

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

P. H. W. BOOTH (ed.), *Accounts of the manor and hundred of Macclesfield, Cheshire, Michaelmas 1361 to Michaelmas 1362* (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 138, 2003). lxiv + 96 pp. £25 to non-members.

This set of accounts for Macclesfield manor and hundred in 1361–2 combines the accounts of a number of officers of the manor and hundred for the accounting year. The officers, including the bailiff of the forest, a parker, reeves and stock-keepers, report on a range of activities all of which are, in some form and variety, familiar from medieval accounts of this and similar kind. It is most especially in the stock-keeper's accounts, as the editor, P. H. W. Booth, reminds us, that the particular interest of these accounts lies, since at this point in its history the lordship of Macclesfield, held by the Black Prince, was closely managed in relation to cattle breeding, a significant enterprise in this period. Thus, most especially in the stock-keeper's money and stock accounts, we are presented with a considerable degree of detail regarding, *inter alia*, the breeding, husbandry and marketing of the lordship's live- and deadstock. The accounts are presented in Latin with facing translation and are accompanied by a detailed introduction. The present edition is one part of a larger campaign by the editor, who has written extensively on the lordship and the county of Chester in the fourteenth century, to publish a range of material, and especially accounting material, relevant to the region and to the lordship, cross-reference to which is frequently made in this edition.

In the introduction, Booth details the descent of the manor and its administrative structures. In the fullest section of the introduction the editor also closely discusses what he terms 'the Macclesfield cattle enterprise'. He locks horns with earlier interpretations of the history and significance of livestock husbandry in the region, which he largely dismisses as 'uncritical', and offers a detailed assessment of the rise and decline of the 'enterprise', together with comment on a range of associated issues, including marketing, the costs of labour, the pasturing of the livestock, and dairying. Booth also describes the relatively limited profits arising from the livestock venture, where, although prices moved

according to national trend, the actual prices were relatively low. In 1376, according to Booth, the concentration on cattle husbandry appears to have been abandoned. The editor speculates that the costs relative to profits, and especially labour costs, were a determining factor but he also considers the possibility that poor weather, and its concomitant effects on a hay harvest, may have had its part to play.

The volume is supported by figures illustrating a number of the significant trends outlined in the introduction, maps of the region and of conjectural sites for the vaccaries, and an index. There are two appendices, one usefully summarizing the 'cattle enterprise' data extracted from the accounts from 1353 to 1376, the other, rather more idiosyncratically, adding some further observations and associated commentaries on the 'Great rebellion of Cheshire of 1353', an 'event' relevant to the history of the lordship and also discussed in an set of published accounts edited by Booth.

A developing interest in 'decision-making in agriculture' and most especially the calculations of seigniorial management of husbandry, evident in the work of Campbell, Stone and others, will ensure that this volume will be of benefit to researchers in these areas, as well as those primarily interested in the late medieval history of the region.

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JOHN LANGDON, *Mills in the medieval economy. England, 1300–1540* (OUP, 2004). xx + 369 pp. 38 tables; 12 plates; 28 figs; 6 maps. £60.

This is a most welcome book. A long-matured work, it is the culmination of some twenty years research that began at the University of Birmingham. Under the inspiring leadership of Rodney Hilton and then principally Christopher Dyer, a succession of postgraduate students pursued themes of largely rural history, firmly based on thorough studies of the copious English manorial documentation and at the same time grounded in an appreciation of the social implications of the nature of the medieval agrarian economy. During the early 1980s Langdon (and subsequently others) turned to the medieval mill as a pre-eminent subject of serious study,

with the aim of superseding the then-prevalent – often fanciful – speculations around the significance and the impact of this most obvious example of early mechanization. The present reviewer's *The mills of medieval England* (1988) was essentially a broad overview of the questions surrounding the mill, of its chronology and its social implications, and of the evidence. Langdon's book now brings a depth of research and analysis that allows our earlier models to be tested, confirmed, and generally modified. It is indeed a triumphant and worthy culmination of that long research effort.

Langdon focuses on the later middle ages, a period when the mill was fully-established. By 1300 the English countryside was filled with watermills and (since the late twelfth century) windmills, and in fact their number would soon begin to fall, accompanying the downturn in the population. The very large sample – 333 manorial mill histories each covering the whole period under study – confirms the trends identified in earlier, smaller samples that watermills were in gentle decline both in number and as revenue earners certainly until the middle of the fifteenth century, whilst the windmill entered a more precipitate decline. Fulling mills and other industrial mills held their position through the period, with a notable take-off in the number of industrial mills at the very end of the middle ages. Langdon's statistical work on a wide range of milling activities goes well beyond such simple analyses, however, and with constant regional breakdowns reflects the complexity of the late medieval economy. The numerous tables and figures reflect how extensive this statistical work was, and are a testimony to the breadth and depth of research that lies behind every chapter of this book.

The mill is interesting in itself as a machine, and there are technical data in plenty. The copious English manorial records often record in astonishing detail the minutiae of the costs of construction and repairs, from which a very full picture of the machines can be drawn, and also of course a fuller appreciation of the technicalities and the financial implications of operating a mill. Langdon uses this matter primarily to support a book which is essentially about the mill in use, about the mill's economic and social meaning. So this is no narrow technological study that neglects people: the owners and operators of mills, and their customers, receive full and satisfying treatment. The traditional perception of the mill as exclusively a jealously-guarded demesne asset has already been shown to be false, and Langdon fills out and develops the picture of diversity, with a significant number of mills effectively independent of the manor and many others held by tenants on lease. Much information on those who took tenancies is presented, and on those poorer men who actually worked the mills.

The question of the relationships the different classes of customer had to these mills is crucial: how did suit of mill, the tenant's duty to use his lord's mill, actually work in practice? Langdon's presentation of copious evidence to demonstrate the practicalities of the situation, and the apparent tendency through much of this period for lords to extend or try to extend their powers in this respect, is only one of the many fascinating sections of the book. Each of his chapters ends with a discussion of the implications of his findings, and (parallel with the presentation of important empirical evidence for how this sector of the medieval economy worked) these discussions, of – for example – technical creativity and technological systems, capital fragmentation and reformulation, and the social interactions of milling, take the reader far into important theoretical considerations with significance well beyond the field of milling.

As Langdon points out in his concluding discussion, his study of milling confirms continuity rather than radical change, consolidation rather than discontinuity. The medieval mill was not an agent of social change, he is saying, but rather milling was yet another activity contributing to the reinforcement of traditional economic and social patterns. Though some historians of technology still favour an 'industrial revolution of the middle ages' driven by waterpower and windpower, the medieval mill can be seen in its true colours as a characteristic feature of a pre-industrial society.

RICHARD HOLT
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R. W. DUNNING (ed.), *The Victoria history of the counties of England. A history of the county of Somerset*, VIII, *The Poldens and the Levels* (Boydell and Brewer for the Institute of Historical Research, 2004). xvi + 246 pp. 71 figs. £75.

This volume covers seventeen predominantly rural parishes in central Somerset, comprising the hundreds of Huntspill, Puriton and Whitley. In this region the low ridge of the Polden Hills divides two wetland areas, the central and southern Somerset Levels. Both consist of low-lying peat moors, overlain towards the coast by alluvial clays. Islands and peninsulae rise above the floodable land on both sides of the Poldens. In the parishes studied here the most extensive are the Sowey island and the High Ham promontory, both to the south beyond King's Sedgemoor.

This area was dominated throughout the middle ages by the great Benedictine abbey of Glastonbury. The settlement pattern is primarily one of large nucleated villages. Several villages along the northern flank of the Poldens have a distinctly rectilinear layout which suggests some level of organized planning. This was

presumably initiated by the abbey, and investigations at Shapwick have suggested that this may have taken place in the tenth century during a major reorganization of the monastic estate. The extent of Glastonbury's contiguous landholdings also enabled it to undertake substantial drainage works, notably the diversion of the River Brue through the central Levels from Meare Pool westwards to a new outlet to the Bristol Channel below Highbridge. This diversion is here dated to the later twelfth century, a little earlier than the date-range proposed by Michael Williams in *The draining of the Somerset Levels* (1970). Not only was the abbey directly involved in reclamation, it also encouraged its tenants to undertake similar works, and evidence of agricultural expansion and the settling of new hamlets and farms reaches a peak in the thirteenth century.

Even before the end of the fifteenth century, however, much of the Glastonbury demesne land was being leased out, arable farming had contracted, and some enclosure had taken place. The suppression of the abbey in 1539 and the division of its estate between individual proprietors brought to an end the traditional large-scale movement of flocks and herds around summer pastures on the Levels, and disrupted the co-ordinated management of the drainage. The new owners and tenants were unenthusiastic about improvements which they feared would prejudice their common rights, and preferred to accept the hazards of regular flooding. Overstocking for fatstock and cheese production in due course caused the grassland to deteriorate, and the value of the moors inevitably declined. Renewed improvements were undertaken through a series of parliamentary acts for division and reallocation of the moors between 1777 and 1807, while comprehensive drainage schemes were initiated for Sedgemoor and the Brue valley, with varying degrees of success. Major works continued into the middle of the twentieth century, with the construction of the Huntspill River and the widening of the King's Sedgemoor Drain.

One of the delights of the VCH is the detail it provides on some of the backwaters and byways of agricultural history. Scattered through the volume is a wealth of information on both traditional and more recent uses of the unimproved moors: summer grazing, reed-beds, osier cultivation, the pasturing of geese, fisheries, duck decoys, medieval turbaries and modern peat extraction. On the higher land, pockets of open fields survived into the eighteenth century, but here too there were distinctive local cultures such as cider orchards.

Occasionally one reads criticisms of the standardized format of the VCH and its encyclopaedic content. Yet its purpose is surely not to address the fashionable questions of a particular time, but rather to provide a solid

bedrock of thoroughly researched material which can be quarried according to the needs of its users, along with a record of sources which can be used as a guide by those wishing to investigate further. The range of sources consulted is formidable and, for those of us whose grasp of palaeography and medieval Latin remains somewhat wobbly, the distillation of information from so many unpublished early manuscripts is particularly valuable.

If the Somerset VCH has a weakness, it is its parish maps. In this, as in previous volumes, they are immaculately neat, but limited in ambition, and therefore less useful than they might be. Based mostly upon sources of the 1830s and 1840s, they plot parish boundaries, roads and watercourses, and locate and name settlements; but they reveal little of the agricultural landscape, the extent and distribution of woodland, meadow, parkland, open field and enclosure. VCH volumes from some other counties, notably Oxfordshire, have made effective use of earlier estate maps to portray such information, and it is a pity that this practice is not more widely adopted.

It would be wrong, however, to end on a carping note. This latest Somerset volume is a splendid achievement, and Dr Dunning and his collaborators, Mary Siraut, who contributed six of the parish accounts, and Elizabeth Williamson, who provided the architectural descriptions, deserve our gratitude and congratulations.

JAMES BOND

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SYLVIA PINCHES, MAGGIE WHALLEY and DAVE POSTLES (eds), *The market place and the place of the market* (Friends of the Centre for English Local History, Friends' Paper 9, 2004). iv + 102 pp. £6 incl. p&p from Publications Sales, Friends of the Centre for English Local History, Marc Fitch Institute, 5 Salisbury Road, Leicester LE1 7QR.

This is a collection of articles presented at a conference organized in March 2003 by the Friends of the Centre for English Local History at the University of Leicester. The editors claim to have exercised a very light touch and kept editorial intervention to a minimum. The articles cover a wide range of subjects in widely differing styles. Their wide-ranging nature reminds us that the market is a multifaceted construction. It is not possible to do full justice to each of the articles in a short review.

Graham Jones examines the forms and locations of medieval marketplaces, with particular reference to the relationship between churches and market places in Norwich and Stamford. He also examines Sunday markets (he includes a list), wool markets in Leicestershire, and the possibility that the sites of some fairs have pre-Christian religious origins. Christopher Dyer reminds us that even in the medieval period markets were not

simply places for the exchange of essential foodstuffs, or the only place where they were exchanged. Although the households of the gentry may have increased demand when they were present, markets were maintained by a local population of consumers. His paper is illuminated by numerous examples and reinforced by Jane Laughton's paper on Catesby Priory as a consumer in the first half of the fifteenth century. Using the account rolls, she shows how the priory used a variety of local markets and different personnel to purchase regular and occasional goods. She demonstrates not only that there was a hierarchy of markets, but that significant resources would be put into accessing the right market for a specific product. More illuminating is the use of local traders for substantial purchases, showing their flexibility, and the multiple roles of the Priory's cloth carrier as a trader on his own account and provider of fish and meat.

Dave Postles examines the market place as a social and cultural site that exhibited 'multiple spatiality'. Here different groups came into contact, power was demonstrated and resisted, and civic pride was exhibited, especially in the control of the space within the market and the development of new market places. He argues that the special temporary context that was essential to the functioning of the market provided a focus and cultural resource in which to play out conflicts. The significance of the personal experience of the market place is amply demonstrated by the contribution from Alan Everitt, recording his personal experience of markets, with particular reference to the modern market in Leicester. He reminds us that although the marketplace may have been the main focus of trade, it was not the only place where deals were done. He also reminds us of the importance people attached to their local markets and fairs, something few can now experience. This reviewer remembers that less than twenty years ago his town was transformed on a Wednesday by an influx of animals and country people, and in September children were given the day off from local schools to walk to the Cheese Show. Since then both the market and the fair have moved to sites out of town, and the intimate relationship between the activities, their traditional location and the population has been broken after more than five hundred years.

Andrew Hann explores the modernization of the market places in the eighteenth century, using a cultural and associated economic approach to look at the commodification of market rights, and the introduction of bourgeois civic values into the public sphere of the market. The last two papers examine horse trading. Anne Pegg gives an introduction to Rothwell (Rowell) Horse Fair and includes transcriptions from the toll books for 1686 and 1743–44. Mandy DeBelin provides an exami-

nation of the terms used to describe the horses, taken from the records from Banbury, Oxford and Hallaton (Leicestershire).

The value of collections such as this is the opportunity to be informed about areas outside one's normal range of interests. The reviewer wonders whether such books might be more widely read if they could be made available on the internet, but until they are would encourage anyone with more than a passing interest in the market to write to Leicester for a copy.

NEIL HOWLETT
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IAN D. WHYTE and ANGUS J. L. WINCHESTER (eds),
Society, landscape and environment in upland Britain
(Society for Landscape Studies, 2004). iv + 179 pp. £28
incl. p&p from Mrs Kathryn Brown, 38 Mill Road,
Bozeat, Northants, NN29 7JA.

As the future of the hills and uplands of Britain continues to be fiercely debated both in agricultural and political circles, this volume of thirteen essays is a timely reminder that the mountains and moorlands have long played a dynamic role in the economy and culture of these islands. The book itself concentrates on the post-medieval period and attempts wide coverage of the environmental and ecological changes wrought by developments in agricultural and industrial technologies in the upland regions.

Introductory essays by paleoecologists Margaret Atherden and Richard Tipping are followed by Angus Winchester's detailed account of the management of upland forests in medieval England wherein he shows how the boundaries of forest and chase retreated into the heart of the uplands while numbers of deer dwindled when confronted with the inevitable competition from sheep. Bob Dodgshon's elegant quantitative account of the shift away from traditional Highland practices towards commercial sheep farming, Peter Herring's discussion of Cornwall, and other contributions testify to the profound ecological changes which follow in the wake of changes in the ratio of different upland grazing species. Ecological change also followed in the wake of enclosure, the familiar story of which is covered by John Chapman, while Eleanor Straughton considers common land utilization since enclosure, bringing to bear an international dimension to her chapter. Much of this, of course, is familiar stuff. In like manner, Ian Whyte's essay on the impact of mining and quarrying shows how the environmental impacts are both immediately apparent and darkly more insidious as heavy metals contaminate soil, vegetation, livestock and people. Inevitably, economic and technical advance leads to social change and Mark Brayshay and Andrew Williams reveal that

in Snowdonia long-term continuity punctuated by brief periods of rapid change have transformed both landscape and society. The combined effects of nineteenth and twentieth century estate and farm rationalization, followed more recently by the trauma of Chernobyl and the disastrous consequences of BSE and Foot and Mouth disease, have meant not only elements of ecological change, but a contraction in the number of full time farms in the Llanberis valley from forty seven in 1868 to a mere five in 2001.

Elsewhere in Wales, R.J. Silvester demonstrates how pressure on upland commons from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, be it from overgrazing, encroachment, peat and bracken cutting or even shooting, left physical evidence in some shape or form. Moreover he shows that while the creation of seigneurial forests or the acquisition of lands by monastic institutions can be illustrated from documentary sources, where court rolls and other local records have not survived it becomes nigh-on impossible to describe the utilization of medieval uplands. The survival of huts, enclosures and the bases of buildings can offer some clues, although of course it is by no means certain that many (if any) of these ruins are of medieval or prehistoric provenance. It is extraordinarily difficult, in the absence of datable artefacts, to differentiate between the base of a medieval hut and a nineteenth-century shepherd's shelter. Besides, even if the thousands of surviving huts in different parts of upland Britain were of proven medieval date, we could only intelligently speculate on the nature of the economy they oversaw if we knew with certainty whether they were permanently or seasonally occupied. And what of these allegedly 'medieval' strip cultivation systems increasingly revealed by aerial photography in the hills of mid-Wales? They look suspiciously like early nineteenth-century cultivation ridges to me. In fact a few years ago I stumbled across an abandoned nineteenth-century plough close to one of the sites now claimed to be of medieval provenance!

While agricultural change has its inevitable effects on upland ecology, the influence of collecting and gathering is sometimes ignored or underplayed, and the contribution to this volume by Rotherham, Egan and Ardrion on the effects of peat and turf utilization shows just how widespread these practices were in upland Britain. Peat cutting (and to a lesser extent the gathering of broom, gorse, rushes and bracken for a variety of purposes) had significant effects on vegetation, soil and hydrology. It is sadly ironic that those melancholy, dreary and featureless deserts of *Nardus* and *Molinea* which develop after the removal of peat are now considered by the green primitives to be worthy of preservation.

The most interesting and original essay in this

collection is contributed by Melanie Tebbutt and is essentially a consideration of the imaginative geographies of the Peak, the association of the northern uplands with freethinking and radicalism and as a metaphor for masculinity with the inevitable homoerotic elements. Contrasting the 'masculine' north with the soft 'feminized' downlands of southern England, Tebbutt shows that the hills were seen as bastions of purity and wholesomeness against the squalor of urban life.

The final chapter, by Guy Robinson, reviews the development and organization of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and kindred designated zones and discusses how farmers are being encouraged to contribute to strategies of environmental maintenance and enhancement. Unfortunately, neither Robinson nor other contributors to this useful and well-illustrated volume emphasize the vitally important point that the traditional pattern of the hills and uplands will only be maintained by a thriving farming population who are paid to ensure that the proper balance of sheep and cattle are grazed so as to sustain the botanical integrity of upland swards. What is certain, as the economist Peter Midmore and I have shown, is that for all the talk of the bughunters, twitchers, and *aficionados* of bog and bush, the visiting public want above all to see a well-farmed and husbanded landscape, while the farmers themselves (essentially the creators of that landscape) want, above all, to farm.

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JOSEPH BETTEY (ed.), *Wiltshire farming in the seventeenth century* (Wiltshire Record Society, 57, 2005). xlviii + 376 pp. 14 illus. £20 plus p&p from Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge BA14 8BS.

Wiltshire farming has long fascinated agricultural historians. It features strongly in the many volumes of the *Agrarian history of England and Wales*, particularly because of its marked division into different agrarian landscapes and farming types, and its early participation in agrarian improvements, such as enclosures and the 'floating' of water meadows. It is therefore timely and appropriate that the Wiltshire Record Society should have produced this excellent edition of agrarian sources, edited by the acknowledged expert on the county's early modern farming history.

These sources can be divided into four broad categories. Firstly, there are materials that depict farm and estate management, perhaps the most interesting of which are the detailed farm accounts of large chalkland farms at Norrington and Trow, and the home farm on the Arundell estate at Ansty. The materials also include accounts of

sheep flocks, estate surveys, probate inventories and tithe accounts. The second category comprises local agrarian institutions, notably manorial government, the activities of manorial stewards and the regulation of markets and fairs. Of these, the sources illustrating manorial custom and government are particularly revealing, showing how the communal sheep flocks of the chalk downs were managed, and emphasizing the range of sanctions available against transgressors. The lists of sellers of animals at the fairs of Castle Combe are a rare survival and offer an important insight into the likely volume of business at these sometimes overlooked hubs of the agrarian economy. The third category of sources relate to activities that could be described collectively as 'improvement'. These include records of pre-parliamentary enclosures by agreement on the chalk downs, an important and wide-ranging collection of estate sources and leases relating to the management of water meadows adjoining the Avon, and sources covering the specialist husbandry of woad and rabbits. Finally, there is a section that highlights the effects of these seventeenth-century changes on the labouring population, particularly the fluctuations caused by population increase and squatters, and the subsequent depopulations following enclosure, and the many battles engendered by what Hindle has termed the 'politics of entitlement' to resources and relief.

This is a wide and valuable range of sources, backed up by very careful and knowledgeable editing. This takes two forms. Firstly, there is a useful and important scholarly introduction, sketching out the county's agrarian regions, agricultural techniques and markets, and then concentrating on the nature and diversity of improvement in the seventeenth century. This amounts to an extremely informative overview of the sources, and sets them very effectively into their spatial and chronological contexts. Secondly, each of the sources has its own short introduction, explaining the nature of the source, the location of the farming enterprise by which it was created, and any other relevant details about its authors or notable features of its content. These two elements add considerably to the historical value of these materials, particularly to those coming to such sources for the first time.

There are only two possible criticisms of this collection, both of which the editor acknowledges, and neither of which is easily surmountable. The first is that most of the sources are drawn from the more extensive archives of the larger estates. The second is that these archives are more common on the larger holdings of the sheep-corn downs than they are of the wood-pasture vales, where ownership (and source survival) was more fragmentary. This creates a slightly lop-sided perspective of the county's agriculture, even if it emphasizes the

importance of its regional differentiation, and one of the fundamental problems inherent in the study of agrarian history. Nevertheless, this volume is an important and highly impressive edition of farming sources. It should be required reading for students of agrarian history and the local history of the county alike. It will also be very useful for comparative purposes to those early modern historians with subject interests outside Wiltshire, and for those interested more generally in material life in seventeenth-century England.

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DORIAN GERHOLD, *Carriers and coachmasters. Trade and travel before the turnpikes* (Phillimore, 2005). xvii + 270 pp. 82 illus; 19 maps. £19.99.

For a number of years Dorian Gerhold has been producing thoughtful and exhaustively researched publications dealing with various aspects of travel and transport in early modern England and in so doing has significantly revised our views of that subject. Those brought up on Defoe, Thoresby and Celia Fiennes whose dramatic and even ghoulish descriptions of the horrors and pitfalls of road transport coloured the perceptions of many a schoolboy a generation or so ago, are offered a convincing corrective in his present book. Marshalling a wide and catholic range of sources, from Chancery and Exchequer records, probate inventories and diaries to newspapers, letters and handbills, Gerhold demonstrates the existence of a dense connection of carrying services around London long before the development of the early turnpikes. These apart, burgeoning regional and local services helped extend industrial and cultural links with the capital and ultimately with the increasingly integrated world economy. In this respect the carriers and coachmen forming Gerhold's *dramatis personae* were of fundamental and increasing importance throughout the century after 1650.

In describing the development, organization and logistics of the carrying trade and the early stage coach network, the author takes us into a frenetic world of ostlers, innkeepers, warehousemen, drivers, bookkeepers, petty thieves and highwaymen all of whom waxed and waned as the transport economy grew. As two-wheeled carts were increasingly replaced by four-wheeled wagons (introduced from Flanders) in the seventeenth century, and slowly but surely the draught capacity of horses improved, so road transport became increasingly regular and reliable. True, some goods continued to be conveyed by water, via river or coastal systems, but the bulk of transport flows had been transferred to the roads by 1700, and as the years went by a variety of improvements both in the quality of road surfaces and the technicalities

of wagon and stage construction meant that unit costs of transport began to decline. It is important, however, not to fall into the error of over-estimating the degree of improvement of road surfaces before the mid-eighteenth century. As Gerhold is at pains to point out, the persistence of the packhorse train, capable of travelling thirty or even forty miles per day, arose from the relatively rough surfaces of the earlier roads which, in effect, *made* the packhorse economic. In considering the detailed *minutiae* of packhorse, wagon and stagecoach operational costs, Gerhold maintains that the packhorse was substantially displaced as roads improved in the eighteenth century. Perhaps; but not so in Wales (and, I suspect, other upland areas of Britain) where packhorses were regularly in use in the late *nineteenth* century, in some cases providing a means of transport for young sprigs of the gentry en route for Shrewsbury School. Incidentally, Gerhold's narrative largely ignores Wales, counties to the west of Offa's Dyke appearing as blanks on his maps. Perhaps I have a bit of an axe to grind here, but I can't help wondering why it is that despite obvious cultural differences, Wales is treated as an almost totally foreign land when it comes to essays on economic history!

Unless readers should think that this book is solely about matters technical and economic (and there is plenty of this, with massively detailed appendices dealing with costs, fares, timetables and the like), Gerhold colours his tale with accounts of the sort of people who travelled, of the personal wealth of the carriers and coachmen and of the enormous range of materials which were being hauled around the country. Particularly fascinating is his coverage of the minor irritations of travel in his period. As a frequent user of the train and the bus, I feel for those fastidious unfortunates who, unable to hire a complete coach, were obliged to share with others whose habits and personal hygiene left much to be desired. I shall reflect upon his work the next time I seethe in a railway carriage at the ring tones, I-pods and laptop computers which seem to be necessary impedimenta of today's travellers.

This book probably represents the most comprehensive account of travel and transport in early modern England which has been written to date. It is by no means an 'easy read' and perhaps a little judicious editing would have led to examples being used a shade more selectively and to some of the occasionally heavy-handed writing being eliminated. But this is carping criticism of a masterly piece of research which brings the subject up to date and lays the platform for all future studies in the genre.

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MARIE-LOUISE LEGG (ed.), *The Diary of Nicholas Peacock, 1740–1751. The worlds of a County Limerick farmer and agent* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005). 256 pp. 8 illus. £45.

Nicholas Peacock's diary concentrates primarily on his activities as a farmer and land agent in County Limerick in the years before and after his marriage in 1747. This edition should be of considerable interest to agricultural historians on both sides of the Irish Sea. Peacock was from the cadet branch of colonists who had followed Cromwell's army in the 1650s. He acted as land agent to other English settlers, the Hartstonges, even if his frequent distrains against tenants' cattle, as well as his attempts to conceal his employer's estate from the creditors, illustrate the starker outlines of the Irish rural economy. The same point is emphasized by the dramatic price fluctuations highlighted by Legg in her introduction, even if the diary makes little direct reference to the two severe winters and food shortages of the years 1739–40 and 1740–1. As Legg also shows, Peacock's farming activities were diverse, and he was able to exploit the good alluvial soils of the area to grow oats, wheat and barley, as well as peas, beans, vegetables and good quality flax for fine linen production. He also raised sheep, cattle and horses. This agrarian production was sold at local fairs and markets, and paid for in a multiplicity of currencies that indicate Ireland's chronic shortage of specie at this time, as well as by a series of intricate exchanges and credit relationships.

Through these years, Peacock's over-riding concern was to get married, partly for financial reasons, and partly because of his desire to have a wife to run the farming household. After a failed attempt in 1740, and a relatively hard-drinking bachelor lifestyle thereafter, he succeeded in his object in 1747, with his marriage to Catherine Chapman, 'ye beginning of ye date of my happyness', and the end of his serious drinking. Marriage brought extra spending on furnishings and clothes, and (in due course) the expenses of childbirth and rearing.

Rural accounts of this type are rare throughout the 'three kingdoms' in the eighteenth century, and are particularly unusual in Ireland, which is also less well served by estate accounts and correspondence. This makes the publication of this diary particularly worthwhile, and valuable for agricultural historians. It also provides two other opportunities. Firstly, it allows an important comparison between the Irish and English agrarian economies, and in the institutional practices and transaction methods of those two economies. Secondly, despite the relatively cryptic entries, it offers a glimpse into the Irish rural society, and the co-existence of the lower rungs of the Protestant ascendancy with Irish Catholic tenants. Peacock's diary suggests that this relationship

was reasonably harmonious, as he allowed his labourers and workmen to visit a nearby holy well on St. Patrick's day, attended a Catholic wedding and accommodated a Catholic priest on one occasion.

The editorial standards are high throughout this volume, and the introduction provides valuable context, on Peacock's origins, his family connections, and some of the important facets of his activities as agent, farmer, local officer and husband. There is also a useful glossary of terms, which reveals the meanings of unfamiliar agrarian and dialect terms (such as 'callops', from the Irish *colpa*, full-grown horse or cow). This edition of Peacock's diary merits careful reading by historians interested in the rural economy and rural life in this period, and extends our understanding of both by some measure.

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W. P. GRIFFITH, *Power, politics and county government in Wales. Anglesey, 1780–1914* (Anglesey Antiquarian Society, 2006). xii + 452 pp. 22 illus; 3 maps. £26 incl. p&p from Mr David Wilson, AAS Publications Officer, Stone Science, Bryn Eglwys, Llanddyfnan, Llangefni, Anglesey, LL75 8UL.

The evolution of county government in nineteenth-century Britain has received relatively little attention from modern scholars. Yet the sources for such a project are vast, especially for the period after the 1840s when central government insisted that greater attention be paid to the preservation of locally-generated records. The appearance of a heavyweight study on the form and reform of county administration in nineteenth-century Anglesey which draws on this almost ignored repository of contemporary documentation is thus very welcome.

In twenty chapters stretching across four hundred pages, William Griffith sets out to chart the history of county administration from the onset of the French revolutionary wars to the eve of the Great War. Throughout the first hundred years of the period, the prevailing theme in Anglesey was the endless struggle to find men willing – let alone competent – to carry out the business of local government. The reasons for the shortage of manpower are not far to seek. A well-placed anecdote highlights the grim reality of what service in the county magistracy actually involved, sitting all day in damp clothes in a cold room listening to trivial cases (p. 66). In Anglesey the internecine squabbling of the local gentry was an additional factor, and in the 1840s reduced the apparatus of local administration to a near standstill.

So few magistrates were active that the bench relied heavily on its professional employees, and in one of the most illuminating sections of the book, Griffith details

the work of officers such as the clerk of the peace and the county treasurer. Nevertheless, by 1860, with additional functions (such as policing) being heaped on their shoulders, questions began to emerge as to whether the quarter sessions as currently constituted was really the best body that could be found to deal with county administration.

Despite the wide political consensus on the need for some kind of change, it was not until the mid-1880s that pressure mounted for reform. At this point, the advent of a democratic franchise, together with mounting radical attacks on the existing aristocratic magistrates and the new importance of particularly 'Welsh' issues in politics – issues suitable for local settlement such as licensing – focused attention on local government reform.

The chapters on the new county council elected in 1889 are full of interest. Griffith calculates that the new bodies galvanized attention in Wales to a far greater degree than they did elsewhere: 70 per cent of seats in Wales were contested compared with an average of 54 per cent for England and Wales as a whole, and voter turnout was an impressive 80 per cent (p. 267). Public interest in county government declined somewhat after the initial outburst of enthusiasm, but this had the desirable effect that the council remained very stable in terms of personnel, its predominantly agricultural nature reflecting the core industry of the island. The new councils also reflected local preferences in other ways, notably in their championship of the Welsh language. Not only did the Council take on the local railway company when it threatened to dismiss monoglot Welsh-speaking employees, but it was careful to ensure that its literature relating to vital new services such as midwifery appeared in both languages.

Griffith concludes his account with a survey of the work of the council after 1889; a chapter on the 1902 education act; and an interesting examination of the magistracy on the eve of the Great War. Although the gentry and aristocracy still held places on the bench they were, as Griffith says, by now 'a marginal irrelevance' (p. 396) and the active portion of the magistracy was made up of farmers. The magistrates' bench had come to resemble the new county council.

For all its strengths there are times when a broader 'social history' context would have been valuable. There is a lot more here about the finance of local administration than there is about the society which the quarter sessions helped administer. As a consequence, local government sometimes seems a strangely disembodied institution. We get little impression of the impact on Anglesey society of events ranging from the French wars to the cattle plague crisis of 1865–7 and the tithe war of

More use might also have been made of the extensive reports of quarter sessions business which appeared in local newspapers. Particularly during crises such as the cattle plague, members of the bench often took it upon themselves to be representatives of their particular localities, lending the session the air of a county parliament. Similarly, the press offers a rich source of comment concerning the activities of the magistrates, and there were various stages during the century when complaints about 'justices' justice' in relation to the game laws might form the starting point for a wider critique of county government as a whole.

It would be wrong to end on a negative note, however. Griffith has managed to produce a big and important book on a subject of considerable interest. It is a study that can, and hopefully will, become a model for the history of county government in other parts of Britain.

MICHAEL HOLLAND (ed.), *Swing unmasked. The agricultural riots of 1830 to 1832 and their wider implications* (FACHRS Publications, 2005). 19 tables; 32 illus; 7 figs; 14 maps. ix + 312 pp. £20 incl. p&p; data CD £10 incl. p&p, both from Family and Community Historical Research Society Ltd., Unit 4, 5 West Hill, Aspley Guise, Milton Keynes MK17 8DP.

The rising has many facets. One of the most interesting aspects of 1830 is the evidence of fleeting successes. Farmers did surrender their machinery for destruction or stopped using it. Wages were in fact raised and rents lowered – until the inevitable repression, for one should

Michael Holland's *Swing unmasked* is clearly a labour of love. Produced by a team of local researchers, members of the Family and Community Historical Research Society, it consists of an introductory chapter, core chapters on Swing in Surrey, Shropshire, Essex, Derbyshire, and Berkshire, and then some more peripheral studies on associated (and probably not associated) topics. The strengths of this sort of project are obvious: local knowledge, exhaustive research, and an infectious enthusiasm. The weaknesses, however, are no less apparent: repetition, the inclusion of unnecessary background material, the threat of mere antiquarianism, a certain organizational unruliness (for instance, a chapter on the cholera riots of 1832), a plethora of appendices, and a lack of awareness of some key academic publications on their very subject matter. Indeed the gaps in secondary reading are rather worrying, for one of the claimed contributions of the volume – to demonstrate Rudé and Hobsbawm's underestimation of the sheer scale of Swing – has already been anticipated by Griffin in an article in *Southern History* (2000), and the team's 'new work' on the transportation of prisoners does not cite the fascinating study by D. Kent and N. Townsend, *The convicts of the Eleanor: protest in rural England, new lives in Australia* (2002), which traced a cohort of Berkshire, Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Dorset rioters to their transportation and experiences in Australia, and which is useful for this and many other aspects of Swing.

BARRY REAY
University of Auckland

NIGEL E. AGAR, *Behind the plough. Agrarian society in nineteenth-century Hertfordshire* (University of Hertfordshire Press, 2005). x + 193 pp. 34 illus. £12.99.

No one could accuse this book of being too narrow in its scope or content. It offers a very wide-ranging analysis of many aspects of rural society in nineteenth-century Hertfordshire covering topics such as population change, enclosure and agricultural development, employment, housing, diet, poverty, farm machinery, village life and social relations. Its structure is therefore largely thematic although it also follows the broad chronological sweep of agricultural change in the nineteenth century. The book is attractively produced and well illustrated with many maps of enclosures and forests and photographs of rural workers.

One of the main contentions of the book is that the pattern found in rural Hertfordshire was not so different from other counties to make it atypical of the (southern) English experience as a whole. Although contemporary farming writers tended to by-pass the county in favour of more famous pioneering high farming regions, Hertfordshire's agricultural history largely replicated the blueprint set by other arable counties. Its prosperity over the middle decades of the century was underpinned by the increased use of scientific and market-orientated farming methods (Chapter 4). The impact of mechanization was slow, with the dominance of cheap labour and horse-power ensuring farm machinery was not fully embraced until the twentieth century (Chapter 5). Male day labourers, who were poorly paid, their families poorly housed and their diet meagre and inadequate, dominated the farm labour force (Chapters 6, 11, 12). This led some of them to join the short-lived labourers' union in the early 1870s (Chapter 13) whilst others left the land and joined the flight to the local towns (Chapter 2). Yet there are some crucial exceptions to Hertfordshire history in this period that break the mould. The most important was the presence of a thriving domestic industry in the south of the county – strawplait. This industry employed a very high proportion of the county's women (although their numbers are likely to be under-estimated in the census due to the blinkered nature of recording married women's work), offering them a degree of autonomy and influence not found in other counties (Chapter 10). Agar argues that it also protected working class families against the worst ravages of poverty and insecurity and offers an explanation for the relative absence of serious rural disorder (with Swing and anti-poor law riots making little impact in Hertfordshire). The industry faced competition from cheap foreign exports in the last quarter of the century, and coupled with the depression in agriculture, the county's prosperity was badly hit.

Agar's enthusiasm and knowledge of the region are obvious throughout and he has produced a book that offers a useful and interesting broad account of Hertfordshire's rural history in the nineteenth century. The academic reader may find some gaps. I found the lack of local data on population and employment structures for example left many questions unanswered. However this book adds to our general understanding of rural society at the local level and will undoubtedly appeal to a wide audience.

NICOLA VERDON
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MARK FREEMAN (ed.), *The English rural poor, 1850–1914* (Pickering and Chatto, 2005). Five volumes (xliii + 354 pp.; v + 412 pp.; v + 402 pp.; v + 436 pp.; v + 429 pp.). £450.

The English rural poor have always been overshadowed by their urban, industrial counterparts in the historiography of Victorian and Edwardian England, despite the state of rural life and labour being a key cause for concern for contemporary commentators and politicians. This handsomely-produced five-volume set aims to redress this neglect by reproducing forty three pamphlets, books, reports and extracts from the period 1850 to 1914, all of which address, in various ways, the condition of the English rural poor. The set is edited by Mark Freeman, well qualified for the task being the author of the recent monograph *Social investigation and rural England, 1870–1914* (2003). Freeman provides a concise 35-page general introduction to the volumes, as well as a brief one to two page overview of each source in turn. The content of the volumes has been arranged in chronological order. Thus Volume I concentrates on pre-1872 material, Volume II spotlights the agricultural labourers union of the 1870s, Volumes III and IV include sources from the 1880s and 1890s respectively, and finally Volume V features the Edwardian rural poor. The sources are reprinted in their original typeface and setting, enhanced by modern digital techniques for a clean presentation. The selection of material has been informed by several criteria: first, the documents are 'rare' or difficult to obtain, second, they are short(ish) in length, and third, they represent a range of different English regions. Thus we find reports from government inquiries such as J.H. Tremenheere's on agricultural gangs and Arthur Wilson Fox's on work and wages, essays by well-known writers such as Thomas Hardy and Richard Jefferies, social investigations by B. S. Rowntree, Maud F. Davies and H. H. Mann, alongside more quirky material like a 1865 pamphlet *How to supply the agricultural labourer with good beer at a low price* or the 1874 National Agricultural Labourers Union melody book. Many of the sources are obscure and

little-known but others are much more familiar and have been widely utilized by historians of the rural poor. Indeed the inclusion of some may seem a little surprising in that they are so well-known and fairly easily available. The same reasons are given for the exclusion of celebrated rural autobiographies (such as those by Walter Rose and Flora Thompson) which may have been an oversight. However, bringing together such a diverse and rich body of literature for the first time can only be welcomed as it provides a treasure trove for the academic researcher and interested amateur alike.

Although the volumes have been arranged chronologically there are three prominent themes: the moral and material condition of the rural poor, the political consciousness of the rural labourer, and the depopulation of the countryside. The state of rural housing and education, the availability and remuneration of work, hiring conditions, female and child labour, the influence of beer houses and access to land dominate the first category. Although the focus of concern altered over the decades, moral censure of the rural poor remained a prominent feature of the whole period. One example, the employment of women outside the home, is typical. Charles Whitehead in 1870 claimed that outdoor work was unsuitable for women as 'A woman who works constantly in the fields cannot fulfil her social duties; she cannot attend properly to the wants of her husband; she cannot do her duty by her children' (I, p. 279). The sentiment is echoed by Rowntree in 1914: 'A woman's place is in the home, looking after her house and children, and no social condition can be regarded as satisfactory which compel her to neglect these fundamental duties in order to eke out the inadequate wage of her husband' (V, p. 357).

The emergence of the rural poor as an important constituent in the political arena is chronicled through the rise of agricultural trade unions in the early 1870s, the enfranchisement of the male rural population in the 1880s, the formation of parish councils in the 1890s and the 'land question'. Many commentators, fearful of the appearance of modern strike tactics and alarmed by the potential of democratic change, call for the reinstatement of a paternalist model of social relations in which labourers, farmers and landlords 'are a compact three-fold cord' (II, p. 135). Others were more welcoming and optimistic about political change. Jefferies saw genuine village self-government as leading to 'the sentiment of independence' where men 'work, strive and save, that they may settle at home' (III, p. 113). But whilst there was cause for optimism, many sources point to the continuation of poor pay, lack of recreation and disinheritance from the land itself as contributing to the drift from the countryside. Rowntree still stressed in 1914 that 'there is

no doubt that as a class' agricultural labourers were the 'worst paid' in Britain 'and it is high time something was done to raise their status' (V, p. 356). Allotments, higher wages, co-operative farming, sanitary housing and pension provision were all touted as possible remedies by various authors but, as Mann argued, the cry of 'back to the land' rang hollow as long as life chances and expectations of rural people remained so low in the early twentieth century.

Do we get to hear the 'true' voice of the rural poor themselves? The vast majority of sources are written by the social, political and economic elites of the day: rural clergy, landowners, farmers, JPs, land agents and so on. Some clearly are sympathetic to the plight of the rural poor and sought to undermine the idyllic representation of the English countryside. But as Freeman argues in his introduction, most of the sources offer an 'external' perspective on the rural poor. Even the handful of sources which purport to be written by agricultural labourers such as *A few words on courtship and marriage* by A Hampshire Agricultural Labourer (1867) or *The strike in the agricultural districts* by the self-proclaimed 'Owd Warwickshire Lad' (1872), probably were not. The autobiography of George Mitchell is however reprinted in full in Volume 2. Thus the collection needs to be approached critically. What the volumes provide is a fascinating representation of many facets of rural labouring life between 1850 and 1914 which is invaluable to anyone with an interest in this period. At £450 for the set, it will be out of reach for most academics and university and public libraries too. This is a shame, as these volumes deserve to reach as wide an audience as possible to highlight the continued centrality of the rural world to Victorian and Edwardian England.

NICOLA VERDON
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KEIR WADDINGTON, *The bovine scourge. Meat, tuberculosis and public health, 1850-1914* (Boydell Press, 2006), ix + 226 pp. £50.

This book is not entirely about agricultural history as it is partly focused on animal disease and public health. The main actors in the story are the scientists, doctors, vets, politicians and health reformers involved in the long fight against tuberculosis, and not farmers. In the late nineteenth century there was, according to the author, more than a general anxiety about the relationship between food and disease, an important part of which centred on the relationship between this disease in cattle and man. Most studies of human tuberculosis have concentrated on the transmission of the bovine form in the milk supply. But the disease can also be visibly present in the organs and lymph nodes, though

not in the muscle tissue, of infected animals slaughtered for meat. As butchers removed any obvious signs of tuberculosis before sale, its presence was invisible to the customer. There was intense debate about the threat of human infection from such meat, and whether cooking made it safe to eat.

Precise detection of the disease in animals and man became possible after the isolation of the tubercle bacillus by Robert Koch in 1882, but effective methods of control were slow to emerge. They depended on the agreement by scientists and acceptance by the public that the disease in animals could infect humans. For the next twenty years there was general acceptance that this was so. However, Koch challenged this interpretation in his speech to the International Medical Congress in London in 1901 when he expressed the view that bovine tuberculosis rarely caused the disease in humans. If this were so, it reduced the urgency to eliminate the disease in cattle and to reform the food industry, as well as providing an excuse for those who did not want the expense of either. The question was settled finally in 1911 by the report of the Royal Commission on Tuberculosis, which established its own scientific laboratories to examine the matter with controlled experiments.

At the same time as the scientific debate raged, central and local government were engaged in trying to reduce the serious mortality from pulmonary tuberculosis. The situation facing those trying to impose effective controls was, as is demonstrated by the author, one of complete muddle and confusion. As there was little general agreement among the scientific community because thinking was subject to change and revision, civic authorities and food reformers could have no clear plan of action. Part of their effort was devoted to cleaning up the milk supply, but even this was not always easy. Although urban authorities inspected local cowsheds and eventually banned the sale of milk from animals showing obvious signs of the disease, they had far less control over milk sent in by rail. Controlling the meat supply was even more difficult as most butchers had their own small private slaughterhouses, where inspection was difficult and concealment of the disease was easy. Attempts to control it at its source were also frustrated. Even after tuberculin testing of milk was able to detect the disease in cattle that showed no symptoms, such testing was not compulsory. In addition, the absence of compensation for slaughtered livestock made it difficult to do anything much to reduce its farm incidence before the Second World War. A conservative estimate, made in 1942, was that 65,000 people in England and Wales still died from milk-borne bovine tuberculosis between 1912 and 1937, though it seems unlikely that beef was ever a major vector.

Even when local authorities started to take action to detect the disease in animals after slaughter, the lack of any generally-agreed standards of inspection meant meat passed fit for human consumption in one locality could be condemned in another. The medical and veterinary professions saw the introduction of the municipal abattoir as part of the solution, while butchers strongly resisted attempts at increased inspection. This was partly because it was impossible for them to pass the blame for the disease and the question of compensation back to the dealers and farmers who sold infected cattle. Butchers saw inspection of their premises and attempts to force them to use public abattoirs as attempts to force them to bear all the cost of the disease.

In an impeccably documented study, the author presents us with a convincing analysis of the relationship between all the warring interest groups engaged in the meat politics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He guides the reader through the welter of confusion and contradiction that enveloped the whole debate and shows how the emerging veterinary profession used the disease to gain a larger role in public health. Amongst the medical profession, local Medical Officers of Health also used the disease as a platform from which to reinforce their efforts to reform the meat and milk businesses. Whilst the tuberculosis question may have been uppermost in the minds of all health professionals, it did not drive either farming or the food industry. For all of those in the meat industry it became just another problem to cope with. Farmers were mainly worried about foreign competition and its effects on prices and profits. For those in the meat trade it took its place alongside complaints about swine fever regulations, legislation over shop hours, attempts to enforce the marking of home- and foreign-produced meat, fear of the power of the American Meat Trust, and the security of foreign supplies. The main thing that this important book does is to leave the reader in no doubt about the importance of this disease and its control to our general understanding of British livestock farming and food history.

RICHARD PERREN
University of Aberdeen

JONATHAN BROWN, *Farming in Lincolnshire, 1850–1945* (History of Lincolnshire Committee, 2005). xi + 295 pp. 15 tables; 43 figs. £29.95 (hbk); £14.95 (pbk) plus £4 p&p from Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, Jews' Court, Steep Hill, Lincoln, LN2 1LS.

This is the second book in a new series by the History of Lincolnshire Committee. The book focuses on farming in the county from 1850 to the end of the Second World

War. It is a well-written, clearly presented account of a period of significant change in agriculture which makes extensive use of primary sources, particularly the agricultural returns, parliamentary reports and the estate papers of local landowners.

The book is divided into two parts; the first (pp. 5–82) looks more generally at the county, with chapters on the farmers, the landowners and workers, the pattern of farming and the nature and practice of farming. The second, more substantial section (pp. 83–273) presents a broadly chronological account of agricultural change during the period under study, starting with the ‘high farming’ era before looking at the great depression, then asking the question ‘what became of high farming?’ prior to investigating the period 1896 to 1930. Chapter 10 backtracks slightly to consider ‘New Farming, New Farmers, 1925–1940’, while the final chapter considers the Second World War. The book might therefore be considered somewhat conventional in its approach, but Brown remains aware of the potential limitations of his own self-imposed straitjacket and avoids the trap of simply fitting his data to the chronological categories he has chosen. He effectively highlights the diversity of the county without ever segmenting the analysis to the point where valid generalizations can no longer be made.

The book provides interesting insights into the strategies adopted by farmers from the final quarter of the nineteenth century in an effort to maintain profitability during what were generally difficult times for those arable regions of England distant from the growing markets of the industrializing towns. Brown presents an authoritative account of the development of potato production in the county along with an interesting discussion of the early days of bulb production. He also considers at length the varying fortunes of the principal cereal crops and the mixed husbandry that had underpinned the prosperity of much of the county during the high farming era.

The author’s own background in the county comes through clearly in the comfortable manner in which he blends geography and history within his account without ever over-simplifying or classifying the changes he explains. Criticisms of the text are relatively minor. Extensive use is made of an interesting range of photographs, particularly from the collection of the Museum of English Rural Life. However, none of these is referred to directly in the text, and in some cases (Figure 24 for instance) photograph and text relate to different time periods. The photographs appear to decorate rather than illuminate the text. I also felt that handwritten labelling on graphs (Figure 19) should have been replaced by a more professional-looking typed text.

A more important reservation lies in what this book

does not cover. Compared to the farmer, little is said about the agricultural workforce. Nor does the book say much about the wider rural community or the social changes which took place over the period. Farming is placed in something of a vacuum, with physical geography and the economic and political factors which determined profitability its only significant influences. The book can therefore more readily be categorized as ‘agricultural’ rather than ‘rural’ history. Nevertheless, this book is an authoritative account of changes in farming in Lincolnshire over the period and should prove an extremely useful reference in discussions of agricultural developments between the mid-nineteenth century and the Second World War.

CHARLES RAWDING
Edge Hill University

Elsewhere and General

JACQUES M. CHEVALIER and W. ANDRÉS SÁNCHEZ BAIN, *The hot and the cold. Ills of humans and maize in native Mexico* (University of Toronto Press, 2003). xxii + 301 pp. 1 table; 18 figs; 1 map. £42.

Indigenous systems of subsistence agriculture, especially the slash and burn system, have often been misunderstood and criticized by agricultural scientists. Chevalier and Sánchez Bain argue that to understand the agricultural system practised by the Nahuatl and Popoluca peasants of southern Vera Cruz in Mexico, one needs to know about the cultural context in which it is enmeshed, especially the world view and underlying principles that are based on the hot-cold principle or what has been called humoral medicine. Their analysis reveals the extensive knowledge of crops, especially maize, the agricultural cycle, and the environment that are part of this system.

The first chapter places this study against a background of an ongoing debate in anthropology and the history of medicine concerning humoral medicine in Latin America. One side of the debate, as represented by the anthropologist George Foster, argues that the Greek Hippocratic system diffused from Spain during the conquest. The system is based on a classification of all things (plants, medicines, bodily states) into qualities of hot and cold, which includes both physical temperature and innate or metaphorical qualities. Health is based on a balance of hot and cold and illness is caused by an imbalance. Treatment is usually based on a principle of opposition. Although the Greek system included qualities of wet and dry as well as hot and cold, Foster argues that these have largely dropped out of the Latin American versions. The other side, as represented by the Mexican anthropologist and Nahuatl scholar, López

Austin, argues that a pre-Hispanic system of hot-cold thinking existed and pervaded people's world view, not only of their health but also their relationship with the land and its inhabitants, including plants, animals and spirits. Chevalier and Sánchez Bain deconstruct and critique the assumptions of Foster's argument and support the existence of a pre-Hispanic indigenous system of hot-cold reasoning, as well as wet-dry categories, with which the Spanish system became syncretized, and which continues to persist in contemporary life.

In Chapter two, the authors review various studies that have been made of hot-cold systems in Mesoamerica. One criticism of these studies is that they view hot and cold categories as a system of classification, which implies that a hot or cold value is a static property of the item and in turn cannot account for inconsistencies in the classification. They propose a different dynamic model based on an indigenous perspective of three principles: equilibrium, periodicity or cyclic movement, and solar-driven growth. Equilibrium refers to balance and moderation of hot and cold things and avoidance of extremes. Cyclic movement involves the heating and cooling that form part of the daily activities and bodily rhythms (for example, blood and the body heat up during the day when one is working and cools off at night when one is resting or sleeping) and alternation between wetness and dryness. The third involves heliotropic or solar-driven movement implicated in daily cycles and the life cycle, moving from aquatic beginnings at birth, which is cold, through stages of reproductive heat and finally death, which is hot. These three principles govern not only the ills of the body, but also those of the land, including milpa (maize plots). Furthermore, they interact and influence each other.

Chapters three to six elaborate on these principles through a sophisticated ethnographic study of the Nahua and Popoluca. The authors document how the hot and cold qualities permeate the world view, the agricultural system, and mythology, as well as the health system, and how all these interact with each other. It is the pervasiveness of these qualities through so many aspects of life that support Austin's argument for the pre-Hispanic existence of the hot-cold system. Chevalier and Sánchez Bain's significant contribution is showing how the hot-cold principle underpins the agricultural system as well. 'Ills of the body and land are governed by the same principles and also interact: growth and health factors among humans affect and are affected by the milpa condition'. (p.167). These chapters are perhaps the most interesting ones to agricultural scientists and historians. The agricultural cycle is accompanied by various ritual measures some of which involve food and sex prescriptions related to qualities of hot and cold. For example, a man must not

sleep with his wife for seven nights before planting. This abstinence will increase the heat in one's body, which in turn affects the seeds and the soil.

Chapters seven and eight are explications of the mythology of the birth and life of the corn god, who people believe 'secures the sustenance and well-being of humans and to whom prayers are still recited' (p.173). Cycles of corn planting and harvesting as well as the cutting, burning, and drying processes of slash and burn are synchronized by hot and cold characteristics of both human and divine bodies that are spelled out in the myths. The stories trace the deity's birth as a child, his pilgrimage to the burial ground of his father and his quest for immortality. The authors analyze these myths using what they call the 'interpretive method', which is based on semantic and linguistic analysis of the terms used in the myths and of informants' statements. Through the extensions of these terms as tropes and metaphors the myths are shown to symbolize the agricultural cycle. The myths replicate the basic three principles explored in previous chapters: those of thermal balance, cyclic periodicity and the 'progressive movement of life from its aquatic beginnings toward later stages of reproductive health, old age, and death' (p.173). The hot-cold balance is not only a naturalistic system as Foster has proposed but is also a spiritual one. Hot-cold reasoning is manifested in healing rituals, agricultural practices, and mythology. Furthermore, the conduct of the corn god exemplifies the moral values that humans must follow which involve hard work and sacrifice. The corn god will provide food for humans, who in turn must feed and reproduce the corn. The authors extend their analysis with comparisons of terms and myths to classical Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, to suggest that some of the themes explored through myth may be variations on linguistic usages dating back to pre-Hispanic times.

Chapter nine returns to a further critique of Foster and the debate on the origins of the hot-cold system as manifested in Mesoamerica. The authors propose that the syncretic process which occurred during the Spanish conquest continues today in encounters with biomedicine where the resilience and adaptability of the indigenous culture is manifested and hot-cold reasoning 'continues to shape people's ideas about health and illness' (p.244). Will hot-cold reasoning continue to shape peoples' ideas about agriculture? Although the authors do not do so, the argument could be extended to the confrontation with scientific and commercial agriculture. Will these syncretic processes permit both traditional agricultural practices and the hot-cold reasoning underlying them to survive, enabling Mexican peasants to deal not only with conflicts with biomedicine, but with the agricultural changes occurring today in Mexico?

This book is a rich ethnographic study which will be rewarding reading for graduate students and specialists in the fields of culture and agriculture, medical anthropology, and Latin Americanists.

SHEILA COSMINSKY
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WILLIAM D. GODSEY JR., *Nobles and nation in central Europe. Free imperial knights in the age of revolution, 1750–1850* (CUP, 2004). xi + 306 pp. £48.

This splendid study might be characterized as a work of cultural archaeology, which seeks to reconstruct the vanished 'geo-cultural landscape' (p.72) occupied by the central European nobility of the early modern era. The book's protagonists are the one hundred families of the free imperial knights of Electoral Mainz – the stronghold of the imperial knighthood of the Holy Roman Empire. They were denizens of a world 'that stretched from the North Sea to Vienna, that was suffused by corporate, dynastic, local, and religious allegiances, and that was characterized by a common, cosmopolitan culture' (p.13); and they shared an 'early modern ideal of nobility that prized purity above antiquity, quarterings above patrocliny, and virtue above ethnicity' (p.1). But with the dissolution of the imperial knighthood in 1803, and of the Holy Roman Empire itself three years later, this traditional vision of nobility came under assault, and the members of these families struggled to recast their claims to pre-eminence in a world of nascent nation states.

Godsey's book illuminates the various ways in which the imperial knights of Mainz sought to reinvent their identities during the revolutionary era and its aftermath. In the early nineteenth century, some leading Protestant aristocrats began to define themselves as pillars of the *Uradel* ('ancient nobility') of the German nation. Most notable among this group was Karl Freiherr vom Stein, Prussia's first minister in 1807–1808 and hero of the Prussian resistance to Napoleon, whom Godsey dubs 'the first noble German' (p.248). By contrast, most Catholic knights, who had held a monopoly on economic resources and political influence associated with the 'noble Church' (*Adelskirche*) in Germany, rejected the new ethnic nationalism of the revolutionary era. After the outbreak of the revolutionary wars in 1792, many Catholic nobles from Mainz, including the future Austrian Chancellor Clemens von Metternich, moved to the Habsburg Empire, where they found a more congenial cultural and political milieu.

Those who neither emigrated nor embraced ethnic nationalism struggled to come to terms with their new circumstances. Godsey notes that 'the revolutionary era resulted in a spatial sea-change for the imperial nobility,

which in the end found itself confined in all but incidental ways to the territory of the German Confederation' (p.78). He cites the example of Prince-Primate Baron Carl Dalberg, who came to be viewed by subsequent generations as a 'traitor' to the German nation for having allied himself with Napoleon (pp.72–3). Before the French Revolution, nobles like Dalberg had held estates scattered across modern-day Germany and France; they had 'lacked modern cultural loyalties,' instead espousing an 'imperial patriotism' exalting the traditional corporate structures of the Holy Roman Empire.

Perhaps the book's most fascinating dimension is its account of the rise of the concept of the German *Uradel* – a term coined at the end of the eighteenth century referring to 'nobility traceable in the male line to a progenitor in medieval times or earlier' (p.59). In early-modern central Europe, Godsey writes, nobility had been conceived as reflecting 'virtue,' which stemmed from the purity of aristocratic extraction in both the paternal and maternal lines, rather than from the antiquity of the male line alone. Hence aristocratic lineage was equally prized on the mother's side of the family as on the father's. The most exclusive eighteenth-century aristocratic institutions had required their members to possess thirty-two 'quarterings' – i.e. at least five generations of purely noble ancestry. The new noble ideal reflected a 'decisive masculinization'. In the words of one treatise from the 1790s, 'The fair sex obtains and loses nobility only through marriage ... because the woman is only a zero, whose worth depends on the number set in front of her. This number is the man'. Godsey concludes, 'Here, the noble trend paralleled or perhaps anticipated developments already noted for bourgeois women, whose social and legal position deteriorated in the transition to the late modern era' (pp.59–60).

The concept of the *Uradel* was equally significant for politics as for gender relations. By establishing 'a connection between the "national" and the noble past', this concept 'offered the nobility a fresh and valuable form of legitimacy', enabling aristocrats to justify themselves 'in national-historical and national-cultural terms rather than those of a discredited society of estates or the old noble nation' (p.59). Godsey thus persuasively refutes the argument of scholars such as Heinz Reif that the German 'concept of nobility underwent no fundamental alteration around 1800' (p.13).

Although the nobility of the Habsburg Empire continued to profess 'the traditional corporate and pedigreed understanding of their estate' (p.253), aristocratic identities elsewhere in German-speaking Europe underwent a profound transformation during the early nineteenth century. Those nobles who accepted the new German nation as their 'lodestar', Godsey declares, found

themselves 'trapped within boundaries that they did not determine'. He concludes provocatively: 'As the meaning of "nation" continued to mutate, so did that of "noble", such that by the twentieth century the quality of nobility had fatally come to depend not on quarterings or even culture, but on race' (p.254).

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OLIVER MARSHALL, *English, Irish and Irish-American pioneer settlers in nineteenth-century Brazil* (Centre for Brazilian Studies, University of Oxford, 2005). xii + 323 pp. 5 tables; 15 illus; 2 maps. £20 incl. p&p from Centre for Brazilian Studies, 92 Woodstock Road, Oxford, OX2 7ND.

The title suggests the author is going to deal with a rather large topic over a long period of time. In fact he reports on the migration of only a few thousand English and Irish to Brazil between the years 1868 and early 1873. These migrants represent therefore a very small percentage of total English and Irish migration to temperate overseas lands during the nineteenth century and also a very small percentage of European migration to Brazil. Some 104,000 Europeans, including a few from the USA, moved to Brazil between 1864 and 1873 (p.21), numbers modest in comparison to the inflow in the decades that followed. What then is the significance of these few that they deserve a special study? Their total failure to succeed in Brazil is the answer. Some wished to return home as soon as they set foot in Rio de Janeiro, others after they arrived in the government-sponsored colonies in which they were to live. Many died of disease and starvation, while others who endured great privations did finally manage to return to England thanks in good part to the activity of the British minister to Brazil and to the charity of the well-established British merchant community in Rio de Janeiro who together raised the money to pay steamship fares. This book is a very well-documented study of a badly conceived immigration scheme with the would-be immigrants as victims.

The blame can be widely spread. The Brazilian government was seriously at fault. Its recruiting agents in England were dishonest in their glowing descriptions of the life to be had in Brazil. The three government colonies to which these immigrants were destined, all in southern Brazil, were without easy communication to markets so that commercial agriculture was impossible. The promised paid employment on public works to tide the immigrants over until their first crops matured did not materialize. There were neither doctors nor schools. In brief, the immigrants who actually went to the colonies soon realized there was little prospect of achieving

a reasonable standard of living. The British government could have taken an interest in the manner of recruitment. It must have known that only a few years earlier some European governments – including those of Switzerland and Prussia – had either cautioned against or forbidden emigration to Brazil. Only at the very end of the sad affair did it help in the task of repatriation. The immigrants, too, although all were poor, uneducated, even illiterate, might have made more of an effort to inform themselves about the country in which they were proposing to spend their lives. Some on arriving in Brazil were surprised to find the locals speaking Portuguese, not English.

In the Epilogue, Marshall briefly describes the colonies as they are today. All have grown greatly in population to become towns. Principe Dom Pedro, now known as Brusque, has emerged as a centre of the textile industrial, but Assunguy and Cananéia remain backwaters, still handicapped in their development by poor transportation. Some descendants of the settlers have not moved away but when interviewed revealed only a very hazy recollection of their ancestry. The Brazilian government did learn one lesson from this tragedy: the arrival back in Rio of so many destitute settlers looking for a way home was 'clear evidence' (p.178) that the state agricultural colonies were failures.

Marshall could have set this study in the larger context of European migration to southern Brazil during the nineteenth century. Some immigrants from other European countries did suffer badly and their home governments did intervene, yet, over time, Italians, Germans, Swiss, other Europeans, and Japanese had a major impact on the human geography of southern Brazil. Was their key to success a combination of better preparation and accompanying agents familiar with Brazil who could speak the immigrants' language as well as Portuguese? The English and Irish settlers were left to flounder in the colonies with no knowledge of Portuguese, expected to cultivate crops with which they were unfamiliar and to deal with an incompetent and/or corrupt local bureaucracy. The book would have benefitted from more and better maps. Map 1, simply entitled 'England', shows a strange collection of towns unless one is to assume they are the towns from which the settlers came. Map 2 would have been improved by the inclusion of provincial (now state) boundaries. Detailed maps of the location of the three agricultural settlements would have been useful.

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ENRIC SAGUER (ed.), *Els últims hereus. Història oral dels propietaris gironins, 1930–2000* (Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, 2005). 466 pp. No price given.

Enric Saguer's edited volume traces the main changes that occurred in the lives of a small group of landowning families in the Catalan province of Girona from the 1930s down to the present day. The analysis centres around a series of interviews conducted by Saguer's mainly young research team – the *Asociació d'Història Rural de les Comarques Gironines* – with 35 *hereus*, heirs to family estates, in the districts of La Selva, l'Empordà, and La Garrotxa. Over half of their sample were over seventy years of age, whilst less than 15 per cent were under 50. Biographical profiles were constructed under the headings of education, marriage, professional activities, and mobility. Traditionally, landowners in this part of north-east Spain rented out part of their estates to sharecroppers (*masovers*), often on emphyteutic leases granting rights in perpetuity, while themselves occupying the family farmstead (*masia*). From the 1950s, however, this particular form of sharecropping went into rapid decline. Many landowners sold off their estates; others chose to farm them directly. Some *hereus* found alternative employment in tourism or the liberal professions. The present study contains examples of all of these options although, as the contributors concede, their limited sample may not be entirely representative.

Sharecropping in Girona – a province dedicated to cereal farming, olives, and viticulture – came under threat in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, owing to competition from cheap wheat imports, industrial oils, and the spread of phylloxera across the Pyrenees. By the early twentieth century, land ownership had already lost much of its appeal, a situation that was not improved by the intense social conflict over farm leases during the early Second Republic, and the collectivization of large estates in the civil war period. From the 1950s, lease holding arrangements were complicated by declining fertility. A number of the farms surveyed were left without heirs. Later, the expansion of higher education in Spain, meant that many *hereus* went to university (20 out of the 35 questioned were graduates), where some of them studied law or medicine rather than agronomy. Meanwhile, not a few of the wives whom they had met during their studies in Barcelona or Madrid, were unhappy with the outmoded roles that were assigned to them.

This book builds on previous research by Rosa Congost, Llorenç Ferrer, Ramon Garrabou, Jordi Planas, Saguer, and others covering such topics as the formation of the *hereu* and the often antagonistic relations between landowners and *masovers*. One advantage of its oral history approach is that it provides readers with a wealth

of hitherto unpublished details on the nature of recent changes. Between the 1960s and the early 1980s, as the relative prices of traditional crops declined, many of the *hereus* in the sample switched their production to more remunerative livestock farming. However, the high cost of substituting capital for labour together with the need to achieve economies of scale threatened to destroy the entire inheritance system. Many farms were abandoned at this stage. Salvation finally came – for some at least – in the guise of mass tourism to Spain's Costa Brava. Although not everyone was in a position to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the burgeoning tourist sector, many of our *hereus* were tempted into converting their picturesque *masias* into restaurants, hotels, or second residences for city dwellers. One consequence of all these developments, as the authors inform us, was an erosion of the social and political roles of the *hereu* who, a century ago, had formed part of Catalonia's hegemonic class.

This collaborative volume is the latest in a series of monographs on Catalan ethnology, supported by the Generalitat de Catalunya. With its excellent illustrative material, including some nice old photographs, it contributes greatly to our understanding of Spain's rich and diverse agricultural history.

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STEPHEN B. BRUSH, *Farmers' bounty. Locating crop diversity in the contemporary world* (Yale UP, 2004). xix + 327 pp. 26 tables; 30 figs. £25.

Since the beginnings of crop domestication, the world's farmers have selected, modified, and experimented with genetic resources. Agricultural history is, in part, a story of experimentation by farmers, eager to find varieties that meet their social and cultural needs and solve their agronomic problems. Stephen B. Brush's book offers an assessment of the processes that have generated rich diversity within most cultivated crops. Brush warns that contemporary economic and ecological forces may threaten this diversity, but he also reminds us that crop evolution is a dynamic and continuing reality. The natural and human forces that have generated crop diversity in the past are still at work today.

Farmers' bounty is, for starters, a thorough and comprehensive review of recent literature on crop diversity. Brush summarizes and makes accessible recent writings from many disciplines: cultural ecology, human ecology, economic botany, agricultural economics, and molecular biology, among others. This book offers a valuable review of the literature.

Brush identifies several central questions about crop diversity, and these reappear throughout the book. Why

is there so much diversity? Why is diversity concentrated geographically near the 'centres of origin' of crop species? How is diversity affected by economic growth and globalization? What are the prospects for conserving diversity in a world dominated by industrial models of agriculture?

These are important questions – never answered, perhaps, but examined thoughtfully from multiple perspectives. Brush's empirical orientation offers a nuanced perspective on current debates over the 'ownership' and 'exploitation' of genetic resources. The author notes that it is a natural and ancient human impulse to trade and exchange crop varieties, to modify them, and to experiment with them in new settings. In short, the same impulses that now seem to threaten diversity are the ones that have historically given rise to it.

Brush emphasizes the human role in creating crop diversity. Ecological pressures alone do not account for the profusion of crop varieties. As Brush points out, cultural imperatives and human needs have driven the creation of diversity. Specific characteristics are sought for food or ceremonial purposes, for processing purposes, for aesthetics, to alleviate labour constraints, and so on. Biotic and abiotic stresses are only a subset of the forces that have contributed to diversity.

Brush stresses that diversity itself has value to both consumers and farmers. Rational farmers may prefer to cultivate a portfolio of varieties, rather than a single variety. Similarly, consumers and societies value diversity for itself. (Think, for example, of the attraction of a fruit market selling dozens of different apple varieties, rather than a single one.)

These themes are thoroughly addressed and copiously referenced. Overall, the book will be an important source for anyone with interests in this field. The writing is lucid, and the book is full of nuggets of information (e.g., about how Andean farmers use high-quality local potatoes as a part of wages, to attract workers in a tight labour market). At times, the organizational structure of the book is unclear; some ideas are repeated unnecessarily. Nevertheless, the book will be of great interest to readers with backgrounds in anthropology or rural sociology. It should be entirely accessible, however, to readers coming from other fields. *Farmers' bounty* includes useful tables and data, but those looking for comprehensive statistics on crop diversity might be better advised to look elsewhere, for example at the (now somewhat dated) FAO publication, *State of the world's plant genetic resources for food and agriculture*.

For the audience of this journal, it is perhaps worthwhile to note that *Farmers' bounty* is not primarily historical in focus. Although Brush notes the historical context for diversity, his focus is primarily on the

developing world in the twentieth century. As the title suggests, the book also focuses on farmers' contributions to crop diversity, with relatively little attention to the role of scientists in either conservation or breeding.

This latter omission seems primarily linked to Brush's limited interest in *ex situ* collections of genetic diversity. He seems less interested in seed collections, existing out of the physical and human ecology in which they originate, and more curious about the interactions between crops and the cultures that cultivate and consume them.

Another omission, perhaps necessary, is that the book largely skirts the growing literature on molecular understandings of diversity. Molecular biology and its tools have increasingly challenged our understandings of crop diversity. Many named varieties may differ only in a few alleles. Should we care about diversity of varieties, or of alleles? Brush would argue that the genes themselves are silent, while varieties are constructed along with human knowledge. But perhaps this distinction will fall as our understanding of genetics increases.

What will be the value of varietal diversity in a world in which genes are moved routinely across species lines? What will be the meaning of crop diversity if individual genes can be identified and stored, independent of varieties? Will new biological tools make crop diversity more or less valuable? What are the implications for conservation? What are the implications for the future of farming? Brush folds this discussion into a few pages towards the end of the book – perhaps reasonable, considering that a full treatment of these topics would be book-length. Nevertheless, considering the author's erudition and perspective, it would be illuminating to know more about how he views these changes.

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Apology

It has been drawn to our attention that the 'subject index of eleven entries' described as 'ludicrously inadequate' in John Moore's review of Michael A. Faraday (ed.), *Worcestershire taxes in the 1520s* (Worcestershire Historical Society 19, 2003) in *AgHR* 54 part one (2006), p. 164 is in fact a subject index for an 11-page appendix to the volume and not the subject index of the volume as whole. The main subject index contains some 190 headings and sub-headings, including entries for the six categories which the reviewer specifically identifies as absent. We apologize for this wrongful impression of the contents of the book.