

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

DAVID STONE, *Decision-making in medieval agriculture* (OUP, 2005). xvii + 303 pp. 20 tables; 27 figs; 2 maps. £55.

About few periods of British agricultural history has thinking changed more in recent years than the middle ages. Comparison of the final chapter of David Stone's *Decision-making in medieval agriculture* with M. M. Postan's classic essay in the second edition of Volume I of the *Cambridge economic history of Europe* (1966) highlights how far this revisionism has now progressed. No longer are medieval husbandmen portrayed as handicapped by inadequate technology, hamstrung by communal regulations, careless and ignorant in their utilization of resources, indifferent to market opportunities, and incapable of obtaining and sustaining satisfactory returns from the land. Instead, they look remarkably similar to their enterprising and commercialized early-modern successors and under the right circumstances appear to have been capable of obtaining productivity results that were by no means inferior. On this reinterpretation it is the continuities rather than the contrasts between medieval and early modern agriculture that are most striking. Seemingly, since at least the thirteenth century, market-determined prices, costs, and rents influenced how the land was occupied, used, and worked; likewise, the decisions made by agricultural producers shaped economic outcomes. Thus, as Stone is at pains to demonstrate in this fresh and meticulously crafted book, it was because medieval owners and managers of seigniorial demesnes were efficiency maximisers that they often opted to produce less than the maximum attainable using existing technology. On this analysis, if crop yields per acre were not high it was usually because it did not pay to raise them; if they fell it was because it paid to invest less in production. In his view demesne managers should therefore be judged by their ability to maintain profits rather than physical productivity, especially when, as over the course of the fourteenth century, environmental and economic conditions were both becoming less favourable. He clearly thinks that much of the time they did a remarkably good job.

At the core of the book, and comprising five of its eight chapters, is a detailed analysis of the wealthy bishop of Ely's huge demesne at Wisbech Barton situated deep in the Cambridgeshire fens, in one of the most economically advantaged and dynamic of agricultural regions but one also unusually susceptible to tempest and flood. Its heroes are the servile tenants who served as reeve and supervised the day-to-day and year-by-year running of the demesne and the bailiffs who oversaw them. In Stone's judgement they maintained operation of this demesne at a remarkably high pitch of efficiency for the better part of a century and successfully surmounted some of the greatest environmental set-backs and economic challenges ever faced by English farmers. It is a story rich in detail and well worth the telling and offers many rewarding insights, both particular and general.

The crucial first and longest episode in this saga – the 'springtide of success' – when the demesne and dependent tenant holdings were reclaimed from the fens, the manor of Wisbech Barton created as an operational unit, and rising prices and falling wages guaranteed easy profits to those who managed the demesne, is largely undocumented. In fact, Wisbech Barton's impressive run of manorial accounts does not start until 1313, which obliges Stone to commence his narrative after the economic tide had turned and with the crisis-ridden period from the agrarian crisis of 1315–22 to the Black Death of 1348–9. He then considers the changing fortunes of this demesne during, successively, the so-called 'Indian summer' for demesne producers that followed the plague; the period of deepening agricultural depression to which this gave way after c. 1375, when producers were squeezed by lower prices and higher wages; and, last, the twilight of direct cultivation between c. 1410 and 1429, when, after almost two hundred years of direct management and unable any longer to recruit loyal and able men as reeves, the bishops finally resorted to a policy of leasing. Each episode is scrutinized and discussed in its own terms while a common framework of analysis ('the sale and consumption of produce', 'cereal-cropping strategies', 'crop rotation and field management', 'agrarian techniques and the maintenance of soil fertility', and 'livestock husbandry') makes it possible to track developments over time. What

unfolds is a story in which yields of crops and, to some extent, of animals and their products, were positively related to product prices but inversely related to the cost of labour. It is a story, too, in which initiative was able to counteract adversity for as long as it was possible to maintain the quality of labour and, above all, the quality of management. When the latter eventually failed, direct management ceased to be tenable.

Three further chapters frame and contextualize the case-study of Wisbech Barton and elaborate upon the role of the market in shaping the decisions made by medieval agricultural producers. Decision-making, it is shown, was typically tightened as profits were squeezed and was often tightest of all when and where profits were narrowest. Almost everywhere, the colder economic climate that set in from the 1290s was followed by managerial reform and retrenchment. Nevertheless, efficient as demesne management necessarily became, Stone believes that land productivity was consistently higher by a margin of at least 10 to 25 per cent on peasant holdings, since how else could a national population at peak of five to six million have been fed from domestic agriculture? This runs counter to the received view of a generation of influential Cambridge historians and challenges the pessimistic Marxist verdict advanced by Robert Brenner and others that peasant yields were inferior to demesne yields because proportionally more of the land cultivated by peasants was of inferior quality and for various reasons many peasants were deficient in capital. Certainly, it would be surprising if the highest medieval yields were not obtained on peasant holdings but it will require more than the handful of examples assembled by Stone to establish that mean yields across the entire peasant sector of more than half a million holdings were better than those obtained on demesnes. Indeed, if such a productivity differential existed why did managerially-efficient lords not prefer to lease their demesnes? In more ways than one *Decision-making in medieval agriculture* consequently looks set to stoke renewed debate of this most critical and controversial of issues.

BRUCE M. S. CAMPBELL
Queen's University, Belfast

JAMES BOND, *Monastic landscapes* (Tempus Publishing, 2004). 304 pp. 33 plates; 115 figs. £25.

It is a commonplace to state that monasteries and nunneries were a familiar part of the medieval landscape. Yet visitors to sites such as the Cistercian abbeys of Fountains in Yorkshire and Tintern in south Wales, or Benedictine Glastonbury, or the former Augustinian church at Osney in Oxford may not immediately consider the impact that religious houses had on the

wider environment in which they were constructed. It may be easy to envisage medieval monks following the timetable laid down by the *Rule of St Benedict*, worshipping in the church that lay at the heart of the monastic complex, reading in the cloister walk, or working in the day room. More recently, however, monastic archaeologists have encouraged us to think beyond the church, cloister, infirmary and abbot's lodgings, and place them at the centre of a much larger complex. In this book, James Bond looks more broadly still at monasteries in the landscape, and his study of the impact of medieval religious houses is wide-ranging and comprehensive. Taking account of documentary, landscape and archaeological evidence, he has produced a book aimed at 'the interested general reader rather than the academic' that is informative and immensely readable.

The book begins with an examination of the acquisition and exploitation of monastic estates, and the reconstruction of the estates of abbeys such as Pershore, Evesham and Shaftesbury, are accompanied by helpful maps. The author is careful to distinguish between the characteristics of the estates of different orders, and to emphasize regional variation and chronological change. Bond then moves on to discuss the evidence for different methods of land exploitation: arable farming and the production of cereal crops; the rearing of livestock, and the management of sheep flocks and the export of wool. It is the Cistercians who are most often associated with the clearance of land, but Bond shows, with case studies of reclamation in the Somerset Moors, Romney Marsh and the Sussex coast, Essex and Kent, and Yorkshire, how monasteries of all orders contributed to the opening up of the landscape. Bond also considers the buildings that were key to the agricultural estates of monasteries, the domestic buildings of monastic manors and granges, through the evidence of their surviving earthworks, documentary evidence, and extant buildings (as at Minster Court, Kent (St Augustine's Abbey) and Meare (Glastonbury Abbey)). His discussion demonstrates the diversity of the setting of granges, from a simple layout of two ranges, to more complex arrangements suggested at Neath Abbey's granges at Marcross, Gelligarn, and Monknash. Monastic gardens, orchards and vineyards also receive attention, and Bond draws on sources such as the gardeners' rolls from Benedictine Norwich, Abingdon, Glastonbury, and Augustinian Maxstoke. Other sources of food – sea and estuarine fisheries, lakes and marshland, river fisheries and fishponds – are discussed in detail, as are monastic deer parks and rabbit warrens.

Churches might also feature prominently in the economic assets of religious houses, and could be both a source of revenue and a pastoral responsibility. The

chapels and churches on monastic estates can provide evidence for their relationship with a monastic patron or rector, and for expenditure by monks on their churches. Physical reminders of the connections with monasteries and their abbot can be found, for instance, in the initials of Abbot John Selwood of Glastonbury which appear in the churches of Meare, Ashcott and East Brent which he rebuilt. More broadly, Bond investigates the impact of monastic houses on rural settlement in both planning new villages and relocating others, and on urban centres and boroughs, where religious houses were major landlords (a quarter of the tenements of Oxford in 1300 being in the hands of monastic or religious orders). Finally we see the importance of medieval monasteries in the construction of roads and bridges, mills, and in industrial workings, quarrying, mining, and the production of pottery and tiles.

Bond does exactly what he aims to do. He has produced a wide ranging book, which sets out the evidence clearly. Whereas the Benedictine houses that had their origins in Anglo-Saxon England are among the best documented monasteries, he also focuses attention on smaller and less well-known houses, and on Wales as well as England. The conclusion raises some important questions. As Bond reminds us, the rich documentary legacy bequeathed by medieval religious houses may lead us to overestimate their importance relative to secular landlords, and this, he argues, is why it is important to combine documentary with archaeological evidence and the evidence of the landscape. It may well be that the traditional picture of pioneer monks bringing land into cultivation and introducing innovation in farming techniques and management may have to be modified. However Bond leaves his readers in no doubt as to the importance of medieval monasteries in the shaping of the landscape.

JANET BURTON

University of Wales, Lampeter

AMANDA RICHARDSON, *The forest, park and palace of Clarendon, c. 1200–c. 1650. Reconstructing an actual, conceptual and documented Wiltshire landscape* (British Archaeological Reports, British Series 387, 2005). 8 tables; 85 figs. £38.

Medieval Clarendon was an illustrious place. Outside the new town of Salisbury, it had the grandest palace away from London, the biggest park in England, and a small royal Forest. It is a famous site; the author builds on many previous scholars' work, notably the excavation of the palace in the 1930s which lay unpublished for fifty years.

Some sort of palace goes back at least to the twelfth century; the park is first documented in 1223. The Forest

is first heard of in 1214 – one of the latest royal Forests, though it was probably split off from the New Forest. They were raised to magnificence by Henry III in the mid-thirteenth century. The palace attracted royalty for 150 years, passing thereafter through phases of decline and revival; occasional royal visits continued until James I.

Dr Richardson's work is based mainly on written records. She has extracted a gigantic body of data from the official files in the Public Record Office. She has, properly, left archaeological excavation to others, and herself regrets that not more has been done with fieldwork.

A park was where a landowner kept deer confined within a deer-proof fence called a pale, which was difficult to maintain as the pales rotted or trees fell on it. A Forest was a tract of land, arbitrarily defined, whereon the king (or other magnate) asserted the right to keep deer; it was not fenced, and the deer stayed by force of habit. This particular Forest may have contained little more than deer that escaped from the park; were the many 'deer-leaps' devices to let them get back in? As usual, there is no record of where the deer came from: most of them were fallow deer, an exotic species which someone must have put there.

Forest historians, including Dr Richardson, claim that Forests were 'reserved for the king's hunting' to the restriction, if not exclusion, of other people's interests. However, Forests (in the legal sense) covered nearly all Hampshire and half Wiltshire, and were hardly a restraint on the towns, villages, agriculture, sheep-farming, and commerce of those counties. Clarendon itself included ten ordinary settlements, whose inhabitants seem to have done well out of jobs created by the palace and Salisbury city and cathedral.

Even in this very well-documented place, there is far more evidence for deer on the table than in the hunt. Medieval kings commonly feasted on salt venison, much of it brought from other Forests and processed at Clarendon. The only actual record of a royal hunt is by Edward II, the playboy king, in the 1320s. (There is at least as much evidence for dancing!) As elsewhere, deer were ordinarily 'farmed' or else caught by professional hunters.

Not even Dr Richardson answers the perennial question about medieval deer: why were there so few? Henry III is known to have eaten 400 fallow deer out of Clarendon in 49 years, which would have been in equilibrium with a population of about 40 animals, by modern standards an absurdly small number for the area. How could people with mere bows and hounds have held down the numbers, whereas today the utmost efforts with guns (and cars to run them over) cannot stop deer from proliferating?

By 1500 numbers of deer had increased into thousands, and hunting becomes more evident and more formal. The 'Pady Course' was like a modern greyhound track, with a live deer instead of an electric hare. As a climax, Elizabeth I – that mightiest hunter among sovereigns – slew 340 deer in one day in 1574. By 1661, it was said, all the deer had been exterminated: the mind boggles at how this could have been done.

Both park and Forest contained woodland, mostly belonging to the king. The woods were compartmentalized into coppices, fenced periodically after each felling to keep the deer from eating the regrowth. Clarendon was also a modest if curiously intermittent supplier of timber. The woods suffered badly from the twentieth-century replanting craze, and little is known of woodbanks or surviving coppice stools.

What did the deer eat? They might have lived in woodland, but (like their present successors) would need grassland or savanna to feed. The Forest seems to have been largely either woodland or farmland, without the common pasture on which deer fed in other Forests; they seem, nevertheless, to have been too few to cause trouble by eating farmers' crops. In the sixteenth century the huge numbers of deer in the park would have conflicted with trees. They went through hungry times in late winter.

I commend this illuminating study, full of curious detail. However, a book costing £38 deserves legible illustrations and an index. Dr Richardson's fascinating particulars of fish, rabbits, ferrets, and hermits ought not to be irretrievably buried in the text.

OLIVER RACKHAM
Corpus Christi College, Cambridge

CHRISTIAN D. LIDDY and RICHARD H. BRITNELL (eds), *North-east England in the later middle ages* (Boydell Press, 2005). xiii + 250 pp. 7 tables; 1 plate; 13 figs; 12 maps. £50.

This book is concerned with the later middle ages in the north-east, essentially Northumberland and Durham, and ranges over the political, social, economic and landscape history of the region. There are some references to the pursuit of the elusive concept of 'regional history', notably in an introduction by A. J. Pollard, but most of the fifteen authors of these essays are content to discuss places and themes under the umbrella of the 'north-east' without attempting to define more generally the character of the lands between the Tees and the Tweed. Readers can see for themselves some unifying forces, such as the bishopric and priory at Durham, and the major town at Newcastle, but can also recognize the great divide between peaceful and productive lowlands in county Durham and the more dangerous and pastoral

uplands of the Pennines and the Cheviots. One abiding impression from the number of essays, and their many references to other works, is of the region's wealth in historical research that has been done, and is being done.

Historians of agriculture and rural society will find some useful essays on estates and landholding, notably Richard Lomas's definition of the territory controlled by the bishopric and priory of Durham straddling the Scottish border, including the monastic outpost of Coldingham. The Durham monks and bishopric gained much income from these lands before 1300, but the Anglo-Scottish wars reduced their revenues drastically. In the same border area the Grays of Heaton are shown by Andy King to have done well in the fourteenth century from soldiering. Christian Liddy investigates the rise of a branch of the Pollard family, who were minor gentry serving the bishops of Durham. They were able in the fourteenth century to enlarge a small estate in the parish of Auckland St Andrew. Two essays deal with towns: the market towns of Darlington and Northallerton are analyzed by Christine Newman, and Miranda Threlfall-Holmes's study of Newcastle shows it emerging as a regional capital at the end of the middle ages, and providing the monks of Durham with wine. Both essays reveal aspects of the rural economy, such as the busy fifteenth-century cattle trade at Darlington, and the commercial agents who supplied Durham Priory with agricultural produce, including people based in villages such as Kirk Merrington.

Two essays are especially welcome contributions on the fluctuations in agricultural production after the Black Death. Ben Dodds has already published aspects of his work on tithe receipts, which reflect the fall in grain output. Here he compares the evidence of tithe with other documents, such as rentals and demesne accounts, and shows that together they demonstrate an initial recovery of the arable economy in the 1350s, followed later in the fourteenth century by setbacks, but then some recovery around 1410–30 before the dismal experience of the late 1430s. In parallel with Dodds's agrarian work, another research team at Durham has been looking at the colonization of the waste in county Durham, and Simon Harris presents the evidence for a contraction of arable and the abandonment of farms on the uplands between the Black Death and the late fifteenth century. A final essay, in which Harris is joined by Helen Dunsford and Brian Roberts, muses more philosophically on the landscape history of Durham, and reminds us that the ups and downs in cultivation which excite our interest in the period between 1200 and 1500 mark merely one episode in long-term settlement history – the uplands were cultivated in the Roman period as extensively as they were to be in the thirteenth century.

There are moments when these separate essays interconnect with one another. Harris notes the evidence from the tithe receipts for the abandonment of hamlets, and Liddy's gentry family, the Pollards, held a moorland farm of the type investigated by Harris. The possibility of research being illuminated by such points of contact is one of the justifications of regional history, and one hopes that more will emerge from future work. Another way of advancing understanding of regions is the use of comparison, and one appreciates that Dodds, Harris and Liddy are able to make more of their material because they are prepared to search out parallels and contrasts beyond the north-east.

CHRISTOPHER DYER
University of Leicester

CHRISTOPHER DYER, *An age of transition? Economy and society in England in the later middle ages* (OUP, 2005).

x + 293 pp. 6 tables; 16 maps and figs. £35.

The chapters of this book formed the basis of the Ford lectures delivered by Christopher Dyer in the University of Oxford in Hilary Term 2001. Unbeknown to the audience at the time, sections of the chapters were being condensed into lectures at the point of delivery; a mark of Dyer's skills as an author and lecturer, and testimony to a cool head and nerves of steel. This is a book to be read by anyone with an interest in the later middle ages. The medievalist will be stimulated by the novel interpretation of the social forces for change, the modern historian will find the roots of familiar patterns, and the non-specialist will be guided through the events of this period and their significance. The language is self-consciously accessible, jargon is avoided, and technicalities are explained.

The 'age of transition' in the title provides the vehicle for an exploration of the social and economic tendencies of the period between 1250 and 1550. Dyer argues convincingly for the continuing validity of the concept of a 'transition from feudalism to capitalism' as important shifts occurred in the relationship between lords and tenants, state and subject, agriculture and industry, public and private spheres. These changes were not cyclical as the English society and economy were never the same again. Many of the trends had their roots in a much earlier period, whilst there were also links with the society and economy in the centuries after 1500. He places more emphasis than is customary on the ability of medieval people, especially the peasantry, to bring about change and overcome their problems. There is a conscious move to modify the traditional belief that decisions were made by a powerful elite and change was directed from above.

The book is firmly underpinned by research into a

diverse range of different manuscript sources from over thirty archives, printed sources, and a wealth of case studies and monographs. The emphasis is upon sources that relate to the lower sectors of society, providing us with a perspective 'from the bottom-up'. The research is not confined to documents as it utilizes the evidence from archaeological investigations including a study of existing buildings. All are handled with assurance and employed as detailed examples to illustrate complex patterns and illuminate difficult conceptual themes and theoretical hypotheses.

The Introduction places the book within its broad historical context and outlines the general line of argument and interpretation which are developed in the following six chapters that formed the basis of the lectures. Chapter One presents a particular view of the period which is characterized as being flexible and varied. This 'new middle ages' went through a period of commercialization in the thirteenth century, emerged from the shocks of the fourteenth century with an enhanced capacity for change, a weakened aristocracy, a mobile and less restricted peasantry and a lively industrial and urban sector. Moreover, many features of the period, from family structures to farming methods, resembled those prevailing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Chapter Two, 'Community and privacy', engages with the conflicting interpretations of medieval rural life as either one of individualism and private property, or of community and collective welfare and interests. Dyer argues that these could coexist, albeit with different levels of harmony, and examines the problem from the very different situations around 1300 and 1500. Various themes are explored, such as the management of common-field agriculture, enclosure, the role of lords and gentry. It is argued that many of the initiatives came from the peasants themselves.

Chapter Three, 'Authority and freedom', is concerned with the impact of lordship and the state on economic productivity. It argues that aristocratic lords were not as influential as they would have wished and the actions of the gentry did not change the economy. The role of legislation and taxation in shaping economic activity is examined. The significance of the state lay in providing a stable context for economic life to prosper. The final section examines the actions of those in social groups just below the gentry and concludes that they were independent-minded, economically-active, related to their community, affluent, and played an important part in bringing about change.

Chapter Four engages with the arguments for a consumer revolution of the eighteenth century to dispel the myth of the 'medieval void' in the history of

consumption. In doing so it demonstrates that consumption changed significantly between 1375 and 1520 with new patterns emerging in the acquisition and use of material goods which had an impact on the economy. Increased expenditure on consumer goods did not prevent investment. Emphasis is placed on the actions of farmers, artisans and entrepreneurs who financed productive enterprises, peasant investment, and general expenditure on the transport infrastructure of roads and bridges to facilitate trade.

Dyer develops the theme of participation in the market in Chapter Five. He draws our attention to the apparent paradox that in a period of recession, particularly the fifteenth century, individuals may have opportunities despite contraction in the volume of economic activity. Towns retained their relative position in the commercial system, although their populations fell. It was a mature urban system developing in sophistication and adjusting to new economic influences. Dyer warns that if historians are too preoccupied with the old institutions of charters and boroughs, which give the impression of decline, they will miss much of this new growth. In this chapter a key role is ascribed to farmers of the demesne for adapting and responding to the vagaries of the fifteenth-century market and making a success. Their activities were decisive in reorganizing agricultural production and changing the shape of the landscape.

Chapter Six, 'Work and leisure', investigates the existence of a proletariat at the end of the middle ages, and considers the nature of work and employment at this time. The author concludes that working for wages was an integral part of the medieval economy, that there was much flexibility in the manner of employment, and neither employers nor employees came from a homogeneous class. Attitudes towards employment did change as a 'work ethic' can be identified amongst wage earners who hoped to better themselves. Concepts of leisure and social security, previously considered an early modern phenomenon, were emerging in the later middle ages.

Overall, this is a book that is enjoyable to read, scholarly in its approach, and provides a view of the later middle ages from the bottom up.

MARGARET YATES
University of Reading

JOHN S. LEE, *Cambridge and its economic region, 1450–1560* (University of Hertfordshire Press, 2005). xviii + 238 pp. 31 tables; 39 figs. £35 (hbk); £18.99 (pbk).

Much has now been discovered about the hierarchies of medieval towns, and their hinterlands. The work on

London's grain and fuel supply is best known, but there are a number of regional studies of towns, and on the 'spheres of influence' of market towns. John Lee's book on Cambridge expands greatly our understanding of town-country relations by taking as its example a provincial town with a population of four to five thousand in the period 1450–1560, which can be set beside published studies of Exeter in an earlier period, and of Worcester a little later. Cambridge exercised commercial domination over Cambridgeshire, and its marketing zone extended to a ring of smaller towns which lay near to the edge of the county, or even straddled the boundary, at such places as Royston, Linton and Newmarket. The pattern of towns of Cambridgeshire seems to accord with central place theory, resembling in this respect Leicestershire and western Suffolk. The pattern of marketing has persisted, as is revealed by a study cited by Lee of shopping in Cambridge in 1965.

Cambridge was not a conventional provincial town, however, because it contained a large body of clergy living in rich institutions, which demanded quantities of basic supplies of food, fuel and building materials; the wealthiest, such as King's College, consumed luxuries on a considerable scale. Other towns would occasionally be visited by a great lord's household, but at Cambridge a number of large households were permanently resident. Accordingly a proportion of the goods brought into Cambridge came from a distance, from London, the cloth making centres of the south-west, and other sources well beyond Cambridgeshire. Some of the town's everyday trade also involved contacts outside the county, particularly with Lynn, which was easily accessible by water, and with the wooded countryside of north-west Essex, as Cambridge was not well supplied with wood fuel and building timber in its immediate vicinity. By the end of the period coal was being shipped in quantity from the Tyne. The town was also associated with a peculiar institution, the Stourbridge Fair, which attracted sellers from London and overseas, and customers from the whole of eastern England. Lee gives a fascinating account of the event, and shows that unlike other great medieval fairs, Stourbridge continued until the railway age.

The town and its trade have been researched using a wide range of sources, and the results are illustrated in a series of maps. We learn about the urban social structure and occupations, the regulation of trade (which led to disputes between the town and the university), the building industry, and the flow of commodities. The ups and downs of the economy were partly influenced by the presence of the university, which was growing in size in the fifteenth century, and spending much on buildings soon after 1500. Agrarian history is not at the

forefront of Lee's agenda, but his analysis is helpful to agrarian historians in a number of ways. He shows how the town became a centre for the malt trade supplying London in the sixteenth century, and he explores the spread of saffron cultivation to the south of Cambridge. He also sheds light on the grain market, for example examining the effects of the bad harvest of 1556–7. He studies the mechanics of supply of agricultural produce, in which private treaties between farmers and large consumers tended to replace transaction in the open market.

This book began life as a thesis, and still bears some of the marks of that origin, but it is a very welcome addition to the literature which deserves to be well known and widely read. The publisher should be complimented on producing a book of this quality at such a reasonable price.

CHRISTOPHER DYER
University of Leicester

MICHAEL A. FARADAY (ed.), *Worcestershire taxes in the 1520s. The military survey and forced loans of 1522–3 and the lay subsidy of 1524–7* (Worcestershire Historical Society, New Series 19, 2003). xlv + 297 pp. £25 from Robin Whittaker, Worcestershire Record Office, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP.

Gradually the surviving records of the military survey of 1522 and the lay subsidy tax of 1524–5 are being made available in print, aided by the National Archives' ongoing 'E179' project designed to list fully and restore to order all the voluminous records of lay taxation in that class. Mr Faraday is a notable local historian who has worked on early Hereford probate records, written a good history of Ludlow and has previously edited the Shropshire lay subsidy returns for 1524–5, so that one approaches this volume with high expectations.

So far as the text of the documents is concerned Mr Faraday has provided what appears to be a trustworthy transcript of the originals with exhaustive indexes of surnames and places; but his subject index of eleven entries is ludicrously inadequate. There should have been full coverage of such matters as lords, stewards and parsons in the military survey and of occupational labels such as 'retainers', 'servants' and 'labourers' throughout the volume. The volume should have had a map to illustrate the coverage of both the military survey and the lay survey and, given modern methods of reproduction, I am not persuaded that 'the cost ... is such ... that it would be uneconomic to attempt it' (p. xl). But it is the content of the Introduction that is the most unsatisfactory feature of this volume. I accept that 'in choosing the

topics to be discussed in an Introduction ... an editor cannot please everyone' (p. ix). Nevertheless, members of a county history society are entitled to expect an editor to provide guidance not only on the origin and nature of the records being treated but also on how they can be used to throw light on the historical development of their own county. This fairly obviously ought to include some reference to earlier authoritative editions and studies of the records being edited, but the reader will search this volume in vain for mention of Julian Cornwall, W. G. Hoskins (apart from one footnote reference on p. xxxvi) or John Sheail, or for any reference to previous editions of the military survey and 1524–5 lay subsidy. Presumably Mr Faraday does not think their work is worthy of mention alongside his own: others may venture to differ.

What is certain is that readers will have to find out for themselves how to apply these records to their own localities, a task in which they will obtain little help from an editor whose interests, to judge from his Introduction, are mainly in constitutional history. Thus he rightly observes that 'many of the larger valuations were understated' (p. xxvii) but does not really take on board the implications of his Table 5 (p. xxiii) that the wage-earners and labourers who were supposed to be taxed in 1524–5 (and who in the view of most competent historians of Tudor England comprised at least a quarter of the population) were clearly not fully covered in Blackenhurst, Oswaldslo and Pershore hundreds (8.2 per cent, 11.7 per cent and 14.8 per cent respectively). These figures are clearly far too low, compared to Worcester City (46.0 per cent), Halfshire (24.8 – 28.9 per cent) and Doddingtree (36.1 – 40.3 per cent). To take another matter, Mr Faraday's treatment of population (p. xxxi) utterly ignores muster records, later subsidy returns (especially those of 1543–5), parish registers starting in 1538 or the 1563 diocesan census which exists for Worcester diocese and thus covers all Worcestershire apart from the far west which was in Hereford diocese.

In conclusion, Mr Faraday must be thanked for providing a reliable text of the records he has edited, but the fulfilment of his other editorial duties leaves much to be desired.

JOHN S. MOORE
Bristol

T. C. SMOUT, ALAN R. MACDONALD and FIONA WATSON, *A history of the native woodlands of Scotland, 1500–1920* (Edinburgh UP, 2004). xiii + 434 pp. 16 tables; 16 plates; 16 maps; 37 figs. £60.

Scottish woodland history is a difficult field of study. First, it is difficult to know what is or is not a wood.

Many Scots woods do not have the nice sharp edges that help the English woodland historian: they shade off into wood-pasture and grassland with trees. The written record begins late; this is why this book starts at 1500, the equivalent of beginning a play in Act IV. Detailed maps of woods are few. Many lines of evidence – ancient coppice stools and pollards, timber and underwood in ancient buildings, archaeology, woodbanks, woodland vegetation – either seldom survive or have not been investigated.

Happy the land that has a woodland historian as its Historiographer Royal! Professor Smout and his colleagues, with remarkable enterprise, have traced and interpreted the apparently meagre source material. They have used the now famous maps of Timothy Pont and the archives of noble highland families; unexpectedly, the lowlands and southern uplands seem to be less well documented. Unlike most documentary historians, they are not bound by the written record, but appreciate the critical importance of archaeological and botanical field-work and of understanding the properties of different trees. It is a pity that they have not made more use of pollen analysis.

The woods of Scotland have a peculiar character, driven first by the peculiar behaviour of the principal trees (especially pine and birch), second by the climate, and third by Scotland's cultural, tenurial, and economic peculiarities.

The Great Caledonian Wood, once supposed to have covered much of the highlands well into historic times, is a myth. In reality, as the authors show, woodland covered at most ten per cent of Scotland in 1600 – and even this is a stretched figure, including even sparsely treed grassland. By 1900 native woodland was reduced to about three per cent. This was a lower survival rate than for England but higher than for Ireland. Much of the decline, they argue, was a purely natural phenomenon: the climate and soils of the Scottish highlands, especially during the little ice age, did not allow woodland to survive for ever. Aggravating factors were steadily increasing numbers of livestock, sheep replacing cattle, and the practice of burning grouse moors, all of which hindered new trees from arising. Late in the period natural woods began to be destroyed by modern forestry.

Scottish woods were used by local people for regular supplies of timber and wood; but these were less important in a land with abundant peat and coal for fuel and access to Scandinavian timber. Better documented, and forming much of the material of the book, are commercial and industrial uses of woodland. From 1600 onwards poor or greedy lairds invited Irish and English entrepreneurs to export pine timber for houses

and ships' masts, leather tanned with oak bark, iron made using oak charcoal, and that mysterious stuff of school chemistry lessons, pyroligneous acid. Time after time such people, beginning with 'the eternal optimism of half-informed outsiders', ran into unforeseen difficulties and went bankrupt after a few years – a lesson that was lost on those who, in recent times, have filled the Highlands with conifer plantations to little purpose.

Contrary to popular belief, these enterprises, during their tenure, conserved the woods and did not destroy them. Woods that were exploited are still on the map today; those not known to have been exploited are the ones that disappeared. As the authors remark of the longest-lived of the ironworks: 'Despite the immense size of the charcoal store, there was at least as much land under oakwood in Argyll when they ceased operations in 1876 as when they commenced in 1753'.

Relations with grazing are less clear. The authors claim that banks and walls around woods are no earlier than the seventeenth century, but is this merely because earlier ones are not recorded in writing? However, in the period covered by this book most woods appear to have been used as pasture, which must mean that they were sparse enough to contain edible ground vegetation. Regular encoppicement of woods on the ancient English model, keeping out cattle and sheep to allow felled trees to regenerate, was (so far as written records reveal) a late and often short-lived practice.

The prevalence of pasturage in woods invites further investigation. How effectively did different trees grow again after each felling, as they must have done, despite the presence of browsing animals? Did the preferences of cattle, sheep, or goats encourage one tree species versus another, as they do in the Mediterranean? Did attrition by browsing animals subtract the woodland herbaceous plants? Did it prevent the emergence of a distinctive, coppicing-related ground flora, like the flora of English woods before the recent proliferation of deer? Does a history of browsing explain why Highland woods are so noted for inedible mosses and liverworts, rather than flowering-plants? Historical ecology should be an experimental science, and maybe the authors or their successors will one day answer these questions.

The book is written with clarity, style, and wit (though present technology, in quite an expensive book, should have produced better illustrations). It is full of curious information. I thoroughly recommend it to ecologists, historians, and anyone liking a good story.

OLIVER RACKHAM
Corpus Christi College, Cambridge

JOHN BARNATT and TOM WILLIAMSON, *Chatsworth*.

A landscape history (Windgather Press, 2005). 240 pp. 99 figs. £19.99.

This is a splendid example of what can be achieved through a combination of a systematic archaeological survey of a designed landscape and thorough documentary research into its creation and adaptation over the centuries. The beautiful and accessible setting of Chatsworth has made it the best-loved country house, grounds and park in the land and much of its story is already well-known. Indeed, members of this Society explored part of the park at our annual conference in 1995. What more, it may be wondered, is there to be discovered about its history?

In the first place – as a series of detailed maps, drawings and photographs make clear – it is now obvious that the park contains ‘wall-to-wall archaeology’. As Capability Brown’s park has not been ploughed for the last 250 years, the preservation of earlier features is exceptional. They range from prehistoric round barrows to holloways, rabbit warrens and extensive medieval field systems. They throw considerable light on the wider landscape history of Derbyshire, for earthworks in the surrounding countryside have been largely obliterated by subsequent phases of farming and settlement. Another major feature of Chatsworth park is the enormous number of ancient oak pollards which remain from the medieval and early post-medieval era. These ‘veteran trees’ rank amongst the most important groups in England.

The archaeological finds have also helped our understanding of how the landscape on both sides of the River Derwent was gradually encompassed within the grounds and park by successive generations of the Cavendish family. All the numerous earthworks and standing structures, including buildings, field boundaries and woodlands, have been plotted by detailed sketches. One can only marvel at the sheer amount of detail in the maps of the ‘main historical and archaeological features’ in the various divisions of the park and wonder what such a map would have been like if it had also included the ‘minor’ features. No-one at Chatsworth was expecting such detailed finds as these.

Much of the archaeological survey was done after consulting aerial photographs and the rich and varied collection of historical maps, paintings, prints and documents in the Chatsworth archives. The Chatsworth documents include very detailed estate accounts that recorded payments for work carried out on the house and grounds and for items purchased for them. They often reveal the exact month or year of a particular feature, but of course they are more complete and detailed for some periods than for others. The authors take care

to highlight the shortcomings of their evidence and the problems of interpretation, but they provide a detailed, persuasive account of how the park and grounds developed from the modest beginnings depicted on William Senior’s maps of 1617 to the classic Capability Brown landscape whose carefully-contrived views are largely intact. The overall structure of the park is much as Brown left it, though the rebuilding of Edensor as Britain’s finest estate village and much of the planting on the hillside behind the house and the present network of paths and drives was largely the work of Joseph Paxton and the sixth duke in the nineteenth century.

The story of the house and grounds from Elizabethan times onwards is well-known and some of the greatest architects of their time – William Talman, Thomas Archer, James Paine and Jeffry Wyatville – made major contributions. The most important addition to our understanding of how the park and grounds were changed from the formal, French or Dutch style, shown on Kip and Kniff’s view of 1699 into the landscaped park of today is contained in Chapter Four, where evidence is gathered to argue that substantial changes were made long before Brown by William Kent. It has always been thought that the designs for improvements that Kent made while staying at Chatsworth in the 1730s were never implemented, but the estate accounts note a large amount of planting at that time and a painting of the Chatsworth landscape by Thomas Smith c. 1743 shows that the gardens around the house had already been much altered. In particular, Smith’s painting makes clear that the smooth expanse of lawn immediately behind the house, which has always been attributed to Brown in the 1760s, was already there by about 1743, as were the winding paths and casual groupings of trees.

The authors conclude, rightly, that ‘this complex, many-layered landscape works in both aesthetic and visual terms. Little seems out of place ... The result is an almost unparalleled collection of features and layouts from which ... one could almost tell the whole story of English, if not European, garden design’. Most of this landscape can be walked over, freely, at all times of the year. The book will add greatly to everyone’s enjoyment and understanding of what they see.

DAVID HEY

University of Sheffield

A. J. GRITT and J. M. VIRGOE with C. P. BROWNRIGG (eds), *The memoranda books of Basil Thomas Eccleston, 1757–1789* (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 139 for 2001, 2004). xli + 214 pp. 11 figs. £30. This transcription of Eccleston’s memoranda books held in Lancashire Record Office at Preston provides an insight into the management of a relatively small (986

acres) estate and the life of its improving owner. Gritt and Virgoe's thoroughly competent introduction provides the necessary biographical and topographical information needed to appreciate the background of its compiler, and the local and regional contexts of south-west Lancashire. They also offer thoughts on the potential importance of some of the issues and topics which the books cover. Two detailed indexes on people and subjects allow for easy identification of relevant passages within the text. It is a job well done.

As with all sources, however, the value of these books depends on what an individual researcher wishes to study. Not surprisingly, the majority of the entries are to do with Eccleston's management of his agricultural land: relationships with tenants; the hiring of workers, including live-in servants; the nature of crops grown; the manuring and improvement of fields; crops, animals and produce. Gritt and Virgoe suggest (p. xii) that they are primarily important 'because of the amount of quantitative data that they contain on agricultural affairs'. There is certainly a lot of detail on aspects which are rarely recorded otherwise such as the weight of individual animals and the prices obtained for specific parts of the carcass; prices obtained for produce sold off estate and the amounts retained for home consumption; and the amount of seed sown on individual fields. Sales of cheese and its purchasers, for example, are recorded almost every year, allowing for the construction of a fairly comprehensive picture of conditions and prices over a thirty-year period, demonstrating a rise from around 26s. a hundredweight in the 1760s to nearly 38–40s. by the late 1780s. But, as the editors also acknowledge, the books do not systematically record everything which occurred on the estate, while the lack of specific details about the weights or ages of animals sold, or the size of fields sown or harvested, makes it difficult to assess the importance of some of the data, and in particular Eccleston's success as an improver. Eccleston's assiduity and interests also varied considerably over the period making it difficult to piece together comprehensive indices of prices or yields. In some respects, therefore, the books' value lies in illustrative detail of what was possible or what happened on specific dates or in specific places. Not all of these are strictly agricultural, but relate to matters as diverse as the rebuilding of the hall with its imported Riga timber door, the delays to mail caused by bad weather (1776), medicinal cures, the number of carol singers and Easter peace-egggers visiting in specific years – no fewer than 209 of the latter in 1767 –, and information on early methods of prospecting for coal in the area.

This, then, is not a book which can easily be assimilated or assessed at one reading. Its value lies in the

diversity and eccentricity of its entries rather than its systematic analysis of agricultural trends, but it is no less important because of this.

MICHAEL WINSTANLEY
Lancaster University

STEPHEN RANDOLPH GIBBONS, *Captain Rock, night errant. The threatening letters of pre-famine Ireland, 1801–1845* (Four Courts Press, 2004). 282 pp. €75.

Ireland in the early nineteenth century was frequently characterized by contemporaries (especially those who resided in Britain) as underdeveloped, impoverished and lawless. Crime, especially agrarian crime (referred to in Ireland as 'outrages') was regarded as being especially prevalent, with landlords as the target. Many of these stereotypes have persisted and, even today, they appear in general accounts of Irish history. This fascinating book, which contains the texts of over 500 threatening letters unearthed by Stephen Randolph Gibbons mostly in the National Archives of Ireland, throws new light on Irish agrarian crime. It also provides many counterpoints to such facile generalizations. At the same time, though, what was widely referred to as the 'state of Ireland' question – in contemporary newspapers, parliamentary reports and political debates – was justifiably a source for concern, with the letters providing ample testimony of poverty, estate mismanagement, landlord indifference, and tenant resentment. The title of the book, 'Captain Rock', refers to the signature that most often appeared on the end of the letters (Gibbons identifies over 100 other pseudonyms). The use of a false name not only ensured that the author remained anonymous, it placed the threat within a wider network of agrarian agitation, thereby contributing to the belief that lawlessness was indeed widespread and widely supported.

Many of the demands made by Captain Rock in his various guises are specific and concerned with local or immediate issues – tithes, rent, food prices, evictions, religious antagonisms. The threats proffered ranged from attacks on cattle, to house burning, to assassination. The letters show less interest in regional, national or British politics, and contain surprisingly few references to contemporary politicians; even Daniel O'Connell, who dominated nationalist politics for almost three decades, achieved only two mentions. A strength of this collection is that it shows the concerns of a group within Irish society, poor agricultural labourers, that have traditionally not had a voice of their own. But as well as offering insights into the lives of working people, this collection throws light on other aspects of Irish society: the interaction between landlords and tenants; the day-to-day working of the forces of law and

order; and the government's response to Irish problems (including the use of local informers). Gibbons also suggests in the illuminating and thoughtful 43-page introduction, that the letters demonstrate that literacy was quite dispersed, even if the majority of letters indicate little formal schooling. Interestingly, the letters are written in English, the language of officialdom but not of the poor of Ireland. The letters also suggest that a moral economy existed in Ireland before the Famine, with many similarities to pre-industrial protests in Britain and other parts of Europe.

The collection ends in 1845, the year associated with the appearance of potato blight and the onset of famine in Ireland. A second volume, which examines the Famine and post-Famine period, based on this generally over-looked source, would be a welcome addition to Irish historiography.

CHRISTINE KINEALY
University of Central Lancashire

PHILIP HEATH (ed.), *Melbourne, 1820–1875. A diary of John Joseph Briggs* (Melbourne Historical Research Group in association with South Derbyshire District Council, 2005). 243 pp. Illus. £10.99.

John Joseph Briggs was of farming stock and lived at King's Newton, a village located immediately north of the small south Derbyshire town of Melbourne. Both settlements had evolved within the 3,500 acre parish of Melbourne which abuts against the River Trent to the north and the Leicestershire boundary to the east. King's Newton, overlooking the Trent floodplain, was always agricultural in function while Melbourne became more urban in character following the arrival of framework knitting towards the end of the eighteenth century and modest footwear manufacture during the nineteenth. The parish population had reached about 3,500 in 1901.

Briggs was born in 1811, son of a well-to-do tenant farmer on the estate of Lord Melbourne of Melbourne Hall. He was sent away to school and then took up an apprenticeship at Bemrose printers of Derby. When ill health forced him to return to his family home at King's Newton in 1837 he became a gentleman farmer. However, he was to spend much of the rest of his life developing his interests in travel, poetry, antiquities and local and natural history. His modest range of publications, which included histories of Melbourne, poems, essays and journal and newspaper articles, enabled him to achieve some standing in the local community.

The previously unsuspected diary was recently discovered by Philip Heath in a collection of Briggs's manuscripts. The recording of events as they occurred, albeit intermittently, begins in 1845 and ends in 1875 while entries before 1845 are few and retrospective.

We have therefore an extended record of observations on life in and around Melbourne from the perspective of a well-informed countryman. The entries touch upon many topics but there are a number of recurrent themes. Briggs consistently noted the progress of the seasons and the impact of weather on crops and farm work as an adjunct to which he monitored flood events on the Trent. He commented upon the growing specialization in market gardening around Melbourne favoured by the loamy soils, the impact of the cattle plague in 1866, and also illustrated and speculated upon local archaeological finds. Briggs recorded improvements in communications, not least the politics of railway projects which eventually linked Melbourne to the Midland network. He commented frequently on aspects of the lives and deaths of local personages ranging from tragic accidents to children to social gatherings of local dignitaries and the aristocracy. Local and national political events were of great interest to Briggs including the Crimean War with its days of humiliation and fasting and eventual triumphal parades.

The intrinsic interest of the Briggs diary is much enhanced by the manner of its editing. The introduction provides essential background material on the Briggs family and farm and King's Newton and Melbourne. The significance of diary entries is elaborated through numerous explanatory footnotes and, in particular, by well chosen illustrations including line drawings, photographs and sixteen colour plates. The endpaper maps of King's Newton are helpful but there is a need for a location map to clarify the internal and external relationships of Melbourne parish. In all Philip Heath and the Melbourne Historical Research Group have produced an attractively presented and priced publication. It is also commendable that the South Derbyshire District Council and the Derbyshire County Council have been able to support their enterprise.

ROGER T. DALTON
University of Derby

MICHAEL FREEMAN, *Victorians and the prehistoric. Tracks to a lost world* (Yale UP, 2004). vi + 310 pp. Illus. £25.

Although published by a university press, this is a trade book rather than an academic monograph. It is printed on heavy, glossy paper and contains many illustrations, often in colour. Its topic is the Victorians' discovery of the earth's history through geological time, with plentiful observations on the cultural significance of these often disturbing revelations. In one sense, I was surprised by the book's contents – from the title I had expected something focused mainly on the Victorians' discovery of prehistoric archaeology, which opened up

the whole idea of a primitive 'stone age' preceding recorded history. But Freeman's definition of prehistory is restricted to the pre-human past, with the exception of the one event which was traditionally taken to link earth and human history, the Noachian deluge.

The book offers detailed studies of many aspects of the history of geology, palaeontology and evolution theory. It is particularly strong on charting the literary and artistic responses to the discovery that the earth's structure was best understood as something shaped by a long history of geological and biological change. Freeman has already written on railways and the Victorian imagination, and here we see the role played by railway cuttings in revealing the earth's internal structure. There are many other fascinating insights into the ways in which the Victorians' view of landscape was transformed by the new discoveries, and this, I presume, will be the book's chief interest to readers concerned with agricultural history. Some themes are more original than others – the role of natural history museums as 'cathedrals of science', for instance, has already been widely explored by other scholars.

My own approach to the book, however, is through an interest in the history of geology and evolution theory, and from this perspective it is less satisfying. Freeman is certainly in command of the primary literature in these fields, at least as far as the 1860s, and he has made a serious attempt to grapple with some of the modern secondary literature. But he is much less secure on the late-Victorian period, and thus misses some of the most important reinterpretations offered by modern historians of science. All too often, his approach to the issues is old-fashioned, and succeeds only in perpetuating myths that historians of science have been trying to deconstruct for decades. Geology is still focused on the old heroes, James Hutton and Charles Lyell – there is little to show that it was the rival catastrophists who articulated the developmental model of earth history which dominated Victorian thought. And the Darwinian revolution is still presented very much in terms of the challenge of materialism to traditional religion. Freeman shows little interest in the ways in which late nineteenth-century scientists (including the architects of the emerging human sciences) developed alternatives to the Darwinian theory which would preserve a teleological view of history in which the human race emerged as the final goal of life's development. Noah's flood may have still been a serious issue in the 1830s, but by the 1870s it had been marginalized by a model of biological, cultural and social progress which linked the life sciences with anthropology and archaeology into a powerful evolutionary paradigm.

I found this book simultaneously fascinating and frustrating. It helped me to understand some of the wider interactions of the earth sciences with Victorian visual culture, but it seemed out of touch with many of the latest interpretations offered by historians of science dealing with this and related areas of study. In the end, I suspect that if Freeman had (as his title implies) dealt also with the emergence of an evolutionary view of human prehistory, he would have produced a better-balanced account, at least for the later Victorian period.

PETER J. BOWLER
Queen's University, Belfast

KEITH GRIEVES, NICK MANSFIELD, GEORGE SHEERAN, WINIFRED STOKES, MELANIE TEBBUTT, ANDREW WALKER and JOHN WALTON, *Rural and urban encounters in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: regional perspectives* (CORAL, 2004). 131 pp. £7.50.

This collection of papers originated in a conference organized under the umbrella of the Conference of Regional and Local Historians in 2002. It serves as a salutary reminder that the encounters and mutual perceptions of town and country can take many and various forms.

Two of the papers highlight the connection between industrial activity and the countryside in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Stokes draws attention to the personal links between agricultural improvement and industrial development in south Durham. An example was that of Christopher Mason, an estate owner and agricultural improver, who sold his prestigious Shorthorn cattle herd and ventured into railway investment after the well-publicized success of the Stockton and Darlington railway. Sheeran's paper presents a different face of the countryside/industry symbiosis in his analysis of contemporary northern landscape paintings. These are here interpreted as evidence of cultural disapproval; George Walker's 'Factory Children' of 1814 shows the children as 'expressionless and wizened, old before their time'. But the aristocratic interpretation of landscape as cultural harmony was restored by the unknown artist who depicted Sir Titus Salt's Saltaire Mills, newly relocated to the Aire valley in 1853. He placed them centre-stage, as a new version of the aristocratic country house, adapted to the new world of factory industry.

Moving on in time, Walker analyzes the social evolution of the Lincolnshire show, as it grew in size from its inauguration in 1869. Its success drew increasing numbers of visitors, and a rising proportion of industrial workers, as Lincoln itself became the national centre for

the manufacture of farm machinery. This led the organizers to anticipate problems of social order, and the adoption of socially segregationist policies in ticketing, seating and refreshments. Perhaps these were unnecessary; at least the show did not suffer the level of public concern raised by the more boisterous Lincoln April horse fair.

Tebbutt and Walton consider the impact of the open spaces of the northern uplands on the urban and on the rural imagination. Tebbutt takes the case of the north Derbyshire moorland area known as the Dark Peak, and examines the responses of the urban walkers who used it. She shows the mixture of psychological responses evoked by rambling on the moor, foremost of which was the desire for mental and physical self-improvement. The obverse of this was a sense of disgust with the overcrowded and unhealthy town, where healthy manliness was under siege from its environment. Walton considers the debate which resulted from the decision, enshrined in the National Parks and Countryside Act of 1949, to form a new national park in the North York Moors. Opposition to the establishment of the park was intense, continuous and vociferous. Walton shows elegantly the extreme and unwavering distrust to any proposals emanating from the towns; the opposition caricatured the plan as an urban rape of the countryside, in entire neglect of the available evidence. Continuing resentment by rural dwellers of any plan originating in the towns can be traced in the recent activity of the Countryside Alliance and in the controversy concerning hunting with dogs.

Finally, the papers by Grieves and Mansfield centre on the period of the First World War. Grieves looks at the perspectives on the conflict revealed by the (largely middle-class) diary keepers and epistolary writers in rural areas, such as the Rev Andrew Clark of Great Leighs in Essex. Here, there was a sense that rural areas were rather marginalized, not being kept well informed of the war's progress by the authorities. Some comfort was to be obtained by an emphasis on the eternal round of nature, but the sense of rural isolation and vulnerability was dramatically heightened by the Zeppelin raids, which must have been terrifying on a dark night, as the behemoths roared thunderously overhead (although doing little damage). When rural dwellers ventured into town, they were repelled by the frenetic activity, inflation and conspicuous consumption, although the imposition of food rationing led to the restoration of town-country links, as urban dwellers looked to their country contacts for supplies. Mansfield discusses the curious case of agricultural trades unionism in the Welsh Marches of Shropshire and neighbouring counties in the 1920s. Here the central point is the complete

failure of attempts at unionization after its brief flowering in 1917–20. There was an institutional weakness, since the two major unions were bitter rivals, but at bottom efforts to unionize were thwarted by the conservatism of the labourer and the strong paternalism of the farmers and estate owners. Newly-formed organizations – the Women's Institute, Young Farmers' Clubs, and the British Legion – served to underpin the conservative cultural consensus. There is a sense here of unionism as an urban export, finding no roots in the profoundly rural Marches.

Overall, these papers serve as a salutary reminder that relations between town and country are always a nuanced affair, and that simple dichotomies are of little analytical value. This is not to say that simple models of town-country antagonism do not continue to operate in public and private discourse to this day, but that they are continually mediated by the course of economic evolution and the varying fortunes of interest groups.

PETER DEWEY

Royal Holloway, University of London

ABIGAIL WOODS, *A manufactured plague? The history of foot and mouth disease in Britain* (Earthscan, 2004).

xvi + 208 pp. 16 plates. £19.99.

The first recorded outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in Britain began in August 1839. It continued to spread until the end of 1841, but never disappeared completely, and there were several further waves of infection, each lasting a year or two, through to the 1860s. It began to be accepted as an unpleasant, unfortunate, but unavoidable feature of farming life that had affected almost every parish in the country at one time or another. Animals recovered from it, and farmers and dealers continued to take them to market. At big markets such as Smithfield the floor sweepers filled baskets with the shed hooves of infected animals. The contrast with the 2001 FMD outbreak, in which many of the millions of animals that died were themselves probably uninfected, but happened to be within three kilometres of an infected place, could hardly be greater. This book explains how the change came about.

It was, Dr Woods argues, largely an accidental creation of the nineteenth century. The symptoms of FMD appear to have been more severe in more highly productive pedigree animals, and aristocratic breeders co-operated with protectionist Tories to sponsor the 1864 Cattle Diseases Prevention Bill, which was withdrawn in the face of opposition from Liberal free traders and the meat trade. But an outbreak of cattle plague in the following year led eventually to the 1869 Contagious Diseases of Animals Act. It was this Act, and

its successors up to 1884, that produced, according to Dr Woods, the widespread perception of FMD as a dangerous plague rather than a common disease. Stricter controls produced a greater awareness of the prevalence of FMD and its consequent cost and contagiousness. They also had a greater impact outside the farm gate through the bringing about of cancellation of markets and fairs. At the same time, the rise of refrigeration produced a dead meat trade, and so reduced the fear of meat shortages caused by controls on the import of live animals. In the years of freedom from infection following the 1884 Act, familiarity with FMD was replaced by fear of the unknown. And finally, the bans imposed on imports from countries with FMD by the USA, Canada, and Australia would have had no impact on commercial producers in the UK, but significant effects for pedigree breeders attempting to export breeding stock to those countries. Thus when FMD reappeared in 1892 it was met by a slaughter policy, this time accompanied by compensation for animals lost.

The subsequent history of FMD in the UK is about the maintenance of this policy in the face of opposition from foreign suppliers, scientific controversies over the epidemiology of the disease, and the development of effective vaccines. It involves a series of official enquiries, the perception of pedigree exports as a sign of national superiority, 'the "spin", subterfuge and scientific manipulation that characterized the British government's response to the disease threat' (p. 53) in the interwar years, especially in relation to Irish and Anglo-Argentinean trade, the perennial problem of pig swill, offensive and defensive germ warfare, and the varying powers and influences of civil servants and politicians in the Ministry of Agriculture, the veterinary, medical and scientific professions, the meat trade, and pedigree livestock breeders. The result is a rich mixture of political, scientific and agricultural history.

In part this is history as polemic. Dr Woods is clearly unconvinced of the value of the slaughter policy, and sets out its detailed history to demonstrate that it was by no means the only possible response in the UK, just as it was inconceivable, until recently, in the different circumstances of continental Europe. In consequence it raises some interesting questions about the role of history, and the extent to which it can effectively contribute to what is clearly an ongoing policy debate. But it is more than this. It is also an excellent example of the sort of history of science and technology that tries to go beyond simple explanations of how initial misconceptions were replaced by present enlightenment as a result of the heroic efforts of the pioneers. In an age when books often become too long for their own good this one is admirably short – 150 pages of text and

another fifty or so of notes and bibliography – but, ironically, it might with advantage have been longer, to set its discussion in the context of this expanding science and technology history. Similarly, given the nature of her polemic, it would have been interesting to have had more comparative material: on FMD in continental Europe, for example, or FMD compared with leprosy, which might be seen as a manufactured human plague, or with salmonella, which might perhaps have been treated by slaughter, but wasn't.

PAUL BRASSLEY
University of Plymouth

JONATHAN BELL, *Ulster farming families, 1930–1960* (Ulster Historical Foundation in association with the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, 2005). 132 pp. Illus. £9.99.

This book, aimed at non-specialists, enriches our understanding of rural society in twentieth-century Ulster, illuminating not only its agricultural economy, but also such themes as rural industry and gender relations. Bell presents oral history as a rich source for the reconstruction of rural life in Ulster between the 1930s and the 1960s. In an introduction and useful prologue, he considers how to navigate oral sources, and argues for the essential value of this material. The text is complemented by a good range of photographs, including many of the volume's subjects. Bell often allows them to speak for themselves, and, as is often the case in such exercises, silence is as meaningful as the spoken word. Surprisingly, given the tumultuous events encompassed by both the period under consideration and the later timeframe in which the oral narratives were recorded, there are only oblique references to rural sectarianism (a curiosity that Bell notes in his introductory remarks). For insight into that feature of Irish rural society, readers will have to consult the work of other scholars, including Rosemary Harris, whose classic *Prejudice and tolerance in Ulster* is complemented by this book. Equally striking, the border is suppressed in this survey of a province that straddles two states – a curious matter, as one might expect divergent experiences in the Free State/Irish Republic and Northern Ireland, especially during wartime, to be foregrounded in memories of rural life, or in Bell's accompanying commentary. The salience of this silence demands exposition.

As the latest in a number of publications by smaller presses highlighting sources for the study of rural Irish history, this book will find a place on shelves besides such works as James Morrissey (ed.), *On the verge of want*. It should invite its audience to contemplate the value of oral history, and perhaps spur new research.

Bell sketches a range of themes ripe for further investigation – the uneven extent of mechanization on farms, divergent systems of farm labour, changing features of rural sociability, and intertwined relations of gender and authority on the farm. The transcribed oral narratives that he interweaves with his analysis of rural change are highly engaging. There is a strong emphasis on the variety of the subjects' experiences, influenced among other things by gender and the size and location of farmholdings. They resist even tentative generalization about rural Ulster's encounters with what Bell characterizes as the forces of 'modernization' (in particular farm technology and state intervention). The narratives suggest, with great colour, another powerful influence at work in the shaping of such experiences – individual personalities. The personal interactions detailed here – between family members, farmers, neighbours, workers and agents of the state – are rich in detail and nuance.

The concluding section offers a lucid discussion of oral history (largely culled from Gaynor Kavanagh's *Dream spaces: memory and the museum*), but this study is largely a selection of narratives assembled to highlight experiences as they are recounted in later life. Some scholars may find the archive from which these cases were selected fertile terrain for the theorizing of memory, but Bell asserts its value for the archaeology of a near-past which, he asserts optimistically, is indeed 'knowable'. Regardless of the purposes to which these voices are marshalled, their vividness (when describing, for instance, how rural families in Northern Ireland circumvented wartime rationing), is indisputable. This book may have benefited from a short bibliography, as it contains only a limited number of footnotes. Some readers may also fault Bell for being unreflective about the nature of his own project, seeing it as a window onto the every-day life of diverse rural people, rather than a complex series of layered narratives, including his own, giving voice to a heavily structured interpretation of the past. But by including the reflections of such people as the peripatetic farm labourer James Ennis and the farming sisters Isabel Lyons and Dolly McRoberts (whose experiences belie notions of immutable sexual divisions in farm labour), Jonathan Bell draws attention to narratives that have much to contribute to ongoing scholarly fieldwork in rural Ireland.

K. J. JAMES
University of Guelph

COLIN PEARSE, *The whitefaced drift of Dartmoor's 'prapper' sheep: commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Whitefaced Dartmoor Sheep Breeders' Association* (The Author, 2004). xl + 367 pp. Illus. £25 incl. p & p from the author, Barramoor Farm, North Bovey, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ13 8RP.

The Whitefaced Dartmoor is not one of the better-known breeds of sheep. Indeed, the Rural History Bibliography had no entry specifically on the breed until this book came along, and neither does the breed feature often in general books on sheep and sheep breeding. It is now regarded as one of the rare breeds.

It is a breed whose numbers are small, with no more than thirty registered flocks. It has its origins among the first sheep to withstand the rigours of life on Dartmoor, although its modern form has been established only during the last 150 years or so. A breed association was not established until 1951, brought together in defence of a breed that had experienced several decades of decline. Other breeds, such as the Scotch Blackface, and crosses of Border Leicester, Suffolk and other types had been introduced into Dartmoor farming especially during the 1920s and 1930s, pushing the Whitefaced Dartmoor back.

In keeping together to maintain the breed, the founders of the Whitefaced Dartmoor Sheep Breeders' Association and their successors have proved about as hardy as the sheep themselves, and it is in celebration of the first half century of the association's existence that this book has been produced.

The book is devoted to the men and women – the farmers, their families and the flockmasters – who have been responsible for upholding the Whitefaced Dartmoor tradition during the twentieth century. Their reminiscences and records of their flocks, successes at shows and sales, and aspects of farming life on Dartmoor form the bulk of the text. After a wide-ranging introductory chapter that seeks to set the sheep farming of Dartmoor, and the Whitefaced sheep in particular, into a historical and geographical context, 329 pages are devoted to these people, presented family by family. It is a substantial body of oral history, interspersed with other material. Although much of the text would have benefited from a stronger editorial hand, and an index would have been helpful, there is much raw material here for the historians of farming on Dartmoor in the twentieth century.

JONATHAN BROWN
University of Reading

MICHAEL CLAYTON, *Endangered species. Foxhunting – the history, the passion and the fight for survival* (Shrewsbury: Swan Hill Press, 2004). xvi + 316 pp. Illus. £25.

Michael Clayton is uniquely placed to write the history of late twentieth-century foxhunting. Having taken up hunting in his teens, as he tells us in this book, part history, part memoir, he began a career in print journalism, made the leap to television and then from television news reporting for the BBC to the editorship of *Horse and Hound* in 1973, which he also served as its hunting correspondent, Foxford. This way Clayton found the perfect combination of career and hobby. He claims to have hunted with 200 packs at home and abroad (and on expenses too!). His previous books have established him as the leading commentator on foxhunting over the past thirty years.

This book falls into three parts. The first four chapters offer an account of hunting in the twentieth century. The middle chapters are more thematic. Chapters Five and Six discuss the hound and horse respectively. Chapter Seven offers an account of some huntsmen, past and present, Eight discusses hunting abroad. Chapter Nine is really a memoir of Clayton's time in the field as both a young man and as Foxford, and here one suspects some reworking of his clippings. Chapter Ten represents a change of gear and forms the third part. It offers an account of successive attempts to legislate hunting with dogs out of existence, taking the story to the passage of the 2004 bill and the illegalization of hunting in at least its traditional form from 18 February 2005. Clayton of course wrote too soon to know of the failure (so far) of the legal challenges to the act, but equally the common agreement that the act has – so far – failed in its purpose of suppressing foxhunting. Nor could he know that the leader of the Conservative party elected at the end of 2005 had hunted and was reported to be sympathetic to hunting. The story is plainly not over yet.

Clayton's book comes with glowing testimonies from *The Field*, *Country Life* and the *Daily Mail*. It contains much useful information, but given his vantage point over the past thirty years as an observer and participant, the book – shot through as it is with nostalgia, valedictory comment and uncertainty about what will happen – is a disappointment. It is a journalist's book – short snappy paragraphs, occasional good jokes, a tendency to mention everyone – but no inside stories, no revelations of personality clashes, of the lobbying of ministers – not even the odd revelation on who was sleeping with whom (although he quotes the adage that a mistress was 'something between a Master and a mattress', p. 86). Occasionally it is a little vague – about dates for instance

– which suggests that Clayton is perhaps writing from memory rather than his files. It lacks sociological observation. Was the field as socially wide as claimed? Did it change over time? Who were the MFH as the supply of men and women with private incomes ran dry? Clayton tells us that Foxford was criticized for writing too much about Leicestershire: 'I pointed out that newspapers gave far more space to Arsenal than minor Third Division clubs' (p. 196). Something of the same criticism can be made of this book which, to me at least, has more to say about the cream of the hunting fraternity than the problems of the socially non-U farmers' hunts. Where Clayton does lift his guard a little and offer pithy opinions is when he displays sympathy with those figures who realized the need for the sport to raise its public profile, dispel its aristocratic and landholding image, and counter the drip of anti-field sports propaganda. And he repeats criticisms (which he has made elsewhere) of the Quorn's conduct in the digging-out scandal of 1991. One wonders whether Clayton might yet write his memoirs and tell us more about the internal politics of hunting as it came under pressure from the anti-field sports lobbies.

As a book by a leading practitioner written with other members of the hunting fraternity in mind, the book will doubtless be enjoyed by many and achieve a wide circulation. Rural historians will find it to be an interesting source with some good leads to be followed up rather than the definitive last word. We lack an academic study of any twentieth-century field sport despite the fact that for long periods, sporting uses of the countryside have plainly been a significant factor in determining land use (this can perhaps be seen more plainly now that the post-war productivist revolution has run its course) and public attitudes to field sports have coloured larger attitudes to the countryside, farmers and farming. Indeed, to make a political point, one feels that since 1997 the smoke generated by pro- and anti-hunting lobbies has often disguised the lack of real thinking about other rural issues. I have already argued that foxhunting (and field sports) is an area in which rural historians should have something to say. Until they rise to that challenge, Clayton is as good as we have.

R. W. HOYLE
University of Reading

LAWRENCE GARNER, *Dry stone walls* (Shire, Second edition 2005). 40 pp. £4.50; TOM WILLIAMSON, *The archaeology of rabbit warrens* (Shire, 2006). 72 pp. £5.99.

In this second edition of his earlier Shire volume, Lawrence Garner offers a comprehensive and beautifully-illustrated survey of the craft of the dry stone waller

whose works, fascinating in their variety and charm, captivate the traveller through Britain. Gwynedd or Gloucestershire, Sutherland or Derby, Yorkshire or County Down, the regional and local variation of wall construction, dependent upon both geological and agricultural considerations, cannot fail to delight. With enthusiasm and learning tempered by long practical experience, Garner outlines the peculiarities of walling materials and the practical problems involved in their utilization in different parts of the country. While dating will always remain a problem, he discusses the earlier, rather crude walls whose origins probably lay in early clearance and moves us quickly on to a consideration of the enclosures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries constructed by specialist craftsmen. In so doing he introduces some splendid technical terms which may be familiar to readers of this *Review* possessed of a more esoteric vocabulary range than myself. But I somehow doubt that many of my readers would identify a 'cripple', 'lunky' or 'smoot' as a hole at the bottom of a wall by which sheep gain access to the adjoining field!

Although Lawrence Garner admires the magnificent mountain walls of Gwynedd, he is less than enthusiastic about kindred enclosures in the south of Wales where building was more 'optimistic and intuitive than skilful' and where the limited use of throughstones and coping was to be deplored. The problem, of course, is that in much of Wales south of Machynlleth there is little good walling stone and for this reason the earth and stone bank topped with a quickset hedge is the main form of enclosure. If Mr Garner, in his capacity as director of the Dry Stone Walling Association, would come to Ceredigion and show me how to build a half-decent wall with our local shale and rounded conglomerate I will be in his debt! A great deal of interest is currently being shown in the restoration of derelict stone walls across the land and thanks to the efforts of bodies like the Dry Stone Walling Association and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers the number of people receiving training in the craft is on the increase. I suspect that as environmental imperatives become of over-riding importance their skills will be increasingly required, and in that case the dedication of men like Lawrence Garner towards the preservation of the appropriate craft skills will be amply justified.

I would not be in the least surprised to learn that the versatile Tom Williamson builds a mean stone wall. Even a cursory review of the last thirty years of rural literature suggests that there is little to which this historian, archaeologist and smallholder is not prepared to turn his hand, usually to excellent effect. On this occasion he focuses his attention on that rather disagreeable

mammal, the rabbit, reintroduced to this country by the Normans. More especially he is interested in the rabbit warren and the two thousand or so recorded pillow mounds, prominent features of the warrens from medieval times. To the confusion of some archaeologists who have interpreted them as neolithic burial structures, pillow mounds, rectangular, square, polygonal or 'V' shaped, were an important element of the landscape before the eighteenth century when agricultural developments allowed the cultivation of land occupied by the vast warrens. Williamson offers detailed descriptions both of the distribution and construction of surviving pillow mounds and of the embankments, fences, walls and ditches enclosing the warrens themselves. While some were of simple dump construction from spoil dug from the surrounding ditch, others were made of material brought from afar, while others yet, like those in the Welsh uplands, comprised carefully elaborated stone-capped artificial burrows cut into the ground surface below the mound. A good warrener would ensure above all that the pillow mound remained dry since rabbits will not tolerate wet conditions, and accordingly every effort was made to retain sloping sides and to maintain regular coverage of the upper surface by throwing material from the surrounding ditch to the top of the mound.

Design and construction of mounds also had to take into account the need to catch the inmates at appropriate times of the year and Williamson discusses the various combinations of dogs, ferrets, nets and pit and tip traps used for this purpose. As with his descriptions of vermin traps and the operational minutiae of the warren, Williamson's text is admirably clear, lavishly illustrated, succinct and of abiding interest. My only quibble lies with his section on the few surviving warreners' 'lodges' where warreners lived and stored their carcasses, skins, nets, traps and other paraphernalia. I wonder whether it is always right to assume that merely because a contemporary farmhouse or pub close to a former warren is called a 'lodge' that it was necessarily the lodging of the warrener. Take the case of Thomas Tresham's outstanding late sixteenth century folly, the Triangular Lodge near Rushton Hall in Northamptonshire. On the grounds that this astonishing building, a profound and esoteric meditation on the Trinity, is mentioned as 'warrener's' lodge in a set of estate accounts, Williamson assumes that it served that vulgar function. He may, of course, be right. Yet, having played in that spooky folly as a child and been brought up in the belief that Tresham and his pals hatched the Gunpowder Plot within its walls, I profoundly hope that he is wrong!

R. J. MOORE-COLYER
University of Wales, Aberystwyth

TOM WILLIAMSON, *Sandlands: The Suffolk coast and heaths* (Windgather Press 2005). 164 pp. 72 figs. £16.99.

This book is simply riveting and should be required reading for anyone involved with the conservation of the landscape. Tom Williamson, now the acknowledged expert on this type of environmental study, writes with passion and directness, drawing together research funded variously by the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB, English Heritage and Suffolk County Council. The result is a most attractive and well-illustrated publication with appeal for both academic and general readers. Of particular note are the maps – past and present – which illustrate the receding coastline, the contraction of coastal marshes, disappearing heaths, changing settlement patterns and the planting of woodland, all dominant features of the Sandlands, an important Area of Outstanding National Beauty in overfarmed and increasingly threatened East Anglia.

What distinguishes the book is the format adopted by Williamson. Rather than follow the traditional chronological approach, he treats aspects of the countryside thematically. In this way, he is able fully to explore the distinctive character of the marshes, heaths, fields, settlements and the coast in turn. He provides the necessary chronological framework in the introduction, 'History and the environment', starting with a typically surefooted description of the origins and nature of the district; the section on early settlers carries unusual conviction, bringing to life a period mysterious to all but the specialist. Their farming activities, with precise detail on the destructiveness of early farm tools, lead us to consider the long term interaction – for good and evil – between man and his environment. This is the overriding theme. He reminds us that the landscape we see today is very much the creation of the period of agricultural improvement and prosperity of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when field patterns were reorganized, settlements built, plantations established and marshes drained. Williamson does not ignore the cultural and the romantic: landscapes are more than by-products of economic and social activities, they live in the imagination. But his primary aim is to look beyond the aesthetic appeal and understand the forces and influences which moulded this unique landscape.

Having set the scene, Williamson turns to his five thematic chapters. 'The coastal wetlands' starts with useful definitions of different types of fen and marsh, the flora and fauna associated with them, and the part they played in rural economy, providing food, salt, fuel and building materials. For centuries, man has tried to improve this valuable resource by reclaiming the salt marshes for grazing, and later by more complex drainage schemes,

involving the latest technology of the nineteenth century. The task was never easy and from the earliest times required co-operation between landowners and tenants to build and maintain embankments, dykes, sluices and walls; sometimes the spirit of collaboration was not forthcoming, particularly when areas of common marsh were concerned. Williamson carefully takes us through this intricate and dramatic story, using maps, documents, archaeology and aerial photography, showing how the efforts of our forebears shaped and reshaped the wetlands. We are left marvelling at their ingenuity and determination, but despairing at the lack of sensitivity shown in more recent years. Today, only a tiny fraction of the marshes survive, with the vast majority under the plough or chemically-farmed grassland. A depressingly consistent theme emerges of wholesale destruction of fragile landscapes in the second half of the twentieth century, with conservation bodies struggling to reverse the tide.

The story of 'The heaths' follows a similar pattern of change and development in response to man's needs, descending into neglect and decline in the twentieth century, but here the outlook is more promising as several initiatives start to bear fruit. Williamson's description of the ecology and management of the heaths over the centuries helps to explain why it is a simpler task than restoring marshland. These chapters illuminate, in the most graphic and informed way, the complexities facing the conservationists and the absolute need to support their endeavours.

The two chapters on 'Settlements, fields and boundaries' and 'Woods, parks and plantations' cover the more familiar ground we associate with Williamson and his earlier books; they provide the backdrop of 'normal' landscape and comfortable everyday life. Drama returns in the final chapter on 'The landscape of the coast'; this stretch boasts some of the most spectacular examples of coastal erosion in the country with towns falling over the soft cliffs, the formation of long shingle spits, the silting up of rivers and ports cut off from the sea. We are left in no doubt that the remorseless power of the sea has been, and with global warming is likely to remain, the principal influence creating the special quality and character of the Sandlands.

ELIZABETH GRIFFITHS
University of Exeter

ROBIN STANES, *Old farming days. Life on the land in Devon and Cornwall* (Tiverton: Halsgrove, 2005). 160 pp. Illus. £19.99.

This handsome and lavishly-illustrated volume is essentially an updated version of Stanes' *The old farm* which appeared in 1990. While it could so easily have been yet

another of those wistfully nostalgic, maundering and rather dreary accounts of 'the old days', it is in fact a thoughtful, detailed and unsentimental review of rural life in the south-west between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. There are the usual descriptions of crops and animals, food and drink, haytime and harvest and the evolution of local vernacular architecture, along with a close examination of the hearthside culture of south-west Britain with its periodic feasts and festivals. Particularly impressive is the lengthy section on those vast and occasionally enigmatic Devon banks and the names of the fields they enclose. As Stanes is careful to point out, from a farming perspective Devon and Cornwall were rather different from many other parts of the country. A combination of early enclosure and the availability of ample upland common grazing gave free rein (within the limitations of their leases) to farmers to develop husbandry systems which eliminated the need for wasteful fallow courses. Hence the alternate husbandry, rotational farming and water meadows which so impressed Oliver Cromwell that he declared the farming of Devon and Cornwall to be the best in the land. If some elements of Devonian agriculture, including 'paring and burning' and various aspects of local mixed farming found critics among nineteenth-century advocates of the Norfolk four-course arrangement, the system was sufficiently robust and flexible to allow most farmers from the south-west to ride out the depression of the 1880s and 1890s while many of their detractors went bankrupt.

As a scholar and sometime farmer himself, Stanes writes very knowledgeably on the social side of the rural world: of kinship, family and inheritance; of marriage, society and religion, and of the darker side of village life: the feuds, the 'rough music', the abuse of witches and the 'disappearance' of unpopular folk. Although the absence of a clear chronological framework sometimes makes it difficult to tell whether we are reading of the 1650s or the 1950s, this is, to my way of thinking, the most stimulating section of Stanes' book. I could not help reflecting, as I read of the 'fun' at haymaking and the communal nature of much of the work of the fields that for some people rural life was, in virtually all respects, beastly and brutish. Apart from the dreary and back-breaking labour involved in the growing season (endless hoeing and singling row crops, 'roguing' cereals, carting muck), at harvest (thistles and yet more thistles) and threshing in the winter (the horrors of rats in those corn stacks, the muscle-wrenching business of handling 18 stone sacks of wheat and the wheeziness engendered by fungal spores), there was the regular inhumanity of man to man. To be sure, life in the fields as a boy could be great fun if you didn't *have* to be there,

as in my own case where the majority of the day was spent wandering around with a gun potting the odd rabbit. But if you *had* to labour in those fields and were slightly out of the ordinary; a shade eccentric perhaps, or even female, life could be hellish. As a boy in the late 1950s I well remember the pleasure taken by my father's men in taunting an epileptic casual labourer until he had a fit. Meanwhile, the mentally feeble residents of my Northamptonshire village (and they were in plentiful supply) were considered quite fair game by those who would probably have been at the front of the crowd at a jolly seventeenth-century witch burning! Bullying, incest and physical and sexual abuse, to say nothing of bestiality and deplorable cruelty to animals were commonplace in the 'innocent' rural England of my childhood. Robin Stanes quite rightly emphasizes the many positive virtues of rural life which, after all were the norm. Or were they? Perhaps the time has come for the oral historians to capture the realities of the rural world in the first two post-war decades before it is too late. In the meantime, as the environmentalists moan in their urban drawing rooms, I shall continue to rejoice in the products of Fisons, ICI and Monsanto, those illustrious eliminators of plant and animal disease, facilitators of an easier life, and indefatigable destroyers of thistles and poppies, whose efforts fuelled the remarkable agricultural revolution of the 1950s and 1960s.

R. J. MOORE-COLYER

University of Wales, Aberystwyth

Elsewhere and General

RICHARD W. UNGER, *Beer in the middle ages and the renaissance* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). xvii + 319 pp. 12 tables; 22 illus. £29.50.

In *Beer in the middle ages and the renaissance*, Richard Unger sets out to explore the production and consumption of beer during pre-modern times in northern and western Europe, the region where beer was, and often remains, the preferred drink. During that period, 'beer was a necessity, a part of life, a drink for everyone of any age or status, and a beverage for all times of the day from breakfast to dinner and into the evening' [p. xiii]. As such, it was much prized as a source of nutrition, widely regarded as a healthy beverage when drinking water was not, and consumed only incidentally for its intoxicating effects. Indeed, Unger contrasts beer's intimate association with subsistence in earlier times with its close modern association with primarily recreation and intoxication, especially revolving around sporting events and university life.

After brief introductory remarks about beer production in ancient times, Unger quickly moves on to the

medieval and early modern periods. Most of the book is dedicated to tracing the development of brewing from the early middle ages to the seventeenth century, by which time it had become integral to a complex and prosperous commercial economy. As an aid to understanding such development, Unger suggests that it went through stages similar to those identified by Roman historian and archaeologist, D. P. S. Peacock, in his study of the developmental stages of pottery production. Accordingly, Unger identifies six stages in the development of brewing, ranging from domestic production and household industry through individual and concentrated workshop production to manufactory- and factory-based commercial production. Only the last stage, factory-based commercial production, associated with the industrial revolution and massive production scales, occurred after the period Unger considers. While there was a chronological sequence to these stages of development, they did not occur simultaneously in all places. In fact, he says, by the end of the period in question, all stages still could be found in some place or another. Though these stages were not synchronous, they did mark increments in the scale of production. Even so, until the seventeenth century, production levels remained relatively small, the largest perhaps on the scale of microbreweries today.

The most significant change to beer production during the Middle Ages, according to Unger, was the gradual introduction and eventual domination of hops over other flavouring and preserving agents in the brewing process. While a number of large monasteries apparently made some beer with hops from the ninth century onward, it was the brewers of Hamburg, Bremen, and other cities of north Germany who made it commonplace after 1200. Until then, most beer was flavoured and preserved by mixtures of herbs known collectively as *gruit*, usually including leaves of bog myrtle or wild rosemary and one or two additional herbs, but varying greatly from one place to another. *Gruit* continued to be the preferred additive for many: consumers because of its familiar flavours; brewers because it worked with known methods and equipment; rulers because they taxed it and derived considerable income from it. Still, hops possessed one attribute that eventually permitted it to win out over *gruit*, its enhanced preservative qualities, which allowed hopped beer to become a reliable and lucrative export product. In short, hops gave beer a longer 'shelf life'. As a result, the use of hops in brewing began to predominate in the increasingly concentrated workshops of north Germany during the thirteenth century, in Holland during the fourteenth century, in the rest of the Low Countries during the fifteenth century, and in England and elsewhere after 1500.

Besides the changes in beer production associated with the adoption of hops, Unger also discusses changes over time in the types of grains used in brewing, usually combinations of wheat, oats, and barley, the kinds of equipment used, the frequency of brewing, and many other aspects of beer production. He also pays attention to what sorts of people brewed, how brewers organized their workplaces, and what organizations they formed in support of their trade. Further, Unger includes extensive discussions of the importance of beer trade in the late-medieval and early modern commercial economy. In addition, he examines the role of beer, as well as its ingredients, as a source of tax revenue over the entire period. The result of all of this is a book that is impressive in both breadth and depth. He has assembled a rich variety and quantity of material, partly based on his earlier detailed study, *A history of brewing in Holland, 900–1900: economy, technology, and the state* (Brill 2001), and supplemented by the work of many other scholars from primarily England, France, Germany, and the Low Countries. Unger's book is not an exhaustive study of pre-modern brewing in northern and western Europe, but it is comprehensive and exemplary. And because it is well-organized and well-written, it provides a useful and accessible introduction to a vast subject that at the same time provides a solid context for the work of other specialists in the field.

WILLIAM H. TEBRAKE
University of Maine, Orono

VILJO RASILA, EINO JUTIKKALA and ANNELI MÄKELÄ-ALITALO (eds), *Suomen maatalouden historia, I, Perinteisen maatalouden aika, Esihistoriasta vuoteen 1870* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura / Finnish Literature Society, 2003). Publication 914:1. 646 pp. Illus. €237 for this volume and two others.

This is the first of three volumes which will constitute the definitive history of Finnish agriculture and it spans the period from Stone Age settlement to the 1870s. It is intended for the Finnish specialist not the foreign reader and, as a result, it is assumed unnecessary to sketch in the characteristic features of the physical environment that affect agricultural activities – the interplay between land and water on a glaciated peneplain, the coniferous woodland, the mosslands that cover about a third of the country, cold clays and sandy heaths, the high-latitude climate where winter prevails over summer, the seasonal rhythm of daylight and darkness, the risk of summer frosts. Within this setting agricultural activity has always been a combination of farming and forestry, of farming and fishing or a combination of all three. Down to 1870 subsistence farming prevailed with the practices those of

the *Raubwirtschaft*. Additionally, throughout its history, Finland's farming community has been scourged by intermittent wars and famines, the last at the very time that the volume concludes.

The text falls into five parts: from the prehistoric period through early colonization to the middle ages; the response to the organization of Sweden's Vasa dynasty; the years of the Enlightenment, and the first half of the nineteenth century. A final section identifies trends and developments. An appendix lists old systems of weights, measures and currencies. Among the three editors, special mention must be made of Eino Jutikkala, the most senior Finnish academician and Nordic historian. His contributions on Finland's entailed estates, population change and famine recall his major publications in these fields.

As the eastern half of the Swedish realm, Finland's records are similar to those of Sweden itself and they continued in their established form after Finland became a Russian Grand Duchy in 1809. From the sixteenth century, land registers enable the settlement of Finland to be mapped in fair detail. From the 1630s, with the extension of the cadastral surveys of the Swedish Land Survey Office to Finland, it is possible to identify the character of representative farms, with different types of land use recorded and taxed at different rates. Subsequent legislation covering the consolidation of land holdings (Sw. *Storskifte*; F. *Isojako*) since the eighteenth century has resulted in a major source of evidence for detailed studies in Finnish agricultural history. Half page illustrations exemplify the character of these documents.

Complementing the use of the land is the history of the farmers themselves. The traditional Finnish farmer still rejoices in the name of *talonpoika* (Sw. *bonde*). Perhaps owner-farmer – even yeoman farmer – is the best translation, not 'peasant' as it may still appear in some dictionaries. There are illustrations of the complexes of farm buildings each with its special function. Sometimes there have been extended families, members of which have often colonized the outlying woodlandseters. Below the *talonpoika* in the rural hierarchy was the day labourer or crofter (F. *torppari*), already a near proletariat by the 1870s. The role of women in the farming community is given special treatment.

At the upper end of the social structure were the crown estates, born in the late fifteenth century and numbering 44 a century later. Other landed estates were generally acquired through service to the crown, not least by way of the army. The extremes of the agricultural scene by the 1870s are illustrated on the dust cover with its photograph of swidden (F. *kaski poltto*) or rotational burning of woodland for cropping, and on a

double page elsewhere in the book by a romantic painting of a Finnish estate with its classical *corps de logis* and surrounding park (the 'English park' for some estate owners).

The text is enlivened with scores of illustrations, the smaller of them on the margins of the printed page. The earliest are reproduced from the wall paintings of Finland's medieval churches, those at the end of the volume from photographs that were taken while old practices and features still remained. So many of the lesser illustrations record the importance of wood for the production of farm equipment – carts and boats, ploughs and harrows, wheels and runners, yokes and harnesses, grain and hay pikes, buckets and churns. Supple birch bark was the raw material for other products from backpacks to shoes. Farm markets are remembered, not least through a graphic painting of Porvoo horse market, the Finnish horse being a distinctive breed capable of coping with winter circumstance. There are sections on reindeer husbandry and the emerging interest among Finnish artists in the agrarian landscape.

Most Finns still have their roots in the land. This impressive volume tells how deep those roots have been for Finland's society and economy.

W. R. MEAD

Aston Clinton, Bucks

JEAN-MARC MORICEAU, *Histoire et géographie de l'élevage français du moyen âge à la révolution* (Fayard, 2005). 478 pp. 26 tables; 7 illus; 32 figs; 53 documents. €29.

The title of this book evokes not only the fruitful relationship that has long existed between rural historians and rural geographers in France, but also the specific circumstances of the *pôle rural* that Jean-Marc Moriceau co-directs with geographer Philippe Madeline at the *Maison de la recherche en sciences humaines* at the Université de Caen. Such centres for the social sciences have been established in recent years in each of the French regions and now provide enviable support for research in history, geography, anthropology, sociology and related disciplines. They have also revitalized publication of monographs, edited collections and periodicals by university presses throughout France. As well as holding a chair of modern history, Moriceau edits the periodical *Histoire et sociétés rurales* that has published a suite of important articles since 1994 whose spatial reach extends far beyond France. In addition, he has been instrumental in republishing a number of 'classics' in rural history and ensuring that innovative thematic volumes also reach their audience.

Against the background of a major doctoral thesis (*Les fermiers de l'Île-de-France*, 1994) and a range of other

volumes, including *Terres mouvantes: les campagnes françaises du féodalisme à la mondialisation* published in 2002, Jean-Marc Moriceau presents his *Histoire et géographie de l'élevage*. In fact, this is a repackaged and much expanded version of *L'élevage sous l'ancien régime* (1999). He has retained essentially the same structure and chapter headings but the present book has been enriched by the addition of many new examples and references and a suite of most attractive maps drawn by Maguy Desgardin. Moriceau is most certainly aware of the importance of space and social structure – at a variety of scales – as well as of time in his work. The end result is 478 pages of text, compared with 256 pages in 1999.

Fifteen chapters of unequal length trace how livestock economies have functioned across a wide span of time, stopping short of the dramatic changes that accompanied the railway age. The quantity of *enquêtes* and other sources of documentation from the later decades of the *ancien régime* means that discussion of eighteenth-century conditions is privileged over examination of earlier periods. France is, and always has been, an expression of diversity, and thus Moriceau begins by sketching out the geographies of cattle rearing, pig raising, and horse rearing in the 1790s, with his unavoidably incomplete maps for 1794 being complemented by nationwide coverage for 1852 (reproduced from Michel Demonet, *Tableau de l'agriculture française*, 1990). Source of fertilizer, food and so many other products, livestock farming was also a fragile affair subject to the vagaries of weather, floods, droughts, frost and other natural hazards, as well as to animal diseases and attacks from wolves and other wild beasts. Cattle rearing takes pride of place in the discussion, with some excellent maps of agricultural systems and of supply areas of livestock to Paris and Lyons (however, these are even more impressive in their colour versions in *Terres mouvantes*). Sheep, goats and pigs have a chapter of their own, and this is followed by a short but intriguing chapter that covers rabbits, pigeons, poultry, freshwater fisheries and bees. Such sources of foodstuff were undoubtedly important for both urban and local consumption but scarcity of documentation has meant that they have often been overlooked.

Dairy farming and the functioning of internal systems of trade for butter, cheese and milk are examined at length, before Moriceau offers a critique of traditional, and spatially variable, sources of fodder (stubble, heaths and moors, marshes, natural pastures, leaves from deciduous trees) and then turns to the 'revolutionary' impact of fodder crops introduced to some *pays* during the eighteenth century and the *couchage en herbe* of areas that could supply dynamic urban markets and thereby

escape from the centuries-old exigency of polyculture. Such changes were not simply outworkings of the discipline of distance and evolving communications. As Moriceau has shown compellingly in his earlier work, they reflected the changing perception of specific landowners and occasionally of whole communities. New opportunities could lead to overexploitation of fragile fodder resources, as growing population numbers or human greed outran 'natural potential' in the context of available knowledge and technologies. Transhumance offered a way of managing differing seasonal availability of fodder resources and was surprisingly widespread. A long and detailed chapter relates not only to the Alps, Pyrenees and Massif Central but also to parts of northern France. Hence the excellent work of Mlle Thérèse Sclafert on *estivage* and *hivernage* of sheep in Haute-Provence is complemented by intriguing maps showing the seasonal movement of herds of pigs in seventeenth-century Burgundy and in the Île-de-France. But transhumance was open to abuse when excessively large numbers of animals were involved or were not controlled effectively as they moved along drove roads (*drailles*). Agricultural environments were, indeed, contested spaces with individual livestock farmers having dramatically different appreciations of rural resources from those espoused by peasant communities. In the final chapters of *Histoire et géographie*, Moriceau brings society to the foreground of discussion to complement the enduring, but constantly reappraised, presence of space.

With the inclusion of boxed extracts from documents, numerous tables, reproductions of drawings of livestock (for example, from the *Nouvelle maison rustique*), and excellent maps, Professor Moriceau's latest book is a most welcome addition to the literature on the agricultural history of France. As a geographer, I am particularly impressed by the quality of the maps. Most are highly effective, even in black and white, but it is a pity that J-R. Pitte's map (p. 205) presenting the spatial logic of cheese production was not redrawn. The bibliography of some five hundred items is an invaluable source for further studies, covering not only classic regional monographs by historians and geographers but many articles that have appeared in recent years (however François Sigault's 1975 article on agricultural systems before the railway age is not listed). At 29 Euros, *Histoire et géographie de l'élevage français* is excellent value. Professor Moriceau's next book, mentioned on page 78, will be *Le loup et l'homme depuis le moyen âge*.

HUGH CLOUT
University College London

GÉRARD BÉAUR, CHRISTIAN DESSUREAULT and JOSEPH GOY (eds), *Familles, terre, marchés. Logiques économiques et stratégies dans les milieux ruraux (XVIIe-XXe siècles). Actes du colloque France-Québec-Suisse, Paris, novembre 2002* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2004). 278 pp. €18.

The survival of the peasant farm as an intergenerational enterprise has been one of the central themes of European agrarian history ever since Romantic thinkers proposed an ineluctable tension between traditional peasant culture and the mercantile valuations of land and labour that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century seemed everywhere to be gaining ground. The present volume of conference papers falls squarely in that hallowed dialectical tradition. With few exceptions, the communications concern the legal and extra-legal techniques employed by French peasants to maintain their holdings intact from one generation to the next in the face of the strict partible inheritance regime promulgated in the Civil Code of 1791. From the perspective of the tension between market and traditional values, the recourse to subterfuges in order to bequeath the family farm to a single heir in regions that had practised non-partible inheritance of agricultural wealth expresses the persistence of traditional social values in the face of modernization imposed by the state. The theme is well-worn.

The superabundant source material deposited in archives of civil registrations, parish records, *cadastres*, and notarial minutes supplies ample information for tracing inheritance practices in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Despite that documentary luxuriance, the results reported in the studies included in the present collection are disappointing. It is hardly news that in regions where farms were passed to a single heir (with compensation for the other heirs), the Civil Code had little immediate impact on regional patterns of property transmission. The articles make minor rectifications to Jean Yver's study of regional inheritance practices in France, which was based on legal texts, but they do not significantly alter his broad conclusions. Most of the articles on France are preliminary investigations of archival resources rather than finished products of exhaustive study of well-defined questions. What is missing is a clear statement of why anyone besides legal historians should be interested in the trivia of inheritance practices. A few essays nevertheless stand out. Desai's analysis of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century petitions for 'emancipation' of minors from wardship in the Auxerrois indicates a growing willingness of tutors to emancipate female wards at a younger age in the eighteenth century. This is a track worth following up as an indicator of changing *mentalités*: its

significance for rural history seems rather thin, however. In another interesting essay, Rémy describes how in recent times the high Alpine pastures that were exploited (but not owned) in common in the Tarentaise region of Savoie became an object of contention among their several owners as a result of declining agricultural and the rising recreational value of Alpine open spaces.

Perhaps the most interesting communications concern French Canada. The studies by Dessureault and Dépatie provide intriguing evidence on how the structure of local economic activity affected the composition of the household labour force in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Craig's study of four rural general stores in the 1830s and 1840s shows how the consumption of market-supplied commodities evolved in a very remote district of upper New Brunswick. Lafleur, Paquet and Wallot demonstrate the richness of the Canadian sources for analyzing the evolution of family land holding. Wien gives an original analysis of the effect of the demand for labour in the fur trade on the small pool of available farm labour in eighteenth-century Quebec. These are excellent essays, but their connection to the issues that inspired the conference that gave birth to this volume seems distant. On the whole, the collection is disappointing. It would have benefited from a more ambitious introduction to the material, and more severe editing of unripe fruit that in time may give a real harvest.

GEORGE GRANTHAM
McGill University, Montreal

JOHN MCKENDRICK HUGHES (ed. JOHN R. HUGHES), *The unwanted. Great War letters from the field* (University of Alberta Press, 2005). xxxvii + 395 pp. Illus. C\$32.95.

This fascinating book is an account of one man's war. John McKendrick Hughes (1882–1967) was a Canadian who enlisted into the 151st Battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles. This battalion was broken up in the autumn of 1916 and the lower ranks were attached to other battalions to reinforce fighting units on the Western Front, leaving an embarrassing number of officers surplus to requirements. McKendrick was one such officer, hence the title of the book. He languished in England for some time but in July 1917 responded to the call for officers to devote themselves to communication work, even though that meant reverting from the rank of major to that of staff lieutenant, second class. Fiercely patriotic, farmer McKendrick agreed and rose to the challenge of being an 'agricultural officer'.

British troops were already working alongside French farmers to produce food for the army since German submarines played havoc with supplies from across the

Channel. During the summer of 1916 the Somme offensive liberated a stretch of land from which British troops harvested crops and, with the help of German prisoners of war, planted abandoned patches of farmland to grow cereals, potatoes and other vegetables. Early in 1917 'agricultural officers' – often farmers in civilian life – were appointed to co-ordinate military help to local farming families. In this way, John McKendrick Hughes featured in a little-known aspect of agricultural history that arose from non-combatant men providing catering, clerical, medical and agricultural support. The men who experienced the trenches, stormed enemy sites, or 'went over the top' were only part of the British army. As Dr Craig Gibson explains in a twenty-page introduction, the 'blood and guts' horror of combat emphasized in military histories and evoked in the mythology of nation building was not the only story. He estimates that of two million British and dominion officers and men in northern France and Flanders in the first week of August 1917, only 700 to 800,000 belonged to combatant units.

Between August 1917 and demobilization in 1919, John McKendrick Hughes used his agricultural – and Canadian – initiative to organize soldiers who were rotated away from the front line or worked under special orders to help local farmers, to produce food items for British soldiers and, in the summer and autumn of 1918, to harvest ground captured from the Germans, some of which had been planted by his own men.

The unwanted tells this remarkable story from the point of view of an energetic Canadian in his middle thirties who had no time for British army rules. His solidly pragmatic approach paid off and he made use of fellow Canadians for essential agricultural tasks, knowing that many shared his 'down to earth' qualities and disregard for 'red tape'. He drafted his book in 1956 from evidence contained in a mass of hastily-written letters sent, often on a daily basis, to his wife Sara between 1916 and 1919. Almost all the original letters were lost subsequently but the manuscript was passed on to a grandson, John Richard Hughes, who edited it for publication, provided copious notes and appendices, and enlisted the help of Dr Gibson to write the introduction. The book presents an often entertaining account of remarkable success in agricultural endeavour under difficult circumstances: bomb craters, whizzing shells, dead horses and human corpses were frequently encountered. Potatoes, vegetables, pigs and cattle figure largely in this farmer's story, together with entertaining reminiscences about the British office class. After the war, John McKendrick Hughes returned to his farm near Flatbush in northern Alberta, becoming a leading figure in local agricultural co-operatives and a keen author.

Characteristically, the family's farmhouse was known as 'The Barracks'.

I liked this book greatly for the light it shed on wartime agriculture on the Western Front and for the images it conveyed of parts of northern France that I know well from my own fieldwork on settlement reconstruction in the wake of war. Reproductions of folded sections of maps used by Hughes are especially poignant. *The unwanted* reminded me of my own family: of distant relatives who went to Canada and Australia before the Great War, of my maternal grandfather who drew detailed plans for laying out narrow-gauge railways to supply the front line, and of my father who fought in that war and whose shrapnel-pitted back reminded me of how he and so many others were scarred for life. Of course, I also have some reservations. *The unwanted* is a long and personal book reinforced by notes and appendices from grandson John. I wondered whether they needed to be so detailed and whether two long letters needed to be transcribed and reproduced in facsimile. Here is a work of family, military and agricultural history combined. The University of Alberta Press are to be congratulated for producing an elegant book with excellent photographs and page design at a very good price.

HUGH CLOUT
University College London

JONATHAN HARWOOD, *Technology's dilemma. Agricultural colleges between science and practice in Germany, 1860–1934* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005). 288 pp. £29.

Technology's dilemma, according to this book, is that it is rooted in science but must remain aware of the needs of its users. Consequently academic technologists must pay attention to both, and the balance is not easy to maintain. Should they, for example, conduct a trial to determine which of two fertilizers has the greater impact on the yield of a specific crop, or carry out a programme of experiments to determine the basic physiological characteristics of crop plants and the ways in which they are affected by nutrient availability? The first will almost certainly be quicker, easier, and cheaper to carry out, and produce immediately usable results; the second may take a lifetime, but save endless repetitions of the first kind of experiment. The first will appeal to farmers and fertilizer firms who want quick answers to practical questions, but they will do little for the experimenter's professional reputation. The second will enhance scientific status but receive few thanks from commerce.

Harwood's contention is that technical education establishments, and especially those agricultural ones with which he is most concerned, will tend to specialize in one direction or the other, but that the more practical

institutions will, over time, tend to be more academic, or exhibit 'academic drift'. The danger in their doing so is that their graduates will lack practical skills and that their staff will lose contact with the concerns of the farmers and ancillary industries that will eventually employ the graduates. He elucidates the process with an explanatory 'model of institutional dynamics': the staff in such establishments will want to enhance their academic status, and in consequence will strengthen their science orientation. The effort they apply to so doing will depend upon their institution's rank in the status hierarchy, whether or not it is part of a university, and in which faculty, and whether it has an urban or rural location (more science is expected in urban locations). Success in status enhancement will depend upon the attitude of the government ministry (usually either agriculture or education) controlling the establishment and of local agricultural interest groups, who might work through formal political channels or attempt to achieve direct influence by funding research or teaching that is perceived to meet their needs.

The bulk of the book is concerned with validating this model through a study of agricultural education in Germany between the middle of the nineteenth century and the 1930s. Harwood describes the various academies, colleges and university departments and their student bodies, with their varying status hierarchies, funding sources, and responsible ministries over Germany as a whole. He then compares two institutions at the scientific end of the spectrum (Berlin and Halle) with three of the more practical (Breslau, Hohenheim and Bonn) as far as geographical location, formal organization, teaching programmes, staff and student backgrounds, advisory activities and research are concerned. Finally he compares Bavaria's two establishments, Munich and Weihenstephan, from 1872 to 1934. His concluding chapter is mainly concerned with applying his model to the history of agricultural education outside Germany (specifically in Britain, the Netherlands and the USA), to the history of engineering, medical and management engineering, and to the present-day reform of technical and professional education.

The treatment of German agricultural education is detailed, and, as far as this reviewer can tell, expert and convincing. The principal strength of the book, and the reason why it is worth reading for those with no particular interest in either Germany or agricultural education, is the way in which it constructs its explanatory model and then uses it to make sense of what could so easily be a formless mass of detail. It fails, however, on its promise 'to illuminate the history of agricultural science and education ... in Britain' (p. 33), and this is a great pity, for status hierarchies, academic drift,

differing objectives of sponsoring ministries, and the other components of Harwood's model all have relevance to the history of agricultural education in Britain since the 1840s. But only a page of discussion, most of it derived from a single unpublished work, is devoted to the British comparison, and the plethora of college histories, doctoral theses and historical surveys that have emerged in the last ten years is completely ignored. The irony is that, on the whole, they validate his model just as well as his German examples. Harwood also bemoans the lack of a book-length treatment of the agricultural sciences, thus neglecting not only recent work, but also Russell's classic *A history of agricultural science in Great Britain*, published forty years ago. The problems of this book therefore arise from the author's apparent unfamiliarity with British sources, and British historians should not make the corresponding mistake of ignoring his theory and his work on Germany. Agricultural historians have much to learn from historians of science and technology, even if on some points the traffic might profitably pass the other way.

PAUL BRASSLEY
University of Plymouth

FERNANDO COLLANTES GUTIÉRREZ, *El declive demográfico de la montaña española (1850-2000) ¿una drama rural?* (Madrid: Centro de Publicaciones, Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación, 2004). 47 tables; 17 graphs. 364pp. No price given.

Spain is a very mountainous country. Within Europe, its average height above sea level – around 600 metres – is exceeded only by Switzerland and Austria. Fernando Collantes' nicely crafted monograph analyzes the diversity of mountain regions within the peninsula, along with their demographic experiences over the last century-and-a-half. From the 1860s, all of Spain's highland zones experienced population decline at some stage. Before the 1950s, this decline was most clearly visible in relative terms, vis-à-vis the expanding conurbations of Madrid and the periphery. After that date, however, rural decline was more pronounced, reaching its climax during the country's industrial boom of the 1960s and early 1970s. The main reasons for this overall demographic decline, Collantes argues, are to be found in the nature of the country's economic development. Rejecting the paradigm of mountainous areas as self sufficient, Collantes views them, first and foremost, as part of the spatial division of labour. In particular, nineteenth-century Spain witnessed the demise of those activities, such as livestock farming, in which its mountainous zones enjoyed either absolute or comparative advantages. At the same time, certain upland areas benefited from the diffusion of non-agrarian activities, not

least mining and later tourism. Initially, a great deal depended on the economic strategies of peasant families. With the spread of manufacturing industry, many districts of the Pyrenees and Cantabrian Cordillera saw their economies radically transformed due to the expansion of coal mining – a phenomenon which, he maintains, is best seen as the diffusion of industrialization from Catalonia and the Basque Country. At this stage, labour relations moved out of the family sphere, whilst the inhabitants of the mountains became increasingly subject to entrepreneurial and political decisions taken some distance away.

Why did these zones become depopulated? And, more importantly, how do we account for the marked disparities between Spain's mountainous regions? Here Collantes emphasizes the close correlation between the phases of demographic evolution and the phases of Spanish economic growth. Before 1950, the possibilities of emigration from the mountains came up against a number of important obstacles. These included the slow rate of urban demand for unskilled labour, together with low levels of national economic growth. Other obstacles, including high levels of illiteracy, as well as the long distances from industrial areas, were of particular significance in the south. In certain areas, among them Cantabria, the situation was not all that desperate. Yet, from the 1950s, as welfare conditions deteriorated in the mountains, the higher wages that could be earned in western Europe or in Spain's burgeoning industrial centres set in motion a growing rural exodus, eased in recent times by in-migration.

In geographical terms, Collantes outlines the experiences of Spain's four great mountainous zones. Firstly, in the north, ecological conditions favoured the pursuit of cattle farming, based on small-scale units using family labour. At times of least demand, family members performed additional tasks, some of which took them away from the mountains for long periods. From the end of the nineteenth century, the area also witnessed the rise of temporary emigration to Latin America. In addition, the region benefited from a growing demand for livestock products from the cities, high rainfall, and good communications. It also saw the emergence of important mining and industrial zones, such as Mieres (Asturias) and el Bierzo (León). Secondly, Collantes argues, industrialization in the Pyrenees provoked constant tensions between the effects of polarization and diffusion. As sheep farming gave way – all too slowly – to beef and dairy cattle, the attractions of Basque and Catalan industry led to heavy population losses from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. On the negative side, the profits to be had from coal mining soon proved disappointing to investors while, more

positively, hydroelectric power in the river valleys of northern Catalonia partly accounted for the spread of textile colonies. A century later, the favourable geographical location of the Pyrenees as well as their natural conditions brought much-needed investment in tourism, not least winter sports. Thirdly, nowhere was demographic decline more marked than in the mountains of the interior. Before 1950, nearly all this area experienced depopulation due to 'the weakness of its insertion into the new division of labour'. During the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the twin props of the interior zone's pre-industrial economy, transhumant sheep farming and woollen textiles, were in sharp decline. Yet, unlike the Pyrenees, the zone was incapable of switching from sheep to cattle farming, due to its inadequate rainfall. Nor did the interior benefit greatly from diffusion, with a few exceptions like the timber industry of Soria. The proximity of Madrid completed the picture. Fourthly, throughout the period 1860–2000, the mountains of the south witnessed the smallest net loss of inhabitants. Despite the precariousness of its situation – high levels of mortality, low levels of consumption, mass illiteracy – the region's population went up by almost fifty per cent before 1950. How was this possible? The answer, it would appear, lies with the continuous expansion of the region's export base, centred on the so-called Mediterranean trilogy of wheat, wine and olives. After that date, illiteracy and the long distances to be travelled helped slow down the rate of emigration.

Finally, Collantes asks, wherein lies the rural drama of Spain's mountainous regions? Is it due to depopulation, the consequence of poor welfare provision, or low standards of living? Was it brought about by the disappearance of traditional patterns of rural life, as a result of economic development, or conversely by the lack of it? In his opinion, the aim of the Spanish government's rural policy should be not to re-establish past situations but to create new ones. Hence, this well-researched and thoughtful book concludes, what the country needs is a number of different strategies for its mountainous regions, designed to address a variety of situations.

JOSEPH HARRISON
University of Manchester

GIOVANNI FEDERICO, *Feeding the world. An economic history of agriculture, 1800–2000* (Princeton UP, 2005).

xiv + 388 pp. 75 tables; 4 graphs; 1 map. £29.95.

Giovanni Federico's global economic history is the first of its kind, an ambitious, bullish survey of an industry that has confounded the forecasts of pessimists from Thomas Malthus to Paul Erlich. It summons an

impressive range of data (75 tables in the text, plus a statistical appendix of 17 pages) and a huge specialist literature, mainly in English (46 pages of bibliography).

The book is very well organized. It begins with an account of how geography (encompassing soil and climate) made agriculture 'different'. The diversity that is much of the sector's charm for agricultural historians does not detain Federico, however. This is history cast very much in economic terms, in which arguments from first economic principles are generally favoured over the 'anecdotal evidence' of historians (e.g. pp. 4, 141, 186, 231). The core of the book analyzes the industry within a production function framework. This involves describing output trends (Chapter 3), and then explaining how inputs (Chapter 4), productivity growth (Chapter 5), technological progress (Chapter 6), institutional change (Chapter 8), the role of the state (Chapter 9) affected output over time. The final chapter offers fifteen stylized facts – some of them quite striking – and casts a provocative and optimistic look to the future.

No soundly-based estimate of global food production is possible before 1870. Federico reckons on the basis of admittedly flimsy evidence that output kept pace with population, but at consumption levels consistent with poor nutritional status. Thereafter, with the onset of national agricultural censuses, the data improve. Federico estimates that the annual rate of growth of world food output per head rose from 0.15 per cent in 1870–1938 to 0.56 per cent in 1961–2000. The earlier figure is derived from an expert reading of a range of sources, the later from data in the UN Food and Agricultural Organization's website (<http://faostat.fao.org/>). The achievement of late nineteenth-century agriculture was to keep pace with population growth, against widespread predictions to the contrary. Output per worker grew, albeit slowly, thanks mainly to additional inputs of capital and land. Price data are shown to broadly corroborate this story: the real price of food products tended to rise before 1870 but has fallen sharply since then.

Taken together, the percentage growth rates above imply an increase in the available food per capita of less than two-fifths between 1870 and 2000. The impact of such a relatively modest increase on life expectancy and physical size of *homo sapiens* is striking. Presumably the increase in output was matched or exceeded by the increase in nutritional content, although the issue is not broached. Artificial fertilizers, biological innovations, increased specialization, and the resilience and creativity of farmers (large and small) fended off the law of diminishing returns with ease. An attendant reduction in the

impact of harvest fluctuations over time is implicit, though not discussed.

Throughout, *Feeding the world* bears witness to a historian's conversion to the economic approach to the past. In the spirit of Douglas North, institutions tend not to matter in the long run, because they are adaptable. Federico concedes that a purely rational choice approach is, to an extent, ahistorical because it leaves much of what happens in the short run unaccounted for (p. 220). Federico's 1800–2000 is a long time, however, even in history. In the spirit of Ronald Coase, property rights don't matter insofar as they are enforceable. Thus traditionally contentious issues such as sharecropping, inheritance customs, and forms of ownership are by no means ignored, but they play secondary roles. This also means that the focus is much more on issues of efficiency and productivity than on the distributional issues that feature much larger in traditional accounts.

Federico's reading of the past informs his relatively 'upbeat' outlook on the future. In common with most present-day students of agricultural economics and development economics, he is optimistic about agriculture's capacity to deliver the goods and unconvinced by the many environmentalists and ecologists who worry about 'sustainability'. Federico is probably right, but greater attention to the situation in Africa, which does not feature much here and is absent in the index, must temper confidence. In both Africa as a whole and in sub-Saharan Africa, the food supply has barely been keeping pace with population since 1960. Is Africa's backwardness due to the 'peculiarities of agriculture', the inflexibility of its institutions, the persistently high rates of population growth, or the uniqueness of the African environment (p. 222)? The failure – so far – of desertification to wreak the havoc widely predicted in the 1970s and 1980s, and the decreasing incidence of famines of biblical proportion, are in tune with Federico's themes of farmer resilience and institutional flexibility. Yet global warming poses a real threat, and Africa's poor are probably more susceptible to its potential impact than those of any other continent. That Africa's share of global population is predicted to reach 21.7 per cent by 2050 (according to the latest UN medium-range predictions) – compared to 8.8 percent in 1950 and 14 percent today – is no cause for complacency.

The range, stance, and clarity of this hugely impressive book make it ideally suited to classroom use at advanced undergraduate or graduate level. It deserves to be widely read, in university libraries and beyond.

CORMAC Ó GRÁDA
University College Dublin