentially the story of Frederick 'Ray' Raybould, born into a tenant farming family from the Warwickshire-Worcestershire border in 1899, though his wife Isabel actually takes an equal share of attention for much of the book. The various farms he lived on were classic family holdings of around the hundred acre mark, and all were close to towns. He stands out as an individual only in that during the Second World War he was evicted by the local War Agricultural Executive Committee on fairly specious grounds, losing his place on the farming ladder and never regaining it. Lavishly illustrated with drawings and displaying a strong sense of 'rural heritage', this is not in any sense an academic history, but it is not overly romantic and there are many points of interest, particularly in putting a human face onto agricultural history. It is a good corrective to any tendency to portray Edwardian farmers as a relatively homogeneous group of capitalist employers, for personal and family labour, ruthlessly exploited, was the basis of survival. Raybould was poorly educated even by contemporary standards, and earned a poor living

in terms of disposable income despite the social standing he had as a farmer. His father relentlessly drove himself and his family, so that Raybould described the period after he left school as 'fifteen years of slave labour', without even a wage to show for it. Similarly, the personal difficulties of a farmer's wife, and especially one not born to farming, are well brought out. Similarly, while it is not typical, the eviction shows a side of the war that would be difficult to reconstruct from documents: the human cost of the massive increase in the intensity of agriculture and the dangers of unfettered executive power that such a crisis tends to bring. Altogether, it is worth perusing for anyone with interests in the locality, or in farmers as a class, or the impact of war in agriculture.

STEPHEN CAUNCE

JOHN CANNON, ed, *The Oxford Companion to British History*, OUP, 1997. xii + 1044 pp. £30.00; JACK SIMMONS and GORDON BIDDLE, eds, *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, OUP, 1997. xv + 591 pp. Maps. £45.00.

These two substantial reference works are welcome additions to the widening range of *Oxford Companions*. Over 100 scholars have contributed more than 4000 entries to the volume on British history and 88 scholars have co-operated in writing the 600+ entries on the railways. Each volume is arranged on an A-Z basis, which makes for quick consultation and encourages the reader to browse. The information ranges from the well-known to the esoteric. Did you know that the first circus train was that used in 1872 by Barnum & Bailey in the USA, closely followed by Ringling Bros, or that the first monorail was patented by H R Palmer in 1821? 'Be honest in your answer', as Sellars and Yeatman said.

The volume on the railways naturally has more scope for long entries than the volume which attempts to cover the whole of British history. There are pieces on the various companies, important engineers and chairmen, navvies and railwaymen, places (with maps of each region), the ways in which the system worked, and the social and economic consequences of the railways. The *Companion to British History* is a first point of reference from Roman times to the present day. It contains an enormous range of brief biographies and accounts of events of national importance, but it is by no means restricted to political and constitutional matters, aiming rather to be as comprehensive as space allows. One always wants more, of

course, but these are ambitious volumes that serve their purpose well.

DAVID HEY

THELMA MUNCKTON, *Chancellors Farm Accounts, 1766-1767*, Harry Galloway Publishing, Weston-Super-Mare, 1994. 42 pp. £4.75.

This farm in the Mendip Hills is used by the Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation to train volunteers in conservation. The first year of the accounts (which continue until 1769) have been transcribed, together with a land description of 1754, a map and schedule of c 1829 and the MAF survey of 1941-43.

JAMES S. TALLETT, *Farm Diary: A Daily Record of Work on a Buckinghamshire Farm, 1879-1883*, privately printed, 1996. 93 pp. Maps. Available from the author, 64 Weyland Road, Headington, Oxford, OX3 8PD; no price given.

A day-to-day account of farm work by Thomas Dover of South End, Haddenham, Buckinghamshire at the time of the agricultural depression. The diary ends when Dover retired at the age of 65.

BRENDA J BUCHANAN, ed, *Bath History, VI*, Millstream Books, Bath, 1996. 76pp. Illus. £7.99. Eight essays, including one by J H Bettley on sixteenth-century litigation, and others on the Twerton cloth industry and the Avon Navigation which contain material of interest to agrarian historians.