

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

HUGH KEARNEY, *The British Isles. A history of four nations* (CUP, sec. edn, 2006). xix + 362 pp. 40 illus; 16 maps. £45 (hbk); £17.99 (pbk).

Hugh Kearney's book provides a magisterial account of the complex histories and political geographies of the British Isles over the very long term. Many readers of this journal will be aware of Professor Kearney's aim in writing this monograph: 'to examine ... the interaction of the various major cultures of the British Isles from the Roman period onwards' (p.1). In particular, he seeks to show how our understanding of the histories of the various 'cultures' inhabiting the British Isles is augmented if we consider the long-term interactions between them. In this vein, Professor Kearney's book, when first published in 1989, was in the vanguard of a so-called 'new British history', which specifically attempted to view the history of the various peoples of the British Isles as a totality. His book – wide-ranging in its temporal and thematic scope – provided a welcomed corrective to previous studies which had fallen foul of, and indeed reproduced, ways of studying the British past that were grounded in the national historiographies of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. The additional insights provided by Professor Kearney's approach are numerous but one example may serve to illustrate its eminent value. The author's discussion of the history of the British Isles during the late seventeenth century, for instance, questions English historians' efforts to denote the revolution of 1688 as a 'landmark of English liberty' (p.189), when the future of Protestantism, parliamentary sovereignty, religious toleration and progress was secured within the English state. When viewed in the context of a broader Britain, however, the revolution of 1688 appears as a far more uncertain event. The revolution's religious and geopolitical aims were not secured in Scotland, for example, until the middle of the eighteenth century, following the battle of Culloden. In Ireland, religious tolerance was not granted until well into the nineteenth century and the character of parliamentary sovereignty within Ireland was also of a dubious character. Even in Wales, religious tolerance was denied to a raft of dissenters. Professor

Kearney's approach is made clear by this brief example. It is only by considering the British Isles as a whole that we may gain a true insight into the political, economic and cultural developments of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Professor Kearney's book is all the more impressive for the way in which it succeeds in negotiating a series of potential tensions in a deft way. One of the book's strengths is that it does not always consider equally each of the territories of the British Isles but rather interrogates a territory's history only to the extent that it contributes to the main themes being discussed within a particular chapter. For instance, in Chapter Four, which examines the Viking influence on the British Isles during the early medieval period, the discussion of events in Wales is limited, since the sources of evidence pertaining to the Vikings are far more extensive for England and Ireland. Professor Kearney's approach, therefore, is not borne out of a sense of national pedantry, which argues that equal attention should be directed towards the four territories of the British Isles as a matter of principle. Rather, his approach comprises an effort to understand the complex history of the British Isles through an interrogation of the processes and events taking place in its different territories but only to the extent that they contribute to the grander narrative.

At the same time, Professor Kearney has been wary of underplaying the overarching political, economic and cultural significance of England, and especially the south-east of England, within this historical narrative. By emphasizing the contribution made by processes in Scotland, Ireland and Wales to the politics, economics and culture of the British Isles, there might have been a danger of deflecting attention away from the key impetus provided by England for the emerging histories of the British Isles. In this respect, Professor Kearney successfully illustrates the significance of England (and the south-east in particular) as a motor of social, political and economic change, while at the same time trying to position it within the wider geographical framework provided by the British Isles as a whole. Professor Kearney's chapters on the early modern period, for instance, show how the south-east of England's, and especially

London's, economic and subsequent political dominance possessed considerable implications for the economic and agricultural practices of the north of England and the remaining territories of the British Isles. His skill, in this regard, has been to discuss the key innovations that took place in England – in numerous contexts – and to show how these shaped, and were shaped by, equally fundamental developments in other parts of the British Isles. And yet, Professor Kearney's story is not solely concerned with the interactions between the different cultures contained within the British Isles. Presaging debates concerning the significance of globalization and extra-territorial influences, which have become commonplace within the world of academia since 1989, the author is to be commended for discussing the important connections between Britain and a series of broader political geographies. Attention has already been drawn to the discussion of the Viking influence on British history in Chapter Four. Other chapters, in equal measure, demonstrate the links between developments in different parts of the British Isles and other far-flung places. The connections between Norman political and economic geographies within the British Isles, for instance, is placed within a broader European context in Chapters Five and Six, while the chapters dealing with the early modern period position Britain within the broader context of an English empire that extended into the New World. Taken together, such examples demonstrate Professor Kearney's remarkable sensitivity to the complex political geographies – both within and outwith the British Isles – that have contributed to British history over the long term.

Finally, I must congratulate Professor Kearney on his ability to present a thoroughly engaging 'big-picture history'. The danger with such 'big-picture history', of course, is that it becomes a superficial and rather anodyne treatment of key events with little time or space to discuss the more specific stories and occurrences that make history interesting. In this respect, Professor Kearney has been able to weave detailed stories about the struggles of a range of different people – from kings down to the more lowly businessman – into a far grander narrative concerning the major political, economic and cultural developments that have affected the British Isles. *The British Isles*, in this regard, succeeds in promoting highly-peopled versions of the past, which make the grander story that is being recounted all the more compelling.

While the above comments signal the impressive scope and quality of the book, I still have some slight criticisms. First of all, I would have liked to have seen the revisions provided in the second edition – revisions deriving from seventeen years of academic scholarship

since the publication of the first edition – incorporated into the text in a more meaningful way. At present, the author reflects on these more recent contributions in discrete postscripts, which are to be found at the end of each chapter. While there is some effort to relate the themes discussed in each chapter to the findings of more recent academic studies, I would have appreciated a more concerted effort on the author's part to weave these more recent studies into his own narrative. The second criticism revolves around the book's temporal coverage, which is rather uneven. The chapters discussing the Roman past and the twentieth-century history of the British Isles are brief, especially when compared with the chapters focusing on the medieval and early modern periods. The relative brevity of the earlier chapters, admittedly, may be explained by the paucity of evidence concerning the Celtic and Roman past within the British Isles but the chapters that deal with twentieth-century history are, in my mind, overly brief. There was considerable scope to extend the discussion of this period.

Viewed as a whole, these are minor criticisms. I very much enjoyed reading the book and the second edition is to be welcomed. The success of the first edition is reflected in the way in which it has inspired a large number of other historians to consider the connections between the different cultures contained within the British Isles. I am confident that the publication of the second edition of *The British Isles* will serve to reinforce the value of such an academic endeavour.

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BRUCE M. S. CAMPBELL and KEN BARTLEY, *England on the eve of the Black Death. An atlas of lay lordship, land and wealth, 1300–49* (Manchester UP, 2006). xxiii + 382 pp. 26 tables; 42 graphs; 155 maps. £120.

This book represents a great achievement after years of preparation, and it offers opportunities for new work for decades to come. The first labour that made it possible was performed by officials of the English state, who compiled the original 9292 Inquisitions Post Mortem between 1300 and 1349. They summoned juries, questioned them, and recorded information about the lands, rents and other assets of royal tenants who had recently died. Campbell chose this half-century sample of IPMs for analysis because the surveys were more informative and reliable at this time, and especially in the years 1323–41. They provide a panorama of the English countryside before the Black Death, and during the first phases of the 'crisis of the fourteenth century'. The second prodigious task was performed by Campbell and Bartley, and their many collaborators, who transcribed the IPMs, added

other sources such as the lay subsidies of 1327–34, and subjected them to rigorous analysis. This generated numerous tables, and a Geographical Information System enabled the production of more than 150 maps. All of this was accompanied by many practical problems, as new techniques were being developed. The third and final major effort fell to the Manchester University Press, whose input is presumably reflected in the price. For this modest sum we should be grateful, as the volumes would be sold at more than £2000 each if the full cost of the research and analysis was to be covered.

The maps and the commentary on their contents cover such subjects as the administration of the Inquisitions, regional variety in landholding units, the landed estates, land use and agriculture on the demesnes, land values, tenants and rents, court revenues, mills and markets. The last chapter deals with the evidence of the lay subsidies. Maps appear at a number of sizes and use a variety of cartographic methods. They present the information sometimes as relatively simple densities, but also record complex ratios which indicate relationships between variables, such as the ratio of the value of free rents to the value of customary rents. Thirty are reproduced in colour. What new insights emerge from this picture of England on the eve of its great medieval disaster? Some of the distributions are familiar, either because they echo and reinforce maps already published in Campbell's *English Seigniorial Agriculture* (2000), or because they confirm observations made by other researchers, such as Kosminsky's findings about the prevalence of small, irregular and unconventional manors. Most of the maps are entirely new, and give us a series of valuable insights into the period. No-one has previously plotted the distribution of the conventional units of landholding, virgates and bovates, for example, nor have two-field and three-field systems been mapped over the whole country. They lead us to see farming systems in a new light, so that a map of common rights reveals (by their absence in the county) the especially individualistic agriculture of Kent. We will pore over the maps indicating the local variations in arable and pasture, and customary and free rents, or the varied land values and distribution of taxable wealth. The overall impression is of an agrarian world less dominated by communal institutions, and less thoroughly manorialized, than is conventionally supposed. There is new evidence for the fourteenth-century crisis, with impressive maps of demesnes suffering from infertile soils, lack of cultivation, or other problems and disadvantages, including Scots raids. The valuations put on land show a long-term decline from 1280 until the 1340s. The lay subsidies before their fossilization in 1334 provide a figure of 276,300 tax payers, with unknown numbers

of those who evaded or were exempted, to fuel further arguments about the pre-plague population total.

We must all be grateful to Campbell and Bartley for making this material available to scholars, and for opening up yet further debate about the productive capacity of farming, the effectiveness of agricultural systems, regional variations in the rural economy, and the timing and character of the crisis. This book is absolutely scrupulous in defining the nature of the sources and their limitations. IPM extents were once regarded as very unreliable sources; and now they have been cautiously rehabilitated, but their many imperfections are acknowledged. We are told clearly that the IPMs provide a sample, based on the estates and manors of a section of the secular aristocracy. Nonetheless one fears misunderstandings arising from careless use of the maps, as not everyone will notice that the maps of markets or boroughs, for example, are telling us about the institutions mentioned in the IPMs over 50 years. Boroughs and markets on lay estates for which there is no IPM, and of course those on royal and church lands, do not appear.

The commentary is a useful indication of the conclusions that can be drawn from the maps, but there is only enough space to provide pointers of the significance of the evidence and its possible meanings. Dozens of future studies should be able to draw on this material. The authors, researchers and publishers have completed an important and authoritative piece of research, but they have also put into our hands a stimulating aid for new ventures.

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C. M. WOOLGAR, D. SERJEANTSON and T. WALDRON (eds), *Food in medieval England. Diet and nutrition* (OUP, 2006). xvi + 347 pp. 25 tables; 19 illus; 39 figs. £55.

No previous work of scholarship has accomplished the scale, coverage, and depth this book devotes to what the medieval English ate. The editors set for it two ambitious goals: to synthesize rich, new, and widely-scattered information about human diet and nutrition in England during the sixth through sixteenth centuries; and to clarify and encourage interaction between methodological approaches of archaeology and history. Much of what here serves these purposes was cooked up during a decade's regular gatherings of the Diet Group at Somerville College, Oxford. The authors' shared experience and mutual criticism results in a common tone and focus rarely found in collective volumes such as this.

Food in medieval England presents nineteen chapters gathered into two thematic units with introductory and

concluding chapters by the editors. They are joined by ten more co- or contributing authors, many of them well known to medievalists, agricultural historians, and archaeologists.

Eleven chapters (Two to Twelve) and about two-thirds of the book survey the important classes of foodstuffs: plant materials from field and garden; domestic livestock; fish; wild and domestic birds; the hunt ('venery') and its take ('venison'). Individually- or co-authored chapters sometimes blend and sometimes distinguish between verbal and material evidence (to employ terms which may better differentiate objects of particular study as historians and archaeologists together engage in a common effort to understand the past). Critical criteria for inferring past conditions and human behaviour from recovered plant remains (archaeobotany) and animal parts (archaeozoology) are especially well established. In certain situations disciplinary conclusions coincide, in others they seem to convey different slices of past human experience. As here repeatedly demonstrated, written records of production and recovered traces of consumption must be considered together. All contributors attend closely both to social and cultural differences among contemporary English eaters and to changes visible over time. Merely to sample the rich buffet: C.C.Dyer decisively establishes from widely scattered but abundant data what medieval England's many gardens offered for both elite and common diets; D.Serjeantson judiciously assesses the scope of eleventh-century increases in consumption of marine fishes; D.J.Stone and J.Birrell respectively show surprisingly deep social strata eating more wild birds and some cuts of venison during the period after the Black Death.

The last third of the book offers six topical studies on aspects of diet and nutrition. Some of these present uniquely important summaries of the current state of knowledge. C.M.Woolgar's essay on collective dining customs and B.F.Harvey's on monastic pittance together weaken and nuance the stereotype of exclusively piscivorous monks. Others treat the essential ingredient of natural and cultural seasonality in human dietary regimes and the demographic consequences of known dietary conditions and changes. These essays should go straight to the table set for advanced student seminars in agrarian, economic, and social history.

Two items stun the reader with methods hitherto unfamiliar to medievalists, if not to scholars working on earlier periods. Stable chemical isotopes, trace elements, and pathologies measured in human skeletal remains pose striking new interpretative hypotheses. For example, the ratios of carbon-12 to carbon-13 and of nitrogen-15 to nitrogen-14 are well-known to differ consistently between such broad categories as foods of

terrestrial and of aquatic origin or from plant or animal sources; this ratio is then preserved in the bone protein of humans who habitually consume such foods. Urban skeletons with stable isotope ratios showing more consumption of animals and animal products than was the case for rural people neatly coincide with the evidence of food remains and the written record. But G.Müldner and M.P.Richards report an unusual result from pilot isotopic analysis of large bone samples taken at three socially distinctive late medieval sites in northern England: anomalous ratios there detected argue for unexpectedly heavy eating of *either* omnivorous pigs *or* freshwater fishes. Neither dining habit would be suggested from other sorts of data. New methods open up whole new areas for inquiry.

By and large *Food in medieval England* achieves its editors' goal, offering a diverse, yet smooth and thorough reappraisal of the evidence regarding what medieval English people ate and their consequent dietary conditions. Agricultural historians narrowly conceived will want closely to examine the chapters on food products of domestic plant and animal origin, but anyone interested in broader relations among human social groups and between those people and their natural environment will be rewarded and inspired by the whole collection. The editors and their collaborators earn the highest praise and thanks for serving us this rich banquet. As intended, it stimulates our appetites for extended research efforts in Britain and serious emulation on the other side of the Channel.

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SIMON TOWNLEY (ed.), *The Victoria history of the counties of England. A history of the county of Oxford*, XV, *Carterton, Minster Lovell and environs, Bampton hundred part three* (Boydell and Brewer for the Institute of Historical Research, 2006). xiv + 280 pp. 84 figs. £95.

The eight largely rural parishes covered in this latest volume of the *VCH Oxfordshire* have few distinctive features. If they are known at all to the wider world, it will be because they take in the UK's largest RAF base at Brize Norton, the much visited ruins of William Lovell's great house at Minster Lovell, the childhood home of the Mitford sisters at Asthall, and, for the *cognoscenti*, the birthplace of Maria Edgeworth at Black Bourton. Lying mainly between the Thames and the Windrush, to the west and south-west of the town of Witney (the subject of the previous volume), most were originally part of the royal vill and minster *paruchia* of Bampton. The break-up of this great pre-Conquest estate, virtually complete by 1066, began a longer process of fragmentation which

saw the growth of independent parishes from Bampton's chapelries, the evolution of manors from small dependent settlements, and then, in the late medieval and early modern periods, the dispersal of manorial lands among freeholders, yeomen farmers and resident gentry. All eight were originally open-field parishes, whose enclosure between about 1770 and 1840 consolidated scattered holdings into fairly large farms, so partially reversing the earlier process of disintegration. To judge by the way in which parishes were apparently laid out in 'strip' fashion, giving access to different types of farmland, from the downs of the north to the riverine pastures and meadows of the south, some guiding hand, perhaps a communal one, lay behind their early formation. Mixed terrain must have facilitated the mixed arable-based farming which was (and is) characteristic of the region: wheat and barley, sheep and cattle, varied at different times and in different places with pigs, poultry, bees, turnips, sainfoin and mustard. The religious history of the different villages followed a broadly similar pattern of common experience. Livings were often held by distant corporations, and in the earliest days by Norman monastic houses, clerical non-residence was common until the nineteenth century, and dissent latterly exercised a strong attraction, particularly for the farm labourers, whose Primitive Methodism was often seen as a threat by the parish clergy. The records of church attendance suggest a generally low level of enthusiasm for the established church, though this was often effectively countered by a religious revival inspired by some particularly energetic and reformist parish priests in the mid to late nineteenth century. It usually proved short-lived. If these historical developments followed a generally similar course throughout the *pays*, so too have developments in more modern times. The closure of chapels and shops and their conversion into private houses, the decline and often the disappearance of voluntary organizations, the replacement of the tradesmen, craftsmen and retailers who once stood at the centre of village life by commuters, weekenders and the retired, and the shrinking opportunities for rural employment: these changes, whether regarded as melancholy, progressive or merely inevitable, typify the recent history not only of a few west Oxfordshire villages but also of much of rural England. In 1871 Ringwood Farm, at 600 acres the largest farm in Asthall, employed thirty people. In 2000, now much larger at 900 acres, it employed two.

In keeping with most recent volumes of the *VCH*, this one covers only a small area; but it does so with exemplary thoroughness and skill. To read it from cover to cover, which only a reviewer is likely to want to do, is in some ways a mind-numbing experience, so dense is the factual content and so unavoidably lacking in thesis or argument

is most of the prose. Yet to do so reveals not only some of the general patterns and trends outlined above, but also the immense labour of productive research lying behind even the most straightforward parish history. The unpublished documents used in this volume are drawn from the muniment rooms of Eton and the Oxford colleges, from those of Arundel Castle and Longleat, and from many other repositories. Breaking with the old *VCH* tradition, but like its immediate predecessors, it contains full and valuable descriptions of buildings, and for one parish, Kencot, it follows a newly-adopted structure by including a discrete section on social history: a helpful innovation which makes possible what is in effect an historical essay, going beyond the usual sequence of facts to deal with such large issues as social structure and immigration. One conspicuous omission, common to other volumes too, is worth noting. Amid all the information provided here, nothing at all is said about village losses in the two world wars, though these must often have had a traumatic effect on farming, labour supplies, and many other aspects of village life. The names and numbers of the dead could easily have been gleaned from war memorials and it is odd that they should have been overlooked. Much can slip between the standardized and regimenting sub-headings which the *VCH* format imposes on each parish history. But in all other respects the series goes from strength to strength.

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JOHN HARROP, PAUL BOOTH and SYLVIA HARROP (eds), *Extent of the lordship of Longdendale, 1360* (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 140, 2005). lii + 116 pp. 14 plates. £25 to non-members from Dr Fiona Pogson, Department of History, Hope University College, Stand Park Road, Liverpool L16 9JD.

Longdendale is the eastern and higher part of the Etherow Valley. It rises due east of the Manchester urban complex and runs up into the Peak District National Park. Today it is notable for a string of reservoirs that supply Manchester. In this edition, 14 photographs generously illustrate the varying character of the landscape, from old arable and rolling park land up to open moor. In the fourteenth century Longdendale constituted a lordship centred on Tintwistle, where there was a small borough (not recorded in Beresford and Finberg, but well attested in the records printed here). The lordship was adjacent to the heavily forested lordship of Macclesfield, and one membrane of the Longdendale extents lists the foresters of Macclesfield even though the two lordships were separately administered. In the 1360s Longdendale was in the hands of the Black Prince, who

leased it out. Its administrators were responsible for compiling a series of extents, one in about 1357, of which nothing survives, a second in 1360, and a third a few years later. None of these survives in its final form, but a file of documents in The National Archives (SC 11/897) contains advanced drafts of the 1360 extent and its successor. The editors have printed these with a translation, and supply a detailed introduction describing the record and the circumstances of its composition. An appendix contains a summary of the tenancies, which cross-references the different drafts, and a prosopographical index that draws together available information about the 124 people they mention. There are also separate indexes of persons, places and subject. Although the record is a complex one, the editors have done everything in their power to make it intelligible and usable.

There were ten different settlements belonging to the lordship, but because most of them were subinfeudated as manors or parts of manors it is not possible to calculate the total number of households. The lordship rendered a total sum of £35–40 a year, of which about £16 13s. 4d. was from Tintwistle, its mill and the stallage. A further £12 was apparently from pasture rents. Most of the settlements owed only a few shillings. Though these were not for the most part commercial rents, their low valuation, together with the environmental characteristics of Longdendale, suggest that this was a lightly populated region. Its agriculture probably combined extensive pastoral farming with oats and barley cultivation. Tenants owing harvesting services at Arnfield, in the days before these had been commuted for cash payments, had received a daily meal of bread, butter and milk, and those owing ploughing services had expected to receive for each plough a gallon of ale, six herrings and six oatcakes (*vj kakes avene*). The editors surmise that the last of the three extents recorded here, coming so closely behind that of 1360, was occasioned by the plague epidemic of 1361–2. Even before then there had been depopulation; two burgage tenements in Tintwistle, as well as a couple of other properties there, are described as decayed in 1360, and the editors cross-reference to decays of rent recorded in contemporary account rolls from the lordship. So many of our records come from the wealthier and heavily populated parts of Britain, that it is particularly pleasing to have material in print from a more outlying estate such as this one. It would be interesting to know whether in the longer term Longdendale suffered exceptionally badly from depopulation as a result of its upland terrain, or whether its inhabitants had the resources and enterprise to defy the implications of their 'marginal' location.

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P. S. BARNWELL and MALCOLM AIRS (eds), *Houses and the hearth tax: the later Stuart house and society* (Council for British Archaeology, Research Report 150, 2006). xiv + 202 pp. 22 tables; 108 illus. £17.50.

The value of the hearth tax returns to family historians is now well attested, but it is really only since the mid-1980s that their potential significance for the history of houses has been recognized. This book arose out of a conference which brought together historians, archaeologists and architectural experts to pool their understanding of the documents and the surviving structures and so add to the greater body of knowledge. Some of the contributors look primarily at the problems of using the data (Parkinson, Arkell) but the central thrust of the book is to look at regional housing differences using the hearth tax returns. The regional coverage is mixed – Huntingdonshire and Warwickshire represent 'The Midlands', and, of the counties west of the Pennines, only Westmorland receives any attention. However, the point of the conference and now the thirteen regional contributions to this book was not to achieve blanket coverage, but to identify and reflect regional variation as a platform for work on the hearth tax returns in the future.

Judged from this perspective, the findings are not perhaps as path breaking as the conference convenors may have hoped. Not surprisingly, it turns out that the greater the number of hearths, the wealthier the household, but at the same time, the number of hearths was dictated among the wealthier members of society by individual preference in relation to the use of wealth. Consequently, as we have known for well over twenty years, 'the occupiers of one-hearth houses ranged from the poor to the moderately prosperous' (p. 177). We are faced in other words with the same problem that impacts on our modern society, of cash-starved (mainly elderly) people who happen for one reason or another to live in large (multi-hearthed in seventeenth-century terminology) houses. Nor is it clear where the essays take us next. Several of the authors use probate inventories, which is a standard way of assessing the relationship between house size and wealth, but the overall conclusion is that such linkages have to be tested carefully and used sparingly. Far better is the evidence of the taxed houses today, but the survival rate varies regionally, and the quality and build of the original properties was affected by the relative abundance or shortage of good building materials.

As far as rural historians are concerned, there is some evidence of differences in numbers of hearths between predominantly arable economies in the south-east, and pastoral economies, perhaps because arable farming had greater labour requirements. Possibly also the storage of grain required different heating arrangements from cheese and meat, where these were kept within the

household. But the hearth tax evidence is almost certainly less helpful in relation to households than the material which has been derived from probate inventories over the past forty years. If these conclusions seem rather nebulous, they should not detract from the point of the conference, which was to air the issues in an academic forum. Like the frustratingly voluminous but relatively limited land tax assessments at the end of the eighteenth century, the hearth tax returns may raise our hopes simply because they are so numerous, only to dash them because the evidence is less susceptible to manipulation than we might hope. The hearth tax returns will always be useful to family historians, but what this conference demonstrated is that they may never be quite as useful in the study of houses as the existence of so much data on the number of hearths would lead us to anticipate.

Be that as it may, the regional studies tell us a good deal about houses in late seventeenth-century England, and in themselves make a significant contribution to our understanding of what survives, and what surviving structures tell us about the communities in which they were located. If the hopes of the conferees were only partially fulfilled, we can at least thank the organisers for sponsoring a number of short, well-illustrated regional studies, which are themselves interesting discussions of vernacular architecture in the late seventeenth century. Perhaps the book's subtitle should have been given greater prominence.

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HEATHER M. BEAUMONT with members of the Hebden History Group, *Pointers to the past: the historical landscape of Hebden township, upper Wharfedale* (Yorkshire Archeological Society, Occasional Papers 5, 2006). vii + 57 pp. 56 figs. £12 incl. p. & p. from YAS, Claremont, 23 Clarendon Road, Leeds LS2 9NZ.

Pointers to the past forms part of the YAS Occasional Papers series and, as such, does not disappoint in terms of depth of research and detailed analysis. The paper examines the development of the man-made landscape in the small township of Hebden in the north Yorkshire Pennine dales. The monograph is one of a growing number of studies undertaken by local groups that look beyond their immediate locality in order to place their findings in a wider context.

The general and specific introductions establish with clarity the rationale for the study and the methodology adopted. The survey area is divided naturally into four divisions by a north/south beck which is conveniently bisected by a west/east roadway. The stated aim of the study is to record landscape details and, in particular, different types of stone wall design in order to identify

earlier patterns of landscape development especially those which predate the limited written evidence. The resultant identification of five types of field divisions (largely stone walls) has enabled the group to establish a rough chronology of the development of the township's field system. With one exception, each type is associated with a different period, albeit with some overlap, in the development of the local landscape: medieval (boulder walls, relic hedgerows and trees); sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (external boundary walls); 1690 to 1770s (irregular walls); and the period culminating in the enclosure act of 1857 which enabled the enclosure of 2660 acres of moorland (parliamentary enclosure walls). The remaining group is the 'regular wall' type of which there were relatively few and which may have been constructed before or after the 1857 enclosure act. As part of their methodology, the study group also established chronology by wall to wall abutments. From their findings the researchers were able to identify a four-field system of primary enclosure from the medieval period with one field in each of the four divisions of the study area.

Once all the field-division remains had been identified and plotted, the study group examined other features and events that influenced the development of the agricultural system such as throughways and other routes, the establishment of a manor with a toft compartment, the role of the outlying hamlet in the northern divisions, and the very limited more recent industrial development. The monograph details the relationship of throughways with the primary enclosures and highlights the importance to the township of protecting its agricultural assets from the transit of animal traffic through the area particularly during the twice-annual transhumance activity.

Heather Beaumont emphasizes that due to the paucity of written evidence, interpretation of the landscape has required the time-honoured approach of historical imagination and conjecture based on the fieldwork findings. She cites other authorities in legitimizing this but notes that such assumptions can only provide pointers to the past. This approach is used in an interesting discussion of the dating and role of the peripheral settlement. Following findings in other northern studies, it is suggested that this type of settlement may have predated the manorial system. However, although the influence of the manor was undoubtedly strong within the township during the medieval period, it is possible that the outlying hamlet was not totally under manorial constraint. Rather it had a symbiotic relationship as it managed the two northern primary enclosures for the benefit of the whole township community.

The researchers have made good use of such written evidence as is available, marrying it with the field

evidence to provide valuable clues to the development of land management in the township, particularly as it moved from manorial to freeholder ownership. Place-name evidence is also used. For example, it is suggested that in one of the southern divisions called Sedber, a name of Norse derivation, a surviving earthwork may be the site of a pre-manorial settlement. This conclusion is further supported by indications that the manorial primary enclosures could have been a development of earlier enclosures.

The essay is presented in A4 format with the support of numerous maps, diagrams and photographs. It is well furnished with footnotes, bibliography and an index. Inevitably, the detailed discussion of stonewall types and their locations means that the text in part is dense and requires much page jumping between the figures and the relevant text.

Overall, while the findings tend to mirror the experience elsewhere, this detailed analysis of Hebden township provides another case study to add to the growing body of evidence drawn from the interpretation of the landscape and as such is of benefit for professional historian and the interested amateur alike.

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ALYSHA LEVENE, THOMAS NUTT and SAMANTHA WILLIAMS (eds), *Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700–1920* (Palgrave, 2005). xv + 249 pp. 32 tables; 7 figs. £50.

The subject of illegitimacy has become something of a historiographical relic. Since the work of the late and great Peter Laslett, historical demographers and local historians (of varying ability) have enjoyed proprietorial rights, but the subject has always begged closer textual analysis. If history has undergone a linguistic turn, this shift from the social to the cultural has had relatively little effect on the historians of Britain's bastards. This is not to minimize the importance of demography. It is rather to observe that it is still possible to read whole articles or books on illegitimacy without being any better informed about the sexual cultures that produced the birth of children outside of marriage. It is a history of sex without much sex.

Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700–1920 demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of this historiography – with, it has to be said, one added shortcoming. For histories of illegitimacy are also somewhat fragmented – or, as the editors of the book under review would have it, 'diverse' in their approach. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this, but it does not make for thematically coherent edited collections. Levene and her co-editors valiantly struggle (Chapter 1) to impose some retrospective order on their contributors' essays, with reference

to the emergence of 'many common historical themes' (deviancy, gender, power). But truly there are no common themes.

It is still a valuable volume. As the editors point out, *Illegitimacy* demonstrates collective innovation and range in its use of sources and methodologies: popular ballads (Chapter 2), London Foundling Hospital records (Chapters 3 and 6), settlement and bastardy examination books (Chapter 4), parish record linkage and pauper letters (Chapter 5), unmarried mothers' petitions (Chapter 6), petty sessions records (Chapter 7), Irish Catholic parish registers (Chapter 8), linked Scottish civil register and census data (Chapter 9), and Medical Officer of Health (MOH) notifications. The results vary in their import. The chapter on ballads is more about courtship than illegitimacy: its most noticeable feature is popular literature's relative silence on the very topic that the essay is supposed to deal with. Chapter 3, on the mortality of illegitimate foundlings, though cleverly conceived and executed, is too inconclusive about infant feeding arrangements and based on such a small sample that it is unlikely to have wider application. Chapter 8, which bizarrely constructs data only to demolish it, seems to demonstrate the unreliability rather than the usefulness of the Catholic parish registers. Chapter 5, although one of the most innovative in the collection, remains preoccupied with Laslett's bastardy-prone sub-society thesis, even when it goes against the grain of other chapters in the collection, and tends to assume rather than closely interrogate the usefulness of the concept.

Thus *Illegitimacy* is the bastard child of its own historiography. It contains excellent historical demography: John Black's nicely crafted analysis of the socio-economic typicality of the fathers of London illegitimates (Chapter 4); Andrew Blaikie, Eilidh Garrett, and Ros Davies's groundbreaking reconstruction of the community context of Scottish illegitimacy (Chapter 9); and Alice Reid's fascinating exploration of the mortality of illegitimate children in Derbyshire at the end of the First World War (Chapter 10). But there is relative little evidence of the impact of the new cultural history. The exception is Samantha Williams's treatment of unmarried mothers' petitions to the London Foundling Hospital that at least touches on narratives of seduction and the manner in which they may have impacted on these women's testaments (Chapter 6). One chapter is hardly enough to change the overall complexion of the volume.

Illegitimacy in Britain, 1700–1920 does not shift any historical parameters. We learn more about migration and mortality than sexual morality. Instead of wasting any more print on Laslett's 'bastardy-prone sub society' – a relic if ever there was one – it would make sense in the future to deal with the meanings and languages of

illegitimacy, with official and unofficial definitions, and with textual silences as well as condemnations.

BARRY REAY
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HERBERT HOPE LOCKWOOD, *Tithe and other records of Essex and Barking* (Essex Record Office, 2006). 158 pp. Illus. £9.99.

The main purpose of this book is to describe the unusually full tithe records of the old parish of Barking, particularly those predating the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836. With 12,307 acres until 1830, Barking was one of the largest parishes in the county. Other Essex tithe records are also discussed; notably those for Ilford, also a large parish.

The volume begins with a chapter discussing the origins of tithe and the historical evolution of tithing practices and customs up to 1836. The author notes the transition from collection in kind to collection in cash by the late middle ages, and early instances, as at Newport in 1704, of commutation of small tithes for an agreed local rate. The documentary record is the subject of Chapter Two. Informal tithe accounts were kept by incumbents in volumes which sometimes became general account books, containing references to Easter offerings, glebe accounts or occasional household expenses. Often the arrival of a new incumbent or a dispute would prompt a full farm-by-farm survey of tithe obligations, such as that undertaken at Barking by Isaac Johnson of Woodbridge in 1805. 'Tithe causes', initiated by incumbents or lay improprators against recalcitrant tithe payers, left their own paper trail as cases were pursued through the courts. There were 484 tithe suits in the ecclesiastical court of the Archdeaconry of Essex between 1571 and 1609 alone.

Chapter Three traces the origin and evolution of the arrangements under which the tithes of Barking Abbey were farmed, by the Abbey itself from the later fifteenth century and by the Crown after the Dissolution. The activities of Thomas Cartwright, vicar of Barking from 1660 to 1688–9, are the subject of Chapter Four. An assiduous accumulator of ecclesiastical preferments, culminating in his elevation to the see of Chester in 1686, Cartwright was equally dedicated to improving his income from the Barking tithes. He launched twelve tithe cases in the Court of Arches soon after acquiring the Barking living, and commissioned two surveys of the parish, one in collusion with the lord of the manor.

Chapter Five shows how tithe surveys continued under some of the eighteenth-century incumbents. They included 'Mr Fiddes Green Book', compiled in 1727–8, and another survey, commissioned by the Revd William Stephen, which appears to date from 1750, though it

relies to some extent on one of the surveys made during Cartwright's time. Christopher Musgrave, appointed in 1762, was soon active in determining what was rightfully his. His first account, dating from 1763, is a new and complete schedule of liabilities to vicarial tithe, and suggests increased income from root crops and garden produce.

Chapters Six and Seven treat documents more tangential to the Barking tithes but useful complements to their study. The archives of Ilford Hospital, which include surveys of lands in Barking earlier than those found in any other source, are touched on in Chapter Six, while Chapter Seven considers the usefulness of hearth tax lists, rate books, parish registers, vestry minutes, wills, manor court records and large-scale Ordnance Survey maps when interpreting the Barking tithe documents. A final chapter outlines the research potential of the unusually large number of documents relating to the tithes of Barking, and an appendix gives useful summary information about the sources.

NESTA EVANS
Tostock, Suffolk

ANNE ORDE (ed.), *Matthew and George Culley. Farming letters, 1798–1804* (Boydell Press / Surtees Society, 210, 2006). xlv + 625 pp. 1 illus; 2 maps. £50.

Matthew Culley (1731–1804) and his brother George (1735–1813), two substantial farmers in north Northumberland, have received some attention from agricultural historians such as Stuart Macdonald. Recently, Anne Orde edited and published their travel journals and letters from 1765 to 1798 (OUP, 2002). She has continued her excellent work on their extensive family deposit in the Northumberland Record Office with the editing of another tranche of their papers. This volume brings together 'the only substantial quantity of outgoing letters from the two Culleys' (p.xv): the letters from Matthew and George to John Welch, their steward at Denton, the family property in County Durham, from 1798 to 1804. In her introduction, Orde notes that the letters were kept by Welch who 'apparently later returned them to George or his son, so that they have descended in the Culley papers' (p.xxiii).

The collection comprises some 242 letters. Most were written by George, the better known of the two brothers. Matthew also sometimes added comments at the end of George's letters before they were sent to Welch. George's son, Matthew junior, who worked with his father, also contributed occasionally.

Orde describes George as an 'assiduous letter-writer' (p.xxix). George repeatedly stresses the importance of letter writing for the dissemination of information: 'I keep scolding and requesting you to write often, and

I hope in time to be able to convince you of the importance of communication by letter' (p.75). Information exchange by letter is crucial to their business: 'What does 5£ postage signify between you and us compared to advantages gained by early intelligence?' (p.76). He frequently lectures Welch that he was not writing often enough. He provides guidance on methodology: 'when you send away one, begin another letter to fill up as things occur' (p.16). He also scolds him for omitting to write about things on which he had requested information.

The letters had a range of functions. Although they were written primarily to give Welch instructions, advice, information about markets and to consult with him, they also provided a wide range of information on other matters. Their main themes are agriculture and rural affairs; the state of the weather (a significant topic of discussion); the agricultural operations being undertaken by the Culleys and other farmers; the whereabouts of the two brothers, especially when they were away from home on business; news about people in the agricultural community; and the views of other farmers who corresponded with the Culleys.

A central topic is the state of agricultural markets, especially those for livestock and corn. George provides a wide range of detailed advice to Welch about how to maximize market returns on livestock by selling at opportune times ('in critical times, it is always wise to sell at these great prices' p.140). Acutely aware of factors influencing market trends locally, regionally and nationally, George advises where the best returns are likely to be found.

The letters also refer in great detail to many aspects of livestock husbandry. They outline the changes in livestock in southern Scotland in the previous thirty years and describe the increasing popularity of the Dishley (New Leicester) breed of sheep. They show concern for animal welfare. George notes the relationship between the wellbeing of animals and stock quality, observing, for example, that deterioration results from their being driven aggressively or in unsuitable weather conditions.

The letters are a treasure trove of detailed information relating to the management of the Culleys' farming enterprises between 1798 and 1804, and to other aspects of agriculture – especially livestock and pastoral farming – over a much wider area of England and south-east Scotland. They provide angles that it would be difficult to find in other sources. For example, they record speculations, especially about price trends in various agricultural markets, and the impact (or likely impact) of external events on agriculture. They are especially important in uncovering the rationale behind the day-to-day activities of a very successful farming business.

The editor's excellent introductory essay gives context to the letters, which are judiciously edited, with helpful footnotes which clarify technical and dialect terms, expand on dates of fairs and markets, supply biographical information, and provide other explanatory elaborations. A note on editorial method is also given. In addition, the volume contains George Culley's 'An account of the names of domestic animals at different ages', which is invaluable for understanding the large number of technical terms for livestock that appear throughout the letters (pp. xxxii–xxxiii). The detailed index is especially welcomed: it allows scattered information to become easily accessible to readers who wish to examine a particular subject area.

The editor should be congratulated for undertaking this work and making this valuable collection of letters more widely accessible. This is an important collection which deserves to be widely known and examined in great detail. It is a 'must' for all agricultural historians interested in the period and has much to recommend it to scholars from other disciplines.

HEATHER HOLMES
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JAMES P. HUZEL, *The popularization of Malthus in early nineteenth-century England*. Martineau, Cobbett and the pauper press (Ashgate, 2006). xv + 266 pp. 6 illus. £55.

We either love him or hate him, but rarely do we ignore him. More than any other of his contemporary or near-contemporary political economists, Malthus has aroused emotions both in his lifetime and subsequently. The free market ways of Adam Smith of course attract political supporters and detractors on both sides of the political divide. Ricardo and Ricardian thought perhaps enjoys less the political and more the intellectual attention. Rent theory, whether Ricardian or not, is a theoretical approach to the contractual interactions between peoples that is concluded every day of their working lives. Malthusianism is altogether more brutal. How often is it depicted with the grim reaper in the background ready to scythe down peoples? Our news broadcasts almost daily remind us that the three great Malthusian people purges of the past – war, pestilence, and famine – live on in the twenty-first century. Yes it is as much a modern story of pessimism as it is historical, and it starkly divides the haves from the have-nots in this world, both within societies, but also between societies. The 'Live Aid', 'Band Aid', 'Africa Aid' conscience of western society has reached almost industrial proportions.

War, pestilence and famine were the positive checks on population growth, Malthus also had much to say on the preventive check of sexual restraint, and that of

course is also a major debating point in modern society, not only in sub-Saharan Africa but also in modern British society with the teenage pregnancy explosion of recent times. Malthus linked the issue of sexual restraint directly to the operation of the contemporary Poor Law. He observed that it worked against his preventive check because it encouraged people to entertain early marriage and to multiply household size in the sure knowledge that a social safety net was in place. As he put it, with the encouragement of parish relief, 'men are thus allured to marry with little or no prospect of being able to maintain a family in independence' (p. 21).

But how was the Malthusian spectre received in his own time? The burning issue then, and the recurring issue for subsequent generations of historians, is the influence that Malthusianism, and in particular the preventive check of the control of family size, had on the state management of poverty. In the British case this culminated in the New Poor Law and the ending of outdoor relief in 1834. This book describes how the Malthusian message about the rise of population and the attendant social and economic dislocations that ensued were received by Malthus' contemporaries.

The author claims that his approach is the first serious attempt to investigate how contemporaries tried to broadcast the Malthusian message, both negatively as well as positively, especially among the working class. He concludes that Malthusian thought shaped public opinion more widely than was hitherto imagined because it reached below the purely intellectual and public policy level where perhaps historians have otherwise concluded that it resided. The sub-title of this book – Martineau, Cobbett and the pauper press – sets up the lines of engagement. Harriett Martineau is depicted as a Malthus champion in the early 1830s, with William Cobbett in the opposing corner representing the single most determined adversary of Malthus of that generation. And what of the pauper press? This really refers to the attempted wider circulation of what Martineau, Cobbett and others wrote and thought, through the popular circulation of comment in the working-class press. All three means of communication were intended to reach a similar and wide audience, the middle class and especially the working class, Martineau through her 25 fictional stories in *Illustrations of political economy* and her *Poor laws and paupers illustrated* (published in four volumes) and Cobbett through the reprints, extracts, and tracts taken from his *Political register*.

James Huzel tells his story in four parts. The first is about Malthus and seeks to engage not only the experts but also an audience that is not wholly conversant with Malthus, what he said and believed, and how those beliefs changed over time. The second part offers the

Martineau position, and the third the Cobbett position. The final part is a consideration of what the radical working-class press said. The whole is topped and tailed by an introduction and a chapter of conclusions. What does Huzel conclude? Martineau made huge mistakes in her representation, not least in her espousal of moral restraint both in delaying marriage but also of restraining carnal knowledge within marriage, though Huzel believes that the invective against her for this was a contemporary misinterpretation of what she was really saying. Cobbett attracted a wide audience, and indeed Huzel claims that the wider readership enjoyed by Cobbett is itself evidence of the animosity to Malthus by the working class, and this was reinforced by the invective from the pauper press. But history is about winners and losers, sometimes regardless of the weight of public opinion. Do we conclude that the triumph of the New Poor Law makes Malthus the winner? James Huzel thinks that this is too simplistic, but if he is correct in thinking that hitherto there has been a neglect of Malthus in writing the history of this important aspect of public policy, then perhaps he has sent a hare running that will be pursued for some time to come.

MICHAEL TURNER
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ROBERT LEE, *Unquiet country. Voices of the rural poor, 1820–1880* (Windgather Press, 2005). xii + 162 pp. £14.99.

I suspect many professional historians will find this book slightly uncomfortable – not because of its subject – but because of how that subject is tackled. Its avowed intention is to 'give a voice' to the rural poor, mainly of Norfolk, in the middle years of the nineteenth century. It does this through a series of brief vignettes covering topics like machine breaking, poaching, instances of 'rough music', witchcraft and rural bastardy. The topics chosen are interesting enough but it is the way they are treated which causes some problems. Each essay is prefaced by what the author calls a 'dramatized section'. In these he uses what he calls 'imaginative licence' to put a gloss on the accounts which follow, for example using a vernacular voice to present a version from the view of 'the poor', or writing an account of the event described in the third person in an almost novelistic way.

This has advantages, especially for the non-specialist reader. Many historical sources are dry and not easy to follow and present barriers to understanding necessitating long and often complex exegesis by the historian. This in turn often blunts the impact of what are frequently powerful and moving historical stories. However, to many 'professionals' such changes smack of tampering with evidence. It is not that Lee makes anything up in

the way of facts, rather than the 'imaginative licence' employed appears to give sets of meanings to events over and above what is in the source. For example, in the account of 'rough music' at Clippersby in Norfolk in 1868 in the *Norfolk News* (quoted it has to be said by Lee), the victim, John Mumford, 'was standing at a gate ... with his master [when he saw a number of men coming towards him]. They were carrying an image, which was dressed in [a] similar dress which he wore.' Lee renders this at much greater length, having Mumford hear music and drumbeats across the marsh and his employer recognize the effigy: "'That look just like you John!'" cried his employer, his voice incredulous but betraying the first chokings of suppressed laughter. With a muttered curse Mumford turned his back on the scene and set off for home, trying hard not to break into a run ...'.

There is nothing implausible in this. Mumford's employer raised laughter in the court when he described the effigy; Mumford did go to his house (as did the procession); but it is the assumptions about 'the muttered curses' and later when Mumford in his house stands 'flattened against the wall' while outside his neighbours join in 'dancing impromptu reels' that leave me uneasy. Simply we don't know if he was 'flattened against the wall', and secondly, in the case of the reels, it is stretching the evidence a bit.

In fairness, we only know it is stretching the evidence because Lee, unlike say Ronald Blythe in *Akenfield*, provides us with the original material, but it remains important. Lee wants to give the rural poor a voice – a project to which I have given part of my working life and which I strongly applaud – but the question must be does this method do that? The answer is not simple. The imaginative reconstruction of the lives of the poor, both contemporary and historical, has huge virtues and at its best presents texts of enormous power. Few rural historians could have read Adam Thorpe's novel *Ulverton* without a recognition of the deep 'truth' of his account of the aftermath of Swing. Nearly a hundred years earlier Hudson's accounts of the same events in *A shepherd's life* with its intensely moving plea for the 'good, brave men' transported in 1830–1 has a similar resonance. Yet it is an area which those who lack the training, patience and skill of the novelist should always approach with caution. Against this there is real value for the non-specialist or general reader in using materials in this way. In that respect, the book will certainly have a potential appeal outside the normal academic audience.

I am left however with a sense of unease. In the final chapter Lee talks about 'finding patterns', including widespread alienation among the rural poor of the 1820s to 1840s, who after the suppression of Swing, the advent of the New Poor Law, the 'new' game acts and enclosure

appear as a class apart, sullenly and bitterly confronting the rural elite. In some ways that was certainly the case, as the essays and vignettes in the book show. Yet it was a short moment and one which was made more complex, as Lee's other work shows, by the reaction of the rural poor of East Anglia in the 1850s and 1860s. In those years the rick burner and cattle maimer becomes less significant than the Methodist preacher, the friendly society member and ultimately the trade unionist and Liberal Party activist. By the early 1870s there were more labourers involved in these essentially respectable movements than had ever been actively involved in the desperate resistance of the 1830s and 1840s. This is not to discount the earlier period, and Lee's work certainly gives it a real and anguished human face, but to suggest that the patterns found might be different.

There were survivals of older 'class struggles without class', as E.P. Thompson called them, but they seem increasingly odd and even out of step. In 1911, in a bitter strike at St Faiths in Norfolk, the women and children of the village 'ran-tanned' blacklegs and ended up in court. They claimed what they were doing was a 'tradition' and clearly understood the public contempt and disapproval contained within the ritual. Yet circumstances had changed, and with that change so the ritual shifted its site, its meaning and its importance. What they were doing was part of a strike, led by a well-organized and increasingly powerful union in one of its strongholds. They were supported by unionized urban workers, the Independent Labour Party and were defended in court by a solicitor hired and paid for by the union. There are patterns but they are patterns which show the rural poor modernizing their protest into nineteenth-century forms recognized, albeit reluctantly, by the state. They were also forms which, at least in terms of hours, wages and conditions, were more effective than the doomed and bitter movements of a hundred years earlier. It is that pattern, that change, which needs to be understood, for it was that change which the trades unionists and the early rural socialists of Norfolk believed to be the great advance. They also believed that it was an advance of their own making. The unions, the friendly societies even the Methodist Chapel were, they believed, the product of a new rural 'working class' and their own activity.

ALUN HOWKINS
University of Sussex

M. HOLLAND and J. COOPER (eds), *Essex harvest: a collection of essays in memory of Arthur Brown* (Essex Record Office, 2003). xii + 182 pp. Illus. £9.99.

This engaging volume of essays on Essex themes by his pupils, friends and colleagues commemorates the life and work of a distinguished Essex historian, the late

Dr Arthur Brown. During more than half a century's association with the North Essex branch of the Workers' Educational Association, with the collections of the Essex Record Office, and following his retirement from schoolmastering in 1974, with the departments of Sociology and History at the University of Essex, where he held a research fellowship, he made a seminal contribution to teaching and research in the social and economic history of eighteenth and nineteenth century Essex.

He came to local history, as did many of this generation, by a roundabout route. Welshman by birth and classicist by training, he became attracted to local history as a PPE student at Oxford in the 1930s. Having decided against joining the International Brigade, he chose instead to tutor for the WEA in the Rhondda, prior to taking up a Classics post at Colchester Royal Grammar School. His commitment to local history is reflected by the fact that, as a schoolteacher, he found time to author or edit some eight books on Essex subjects. Three publications in particular are of special interest to rural historians: *Essex at work 1700–1815* (1969); *Meagre harvest: the Essex farm workers struggle against poverty 1750 to 1914* (1990), *Prosperity and poverty, rural Essex 1700–1815* (1996).

The volume reflects Arthur Brown's own wide-ranging interests. It begins with a study of parochial clergy by Jane Pearson, based on a 1776 visitation questionnaire circulated to parishes by the Bishopric of London. The Essex clergymen, she concludes, were more 'lone figures in the landscape', rather than, as they tend often to be depicted, integrated members of the community. Jacqueline Cooper looks at town life in Saffron Walden through the eyes of a local gentleman and his involvement with contemporary issues such as allotments, poor relief, public health, the Swing Riots, and relations with the landowner, Lord Braybrooke. The biographical theme continues with an insight by Maureen Scollan into the character of the first Chief Constable of Essex, John McHardy, and the establishment of a full-time county police force. Rural protest is allotted two papers: Michael Holland's scrutiny of the trial and execution of John Evans, the first Essex Swing incendiary to be prosecuted in 1830, and Valerie Pattenden's rounded account of the 'Chartist challenge' in Chelmsford.

The functioning of the Poor Law is addressed by Pamela Sharpe in an examination of the treatment and effects of malaria in the low-lying marsh hundreds, as revealed by a bizarre and often intemperate correspondence concerning relief between poor law officials and John Thurtle, head of family, and prototype 'Essex man'. The functioning and governance of the Waltham Cross Foundling Hospital, the duties of its trustees, inspectors

and nurses, and the origin and 'disposal' of foundlings, are examined by Raymond Cassidy.

Some readers, and Arthur Brown himself no doubt, may be disappointed at the neglect of agriculture, which reflects perhaps a perceived lack of interest by local historians in technical and economic topics. It is touched upon by Brian Bourn in his review of the work of Thomas Churchman Darby of Pleshey, inventor of the much celebrated 'Darby Digger'. This steam-powered Leviathan, reminiscent of the Martian machines in the film version of *The war of the worlds*, weighing up to 15 tons, and moving sideways across the field at one half of a mile per hour on 'feet' worked by 'legs', was arguably the most mechanically bizarre item of equipment ever used on British farms. Poor marketing rather than technical defects accounted for its disappointing sales, of just 20 machines.

Kevin Barnes's study of the migration of farm workers from depressed clayland parishes in Dengie Hundred in the coastal southeast to the Durham coalfield in the 1870s, is an original contribution to labour history. The Durham census for 1881 identifies upwards of 257 former Dengie residents living in the county in 1881, many of them in the parish of Butterknowle where they formed a significant community and are still remembered today. Also to be commended is the study by Andrew Philips and Patrick Denney of the revival of domestic clothing manufacture in the Colchester area in the late nineteenth century. Upwards of an estimated 3000 outworkers were then employed on a piecework basis, many using sewing machines, making menswear for retail firms in London and the provinces.

The volume concludes with a contemporary incursion. Stephen Hussey draws on oral evidence collected in 1991 to assess the strength of tradition in rural Essex in the first half of the last century. Up to 1950, he believes, most villages had a distinctly rural culture – self-centred, land-based, and reflected in language – and a belief system rich in folklore and superstition. Thus to varying degrees, the old culture prevailed in the face of powerful modernizing forces which, from the 1950s, were to transform village life in the more rural parts of the county beyond the built-up areas of Thames-side and the metropolitan south-west.

In its choice of topics and contributors, editorial standards and, as Arthur Brown would have applauded, concern for the common man, this scholarly yet enjoyable volume is a model of its kind, and fitting tribute to the life work of a guiding light in the study and teaching of Essex history.

E. J. T. COLLINS
University of Reading

PAUL BRASSLEY, JEREMY BURCHARDT and LYNNE THOMPSON (eds), *The English countryside between the wars. Regeneration or decline?* (Boydell Press, 2006). x + 270 pp. 15 illus; 2 maps. £55.

Over recent years the received image of inter-war Britain, of dole queues, of undernourished workers, of bleak and depressing living conditions and of a countryside abandoned to scrub and bush, has been called into question. The extractive and heavy manufacturing industries of the Midlands and the North may have gone steeply into decline, yet, in some regions, economic growth spawned employment in both traditional and novel areas. The commercial world and the white collar sector prospered and standards of living in the south and elsewhere began to advance. As the 'rural trippers' descended on the countryside, they were enabled sniffily to observe their 'primitive' fellow countrymen and by their purblind incomprehension of rural matters to deepen the growing gulf between the urban and rural worlds so much in evidence today.

In this book eleven contributors from a variety of disciplines discuss the social, economic, political and cultural aspects of the rural world between the wars and assess whether the English countryside at this time might better be characterized by growth and innovation rather than stagnation and decline. And it is a totally anglocentric work, Wales receiving three cursory mentions and Scotland none at all. The volume comprises a series of papers delivered at the agreeable venue of Dartington Hall, itself originally conceived as a social experiment in reconstruction after the First World War. It is fitting then, that Leonard Elmhirst's vision is described in detail as are John Spedan Lewis's extraordinary ventures at Leckford, both of them exercises in rural regeneration. In like manner, village drama and various other attempts to foster local cultural cohesion were seen as regenerative activities. Yet so often there was a vapid artificiality about these efforts. What had Dartington Hall or Leckford to do with the rural community beyond their self-sufficient boundaries? What was the purpose of rural drama if it did not somehow connect to the daily round or common task? The holistic vision of a 'rural university' adumbrated by Rolf Gardiner and others wherein music, drama, ritual and masque were directly linked to routine work is not considered. A comparative study of the Gardinerian vision and that of the Elmhirsts would have been instructive. In fairness, the editors admit that they have not attempted to produce a comprehensive coverage of the period, yet one cannot help feeling that several opportunities have been lost, especially since there are elements of repetition throughout the book. Take for example, two rather lacklustre chapters on rural and agricultural education,

which incidentally eschew any reference to my book on the subject written in the 1980s. These are replete with material on the WEA, the Rural Community Councils, the Village College Movement and other matters pedagogical, yet fail completely to address the issue of agricultural research. Given that there was a modest increase in agricultural output, especially of high-priced products, a nod in the direction of the world of research would have been appropriate. Plant breeding, herbicide and pesticide development, advances in reproductive physiology, artificial insemination and dairy hygiene, to say nothing of the evolution of extension systems, all were moving rapidly forward in the two decades under consideration and were to lay the foundation for the dramatic expansion of agricultural technology in the postwar period. And what about the great modernists who hammered away at the conservative bastions of the rural world? In discussing the advance of dairying, the salvation of many a farmer during the period, Paul Brassley mentions 'Mr Boutflour, an educator and advisor'. This is, in fact, Professor Robert Boutflour CBE of the Royal Agricultural College whose crusade for the evolution of a high yielding dairy cow fed on a high level of concentrated feeds did more to promote the animal feed industry than anyone else at the time. He left behind a substantial archive and is deserving of more than a footnote in the rural history of the inter-war period.

Like C.S. Orwin, that fervent apostle of modernity and implacable enemy of traditionalists, Boutflour would have had little time for the Mary Webbs, Sylvia Townsend Warners, Winifred Holtbys and Constance Holmeses whose works are skilfully dissected in this volume by Marion Shaw. Their craving for an imagined past to set against the social wrongs and economic stagnation of the present would have cut little ice with Boutflour who would also have raised his ample eyebrows at Professor Shaw's suggestion that England was ceasing to be an agricultural country 'in the first third of the twentieth century'. The reality was that she had been an essentially urban country since around 1860. Boutflour might also have been surprised to learn elsewhere in this book of his acquaintance Rolf Gardiner's 'English Mistery'. Gardiner was, in fact, only loosely associated with this reactionary body (of which Minister of Agriculture and future Governor of Burma Reginald Dorman-Smith was a member), the 'Mistery' having been founded by his friend Viscount Lymington.

Another of Gardiner's friends was that past master of myth-making and man-of-action, Henry Williamson. As Mark Rawlinson brilliantly demonstrates, Williamson saw the restoration of his derelict farm in Norfolk as a metaphor for the restoration of fertility in its

broadest political sense, while his ruralist and neo-romantic fascist vision is manifest in his vast novel sequence *Chronicles of ancient sunlight*. Williamson was no stranger to the workings of bodies like the National Council for Social Service, the Rural Industries Bureau and the Rural Community Councils who struggled to bring life to the remote reaches of rural England, generating mountains of paperwork as they tried to reconcile the protectionist/modernist dichotomy. Together with most politicians, especially on the Left, these various rural bodies were united in the view that for the national interest to be properly served the land should be fully utilized in providing nutritious food for the people. Farmers held land in trust for the community, avowed Labour, and putting it to full use was the farmer's most direct form of public service. Labour, of course, would have liked to nationalize the lot, and even more, to have persuaded the rural working classes as to the virtue of their cause. But in much of the country slick Conservative organization (and a little timely coercion) meant that trades unions notwithstanding, rural labourers remained overwhelmingly Tory voters.

Many inter-war commentators, in particular the likes of H. J. Massingham and Thomas Hennell, wrote of the decline of the rural crafts tradition. In Massingham's elegiac writings this was viewed as nothing short of catastrophic as men were cut off from nature, natural materials and, by extension, from God. Paul Brassley, in his thoughtful way, takes a rather more sober view. The crafts had certainly gone into steep decline before the war, but thereafter there was a period of stability. Diversification and attention to quality ensured the survival of some crafts into the present day while others fell by the wayside.

This is a curate's egg of a book wherein fresh insights jostle with rehashed and recycled views. While it presents the revisionist case and provides an abundance of material for debate, much work needs to be done before the realities of the inter-war countryside can be brought clearly into focus. I have no doubt that there were very wide regional and sectoral variations in response to the 'depression', to say nothing of differences between the constituent countries of Britain. The group meeting at Dartington have offered parts of a skeleton, which will need to be fleshed out by local studies and attention to complete new areas not addressed in this volume.

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Elsewhere and General

ANDREW CHAMBERLAIN, *Demography in archaeology* (CUP, 2006). xix + 235 pp. 19 tables; 45 figs. £45 (hbk); £17.99 (pbk).

'If I had ham, I'd have ham and eggs, if I had eggs.'

Archaeological demography is defined by its goal, the reconstruction of past populations from skeletal remains. This apparently simple goal is, however, difficult to reach. Chamberlain provides a useful road map but not a total solution to the problems.

The goal of reconstruction of the population from skeletal remains used to be out of reach not only because the evidence available is chronically short in supply, a biased sample of the original material, and difficult-to-impossible to read rightly, but also because few archaeologists understood enough about the concepts and measures and theories of demography to be able to apply it accurately to the available materials. That is no longer the case, as witnessed by the present volume by Andrew Chamberlain.

Chamberlain understands that the concepts of demography are unusually clear, for a social science, in definition and in the use of redundant information, so that if one has a reliable indicator of part of the population structure it is often possible to estimate other quantities by simple subtraction. Hence if you have an accurate age distribution for last year and this year, we can find the death rate for each age segment by looking at the difference (migration raises its ugly head, but demographers have techniques to avoid it). If your accurate data is for ten years ago and this year, we can do the same trick, with a wider range of possible error. And if we have an accurate age distribution from ten years ago, and the birth rate and death rate for the years intervening, we can not only make a good estimate of the age distribution today, but we might use that accurate estimate as a way of critiquing the results of a census. At the same time, demographers tend to work on large and fully described populations, so that results are not even based on random samples but often on full counts of the population. Naturally archaeologists are often attracted to the techniques of demography to try to solve problems on small populations and partial measurements.

Written for graduate students at the University of Sheffield, the volume under review is a well-written, clearly argued and lucidly explained textbook for archaeologists who want to or need to apply demographic models and methods to archaeological problems. They will find the technical expertise and the examples they need to apply the concepts to their material. They will

also find intelligent discussions of side issues, and a 35-page bibliography that defines the field of archaeological demography. Chamberlain inspires confidence as he applies data and methods to isolated problems and produces new insights and clarity from the exercise. If I were still teaching graduate students demography, I wouldn't hesitate to adopt it for my course.

But alas, archaeologists applying demography to their analyses will still not be able to solve all their problems by the mastery of the contents of this book. Having a confident grasp of the concepts and methods certainly helps, but the difficulties in raw materials persist. If an archaeologist has a substantial collection of skeletal materials (100 plus individuals) that represent a living inbreeding population over some reasonably short period of time (like a decade or two), if there is reason to believe that the preservation of materials is more or less random, and if the material is in sufficiently good condition that one can have confidence in methods of aging and sexing, the methods of modern demography can take you a long way to understand many aspects of the life of the past population. Unfortunately, these conditions seldom apply, and yet the material is all the more valuable for its scarcity and ambiguity.

Demographic methods are based on the assumption that you have a census and vital statistics (births and deaths) registration. In archaeology, you have none of the three. Typically you have a fragmentary skeletal collection, which may have been collected over a wide range of territory and perhaps over a long period of deposition. If the skeletons are not from an inbreeding living population, there is little that can be generalized from the collection. One may note many interesting things – size of skeletons, healed fractures, signs of disease, teeth ware, etc. But these observations do not confer an ability to reconstruct the living population from which the skeletons were produced.

Readers are in good hands using Chamberlain's book to guide their research, but only optimists will expect to get all the way to the goal of population reconstruction.

NANCY HOWELL
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J. R. MCNEILL and VERENA WINIWARTER (eds), *Soils and societies. Perspectives from environmental history* (Strond, Isle of Harris: White Horse Press, 2006). xiv + 369 pp. £50.

With a title recalling US Department of Agriculture publications of long ago, this volume takes the position that soils have their own histories, both physical and human. Further, human histories of soil are both material and intellectual, intersecting with biogeochemistry as well as culture. Perception and (incomplete) understanding

of soils and their dynamics are critical to rural decision-making and management. In historical perspective, changing comprehension of the soil resource is as challenging a pursuit as the inductive reconstruction of soil and erosional histories. The eleven chapters of this work explore both sides of that coin, and range across parts of six continents, making for a diverse and international menu.

To begin with an area of uncertainty, the contribution of Frank Uekoetter (Bielefeld) is an eye-opener to the rocky road of agricultural chemistry. Since the early 1900s, experts in Germany have continued to disagree as to plant nutrition and the application of mineral fertilizers; this has important implications for a range of issues, from industrial marketing pressures and the mixed response of farmers to expert opinion, as well as to organic farming, eutrophication, and sustainability. These tensions between popular and scientific 'truths' are still not fully resolved, as highlighted by the chapter on soil nutrient flows by Robert Shiel (Newcastle). Loading a soil with nitrates can exacerbate other management problems, such as reduced organic matter, poor soil structure, or leaching of nitrates into groundwater and rivers, not to mention proliferations of pests that require toxic pesticides. With an unusual range of experience in different environments and archaeological time ranges, as well as experimental projects, Shiel offers productive historical fare that should be made far more accessible. The use of crop rotation, manuring, and liming greatly improves crop yields – in combination with mineral fertilizers, which opens important, objective vistas on the long-term benefits of 'organic farming'.

The wide-ranging analysis of Verena Winiwarter (Vienna) examines the classical and medieval authors, to explicate a history of information and ideas. Her scholarship is impeccable, but not always sufficiently critical and cross-disciplinary. For example, the much-vaunted Piero di Crescenzi was not original, in part copying directly and without attribution from Albertus Magnus, whose own seventh book displays little innovation beyond a reworking of Palladius. But Wandalbert of Prüm (AD 848) is more important than his contemporaries because he successfully converted the agricultural calendars of the Roman authors into a calendar based on the regional ecology of the lower Rhine, predicated on different soils, climate and crop varieties, and an emphasis on the fencing of fields, stalling of animals, spreading of manure and cutting of hay.

The Islamic agronomists were much more than a foreign curiosity. They had developed Galenic humoral theory as a conceptual framework to explain how organic fertilizers and mineral remedies were used to temper or reinforce natural soil properties – 'doing right for the

wrong reasons.' They also set up royal experimental gardens and engaged in regional agricultural 'development'. Their influence inspired later Castilian writers, such as G. A. Herrera, and the 1751 Spanish translation of Jethro Tull included two chapters from Ibn al-Awwam, who in turn was resurrected by the French colonialists in Algeria (K. W. Butzer, 'The Islamic traditions of agroecology', *Ecumene* 1 (1994) pp. 7–50; Id., 'Environmental history in the Mediterranean world', *J. Archaeological Science* 33 (2005), pp. 1773–1800). The Roman authors also happen to be a major source for social history, and offer clues for the development of market gardening. Last but not least, there are hints in Theophrastus that ongoing rural innovations in his day informed the elite writings on agronomy, suggesting the possibility that such works recorded rather than proscribed changes in agrarian practice.

Against this background of ideas in agronomy we can now turn to the six historical chapters on soils in the landscape. Andreas Mieth and H. R. Bork (Kiel) address the ecological degradation of Easter Island, demonstrating the initial use of slash and burn agriculture by sedimentary profiles. As productivity declined, more and more work was invested in amelioration, beginning with organic mulching, and later the addition of charcoal and ash; soil protection by stone mulching at the surface was attempted as sheet and wind erosion accelerated in the wake of revegetation. These labour-intensive methods continued to be practised until the end of the Polynesian period, contrary to the popular narrative of thoughtless human misuse.

Tim Beach (Georgetown), Sheryl Luzadder-Beach (George Mason) and Nicholas Dunning (Cincinnati) offer an extensive and careful review of prehispanic soil erosion and terracing efforts in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean islands. They emphasize distinct patterns of clearance or post-abandonment impacts, or of recovery, in contrasting environments or among different prehistoric communities. A second article, by Luzadder-Beach and Beach, focuses on the interplay of soils, water and indigenous practices in New World wetlands. They highlight raised or ridged fields, chinampas, flood recession cultivation, and problematic networks of drainage canals, bringing closure to some festering controversies. The range and scope of human soil and land manipulations so identified will serve as a benchmark for future research.

Kate Showers (Lesotho and Sussex) attempts a comprehensive soil history of Africa, discussing indigenous 'soil knowledge systems', livestock management, agricultural production in different biomes, soil conservation efforts, urbanization and mining prior to European intrusion. This superb canvas is then contrasted with

the widespread environmental damage resulting from colonial practices and policies. While correct in general terms, concentrated indigenous populations in earlier times also created soil erosion problems (K. W. Butzer, 'Rise and fall of Axum, Ethiopia: a geo-archaeological interpretation', *American Antiquity* 46 (1981), pp. 471–95). The role of the recent demographic transition therefore cannot be ignored in assessing contemporary problems, unless of course we 'blame' the colonialists for that population growth.

Exploitation and conservation of soil on the Indian subcontinent is considered by R. J. Wasson (Darwin), who assembles a welcome panoply of indigenous concepts, and then constructively outlines the evolution of environmental measures and understanding after colonial intrusion. The same author also treats post-contact Australia by means of three current case studies that usefully illustrate processes, responses, and feedbacks.

Although the chapter organization is annoyingly obscure, the editors have assembled a significant book, that is both informative and thought-provoking. It will be welcomed by environmental historians and many other constituencies, including ecologists, geographers, and agronomists.

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JAMES GERBER and LEI GUANG (eds), *Agriculture and rural connections in the Pacific, 1500–1900* (Ashgate 2006). xxxvi + 387 pp. £75.

This volume is the thirteenth in the series 'The Pacific World: Lands, Peoples and History of the Pacific, 1500–1900'. Seventeen such volumes have been produced or are planned, including several others that may be of interest to readers of this journal, such as John McNeill's compilation *Environmental history in the Pacific world* (2001) and Tony Ballantyne's *Science, empire and the European exploration of the Pacific* (2004). The purpose of the series is to draw attention to the longer history of transpacific interactions, to counter what the general editors consider is the traditional conceptualization of 'this vast body of water as a colossal barrier to interchange until recent times' (p. xi). It draws together epidemiological, ecological, demographic and cultural studies, on the premise that 'Water connects cheaply and yet water geography remains an under-appreciated facet of history' (p. xiii). This is hardly a new idea – witness for example Oskar Spate's three volumes on the Pacific, beginning with *The Spanish lake* (1979), which are not referenced here – but it is one that deserves more attention.

Gerber and Guang have followed the format of the series, drawing together nineteen articles or chapters first published elsewhere, in this case between 1943 and

1999. The sources are mostly quite accessible, but are from a range of disciplines. The aim is to assemble in one place an anthology of materials on 'Pacific basin agriculture and transpacific rural linkages' (p.xv), organized around four themes. In the table of contents these are: 'The dispersion and diffusion of seeds and food plants,' 'Systems of production and the impact of the Spanish conquest,' 'Migration of rural people across the region,' and 'Integration of markets and the stimulus to agriculture.' In the text however, the parts are neither individually introduced nor separated; instead there is a 22-page editorial introduction to the whole volume. This provides an excellent overview, albeit one that is referenced somewhat idiosyncratically.

The approach of the articles assembled, although this is never stated, is consistent with the relatively new approach to imperial history of relations understood as networks and webs, rather than as core and periphery. The first part of the book gives illuminating insights into the diverse routes by which plants and seeds were dispersed, from the Americas into China, for example, or from Japan into the United States. Sometimes it is also revealing on questions of agency. By the mid sixteenth century, maize was being brought to the court in Peking by western tribesmen as 'imperial wheat', i.e. as tribute. The transmission home of information about potential agricultural plants was part of the job of nineteenth-century American representatives in Japan. Members of the South American Commission of 1817–18 did much to arouse American interest in plants and crops from that region, the results being more lasting than those of their ostensible political mission.

The articles also put some emphasis on multiple agency and directions of movement, and on the impacts of those not involved in officially-sponsored business. Rural-to-rural migration around the Pacific is a focus, although this invariably occurred within organized frameworks. Chinese agriculturalists had moved into south-east Asia before any strong European influence was felt there, becoming market gardeners around Batavia and plantation producers in nineteenth century Siam. More Chinese lived in rural California than any other part of the United States throughout the nineteenth century: with the decline of mining from 1860, they became tenant farmers, paid farm labourers and fruit and vegetable sellers. Hawaiian planters came to rely on Japanese and Chinese labourers; there was contract emigration of Japanese to Peru from 1898 to 1924.

There are many more themes in this volume that reflect growing processes of interconnection. These the editors liken, somewhat loosely, to the seeds (literal and metaphorical) of historical globalization. Yet inevitably their book is likely to be only a library purchase, given its

cover price. For such a price, one expects a high standard of production. It is well bound, but the individual articles are reproduced as scans of the originals and several are these are of poor quality, making figures hard to read. It is a little confusing to have a dual page numbering system (that of the originals plus the book's own). There is an index, but unfortunately nothing is said about the authors. However the anthology as a whole is a rewarding read. It does bring together materials that, with the aid of the editorial introduction, go a long way to meeting the goals of both volume and series.

ERIC PAWSON

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MICHAEL WILLIAMS, *Deforesting the Earth: from prehistory to global crisis. An abridgment* (Chicago UP, 2006). xviii + 543 pp. 27 tables; 45 plates; 78 figs. £16. Geographers and historians alike have become quite familiar with the distinctive contribution made by Michael Williams to the interpretation of landscape transformation. Its remarkable scope includes a range of local, regional, national and global studies variously characterized by closely textured analyses, sweeping panoramas, deft insertions of biographical, economic, environmental, historiographical, political and other gleanings, and an enviable confidence in straightforward summation and illustration. Notwithstanding these precedents, and especially the author's anticipatory *Americans and their forests* (1989), *Deforesting the Earth* may have seemed stupendously ambitious in 2003, when it first appeared. In another sense, however, it encouraged the trend towards urgent scholarly engagement with rising anxieties about the environmental health of the planet and the maintenance of its resource endowment – pertinence disputing prematurity.

In the original version, the culpability issue was provocatively grounded in the story of human occupation following the widespread return of tree cover after the last Ice Age. Indeed, its overall commitment to a generous sweep through time and space served to rebut naïve characterizations of 'pristine' forests, and emphasized instead the pervasive effects on the world's tree cover of rural settlement expansion, diffusions of commercial agriculture and industry, and their amplification and diversification under European imperialism. In the process it questioned casual denigrations of certain forest users, notably the most 'traditional', least commercial managers. It also located deeper historical background for today's debates on the causes and significance of carbon emissions, though more evidence is now accumulating, and it brought the vexed story of denudation into the present era. The abridgment faithfully maintains these lines. Three years on, depth and complexity still seem

quite persuasively sampled across the prodigious global canvas: the same argument emerges for balancing the current privileging of tropical depredations with a focus on earlier transformations in the temperate zones; all of this continues to permit some critical inspection of the countervailing moves towards more sophisticated 'sustained yield' forestry, temperate and tropical, including influential progress during (and not necessarily because of) Britain's imperial aegis; and in the penultimate chapter there is effectively a repeat of a delayed allusion to the hazards posed for statistical inventory practice by disagreements on the very meaning of 'forest' cover, and by resort to widespread extrapolations from unsubtle aggregations.

So 'Abridgment' is appropriate; this is not presented as a comprehensive revision. The main difference appears to have involved a prudent tightening throughout, partly through a small condensation and refinement of the text, but more notably by sacrificing dozens of well-drafted figures and tabulations, and by replacing the lengthy bibliographical list with a small-print bibliographical essay. The latter section may provide the more convenient guide, not only for non-science readers; on the other hand, the apparent spate of productivity in this busy interdisciplinary area probably built expectations of an updating of the reference list as a separate task in itself. Yet importantly, Williams has seized the opportunity to modify the original discussion of the processes and patterns of early domestication in the light of new research findings, especially with a view to improvements in dating precision, and he appears to be more cautious about the spiraling effects of associations between forest disturbance and the spread of pathogens.

In its modest revisiting, *Deforesting the Earth* continues to offer an impressive and timely sieving of published, overwhelmingly anglophone works. Regional and local studies from around the world – accommodating more primary evidence, recovering more detail – should now test-run its combination of monumental template and interim contextualization. Perhaps that also applies to elaborations of palynological and other scientific techniques, which allow significantly increased access to quite recent pasts. Teachers and supervisors who feel inclined to protest the loss of so many instructive maps, diagrams and tables may be consoled by the retention of nearly all of the original fine plates; in any event, the omissions are readily tracked down in the hardback edition. Judicial pruning has delivered a slightly more compact, paperback volume, at a relatively cheap price which should recommend it to the discerning educated public as well as to libraries and students.

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DAVID B. DANBOM, *Born in the country. A history of rural America* (Johns Hopkins UP, sec. edn, 2006). xvi + 301 pp. £33.50 (hbk); £13.50 (pbk).

In the introduction to the first edition of this book (1995), Danbom explained that he had tried to integrate the recent outpouring of rural American social history with current political and economic history to provide a synthetic history that would serve as a text for courses in agricultural and rural history.

The text of the 2006 edition closely follows its predecessor through the first ten of the original twelve chapters, making minor changes in wording and revision or elimination of short passages. Subunits of these chapters examine rural life in early modern Europe, woodland culture in North America, the rural development of British North America, the maturing society, the revolution and political consequences, early nineteenth-century agriculture and economic growth, life in rural America and in the slave economy, post-Civil War southern agriculture, settlement of the Great Plains, and agrarian protest. At Chapter Eight we reach the Golden Age of Agriculture and the Country Life movement, followed by treatments of the difficult 1920s and the Great Depression and World War II developments.

The original Chapter Eleven described the production revolution that occurred after 1950 followed by a final chapter describing the federal farm policies of the 1970s and the depressed 1980s, concluding with a tribute to rural survivors. In 2006, Danbom merged their content into Chapter Eleven which describes the revolutionary improvements in crop and animal yields, machinery, and biotechnological innovations and their collective impact after the 1950s. The production revolution, Danbom maintains, transformed farming economics but 'failed to reverse the regression of agriculture from being central to the American economy to becoming marginal and, ultimately, trivial' (p. 257). An Afterword, 'A rural America without agriculture' highlights the loss of farm population and urbanization of rural values, using Union County, Illinois to illustrate the stages through which rural life in America has passed. It ends by asking 'can we even talk about rural life as distinctive any longer, or is it just "life"?' (p. 263). Both editions include a useful guide to further reading.

In his review in *Agricultural History* (70, 1996, pp. 682–3), Gilbert C. Fite described the first edition as 'authoritative and exciting', 'must reading' for all seeking to understand the place of agriculture in American 'history, tradition, and culture', and a rewarding change from current 'wormhole' history. Other reviewers offered praise with qualifications. Some topics, said Marilyn P. Watkins (*Western Historical Quarterly*, 27, 1996, p. 399), received no more attention than found in American

history survey texts, the unpleasant side of farm life was overemphasized while other aspects, especially the more positive ones, were ignored. Hal S. Barron, in the *American Historical Review* (102, 1997, pp.167–8) believed that Danbom, failed to ‘offer a “new ... way of understanding” the rural past, short changed the agricultural America west, and for the most part ignored the community aspects of farm life. Robert P. Swierenga, in the *Journal of American History* (83, 1996, pp.171–2) detected a ‘generally negative tone’ and a narrative that disregarded behavioural approaches and slighted community processes.

Most of these same criticisms can be levelled to some degree at the second edition. This reviewer agrees that the book inadequately reflects regional differences, that the infrastructure of non-farm operators, of rural services and industries is largely missing, and that the community institutions and social structures of the last 150 years are slighted. I also believe that reading agriculture’s current status as approaching triviality misreads the situation. These points made, the current book is an extremely well-written narrative that presents its information accurately. Its coverage goes well beyond that of previous one-volume histories of American agriculture. We still await an author who draws fully upon comparative and interdisciplinary perspectives in telling the story but in the meantime Danbom’s book can well serve the classroom teacher and general reader – although it may convince some students that they do not wish to be part of the American agricultural experience ahead.

ALLAN G. BOGUE
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J. BOLÒS, A. JARNE and E. VICEDO (eds), *Condicions de vida al món rural* (Diputació de Lleida / Institut d’Estudis Ilerencs, 2006). 764 pp. No price given. This impressive and beautifully produced volume entitled ‘The conditions of rural life’ comprises 38 papers originally presented to the Fifth Congress on Agricultural Systems, Social Organization, and Local Power held in the history department of the University of Lleida in spring 2005. Divided into three historical periods (medieval, modern, and contemporary), the majority of the articles deal with various aspects of rural life in Catalonia and the Països Catalanes (Valencia, the Balearic islands), with a smattering of articles on western Europe and the rest of Spain. The collection ends with six studies on the uses of archaeology in agricultural history. Among the topics covered are income distribution, living standards, food, accommodation, health, veterinary medicine, and education. The book also boasts a number of detailed and up-to-date bibliographies, statistical data, maps and photographs.

Enric Tello, in his useful introductory piece, sets the ball rolling with a wide-ranging methodological overview which pays tribute to the writings of Edward Thompson, Joan Thirsk, Robert Allen, and Amartya Sen, among others. Although there are a number of studies by established scholars (Albert Carreras, Javier Moreno, José Miguel Martínez Carrión), the majority of the contributions consist of local studies from a group of promising young scholars. Working my way diligently through the volume, I could not but be impressed by the vast amount of primary information which these enthusiastic researchers have uncovered. In a short notice, it is impossible to do justice to individual contributions. However, in their totality, this invaluable collection of articles bears further witness to the vitality of agrarian history south of the Pyrenees, not least in the Principality of Catalonia. The University of Lleida is also to be congratulated for its continued support for the discipline.

JOSEPH HARRISON
University of Manchester

F. DÉMIER, J.-C. FARCY, G. SANZ LAFUENTE, N. VIVIER and C. ZIMMERMAN, *Les sociétés rurales (1830–1930): historiographie, bibliographie, enjeux* (Paris: Éditions Belin, 2005). 220 pp. €19.

This textbook is designed to assist French students who are preparing to sit national competitive examinations prior to qualifying as history teachers in secondary schools. ‘Rural societies’ figure in the current syllabi of two of these demanding *concours* and recently the topic has given rise to several substantive textbooks covering France and adjacent countries. By contrast, *Les sociétés rurales (1830–1930)* focuses on the three elements of its subtitle: historiography, bibliographic assistance, plus selected but not identical research topics in four countries (France, Germany, Italy, and Spain). Co-ordinated by Nadine Vivier of the Université du Maine, Le Mans and written by four specialists on particular countries, this is not strictly speaking a comparative study. Under the rubric ‘historiography’, attention is drawn to theoretical approaches to the study of rural societies in the past and to the role of historical novels in elucidating rural life. The origins of ‘rural history’ *per se* are traced through the works of Henri Sée, Marc Bloch, Wilhelm Abel, André Siegfried and other pioneers. The numerous French doctoral theses after 1945 that traced life in the countryside immediately before and subsequent to the coming of the railway age are then reviewed. Developments in Germany, Italy and Spain are treated individually and more briefly than changes in France.

Part II does not attempt to assemble a detailed bibliography but rather directs readers to key books,

essential journals and websites before offering useful digests of major publications that relate to specific countries and component regions or, more rarely, convey international comparisons. An intriguing map on p.53 plots the spatial pattern of rural history theses in France that cover the period under consideration. Of the three dozen works identified, one is by the geographer Philippe Roudié who analyzed changes in the vineyards of the Bordelais. But if one geographical thesis may be included one is left wondering what criteria were adopted to exclude all the others that relate to the French countryside in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Part III embraces about half of the total book and is comprised of essays that summarize recent research on land ownership and population change across western Europe as a whole (by Nadine Vivier) and then focus on specific themes in individual countries. Thus, Jean-Claude Farcy concentrates on rural migration in France, Clemens Zimmermann examines town-country relations in Germany (from the Rhine to East Prussia), Gloria Sanz Lafuente highlights social protest in rural Spain, and Francis Démier explores the role of large landowners in agrarian life in Italy. These last three chapters benefit from boxed sections that offer brief comparisons with conditions in France.

The text is complemented by a few evocative photographs, several statistical tables and some maps, albeit of varying precision. For example, I was surprised to see that the map on p.115 suggests that in 1900 nine-tenths of Italy had similar densities of population (40–80 persons per square kilometre). Did man/land relations in the mountains and valleys of the Alps really have similar expression to those across the hills and plains of Sicily, or is this an unwelcome example of cartographic oversimplification? Why, one wonders, does the mysterious composite map on p.108 depict Italy at a totally different scale from her neighbours, and why is Lorraine labelled 'Brie' and the Baltic states as 'Prusse' on p.203? In the comparative chronology (pp.204–212) did nothing of rural significance occur in France between 1750 and 1827, or in Germany between 1822 and 1848? Despite these quibbles and irritations on points of detail, this book is a helpful digest of information that certainly made me aware of a good number of publications with which I was not familiar. Without doubt it will be of special value to the next generation of history teachers in France for whom it is designed and to undergraduates pursuing advanced courses on European rural history.

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MARGARET E. DERRY, *Horses in society. A story of animal breeding and marketing culture, 1800–1920* (University of Toronto Press, 2006). xvii + 302 pp. 31 illus. £40.

Few animals have shaped European and North American history as much as the horse. Horses have catered to almost every human need, including labour, transportation, warfare, sport, companionship and food. Despite their importance, historians have only recently returned to grappling critically with the role horses have played in modern history. As someone who follows the history of agriculture, I have patiently waited for a grand synthesis of recent work that places horse breeding and training in the context of developments in agriculture, political economy, and warfare. Although Margaret E. Derry's *Horses in society* is not *that* grand synthesis, it is a valuable contribution to the growing body of equine scholarship. *Horses in society* is especially useful in its thorough presentation of new sources, such as contemporary horse breeding journals and government records.

Derry writes that the goal of her book is to investigate the relationship of horse breeding and technological development. Although she doesn't explicitly state which technological development she intends to investigate, one gets the idea that she is mostly interested in the un-intuitive observation that the number of horses increased after the railroad was first introduced and didn't decrease again until after the First World War. Margaret Derry then spins this observation into a detailed history of the relationship between breeding theories and practices, the international trading of horse flesh, and the development of national transportation infrastructures. The scope of Derry's project is large, including an investigation into a number of different types of horses (sport and utility horses, for instance) as well as three major markets (US, Canada, and Great Britain – although other European countries are covered when appropriate), and she tells her story with little conceptual distance from her sources (only occasionally does she step back to put her claims into a cultural context). The large scope and the number of detailed observations makes following her argument difficult at times, although there are many reasons to persevere. I especially appreciated the chapters on the role of the horse in military engagement. This is a subject that has only been satisfactorily addressed by recent scholarship for the early modern period. Derry's work on this topic gives historians a valuable resource on the role of remounts in the Crimean, American Civil, Boer, First, and Second World Wars as well as an important reminder of how humans have forced other beasts to bear the burden of international strife.

The book is at its strongest when describing changes in equine breeding practices as depicted in the primary

sources. I found it a bit frustrating when Derry did reach to other domains, such as the history of technology and the history of biology, to place these sources in greater context. For instance, historians of technology will most likely wish that Derry had discussed in greater detail exactly which technologies were important to changing horse breeding, although it appears she is mostly interested in a broad trend of mechanization that marked the nineteenth and early twentieth century, especially as manifested in developments in transportation (read railroads) and labour (read tractors). Also, historians of biology may become a bit frustrated with her discussion of heredity and the horse, especially since her main concern is how horse breeding wasn't influenced by genetic theories. There is very little discussion, however, of recent work that documents how horse breeding conceptually and institutionally contributed to the rise of classical genetics. Greater attention to the secondary sources in these two cases would have added sophistication to her discussions.

Although this is not the major synthetic book on horses in agriculture that I initially hoped it would be, it is an important and informative book nonetheless. If someone does eventually write the large-scale overview of the relationship between political economy and horse breeding, they will have to use Margaret Derry's *Horses in society* as one of the major secondary sources.

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NEIL DAHLSTROM and JEREMY DAHLSTROM,
The John Deere story. A biography of plowmakers John and Charles Deere (Northern Illinois University Press, 2005). xix + 204 pp. 22 illus. \$24.

The name of John Deere is today known as the marque of the largest farm machinery manufacturer in the world. It is also the only one of the industry's great nineteenth-century enterprises to have remained independent. The present public view of the company is formed by seeing the green and yellow tractors and combine harvesters at work in the fields. Yet from 1837, when the elder John Deere made his first plough, until after the death of his son Charles in 1907, the enterprise was almost exclusively concerned with making ploughs. It was only after the death of Charles that it branched out into other lines of farm machinery, and, after the First World War, into the tractor business.

The book by Neil and Jeremy Dahlstrom is confined to the period of the plough business, and attempts to flesh out the characters, lives, and achievements of the two major actors: the founding father John (1804–86) and his son Charles (1837–1907). To do this they have made excellent use of a range of material extra to that

deployed by the writer of the only substantial previous history of the firm, Wayne G. Broehl, whose *John Deere's company: A history of Deere & Company and its times* was published in 1984. Broehl's main source was the extensive Deere archive still held at the company's headquarters in Moline, Illinois. The Dahlstroms have supplemented the work of Broehl by extensive research in local and state historical society archives, and amongst the files of the many contemporary local newspapers.

The result of the Dahlstroms' researches is a much fuller picture of the internal workings of the firm, as operated by the leading personalities, and of their own lives and aspirations. One or two examples may be given. The personality of the elder Deere which emerges from the Dahlstroms' book is of a man driven to succeed, in spite of serious early setbacks which would have broken a lesser man. One might surmise that he was a man who probably never left off feeling insecure financially. This explains the convoluted paper transactions of 1857–9, which shifted ownership of the Deere partnership away from John and onto Charles, in order to make it impossible for creditors to seize the partners' assets in the event of collapse. 'No one would guess that Deere was sitting on a small fortune, largely because he never considered it secure from creditors, the next national financial crisis, or a poor business decision on his part' (p. 40).

When it comes to Charles, who was effectively in charge of the enterprise (changed from partnership to company in 1868) from the age of twenty-one in 1858, a much fuller picture emerges of the personality of the quiet, low-key individual who took the firm to the level of a national institution. He was clearly a very effective chief executive and planner, and had the good luck or judgement to appoint capable men to run the daily business. He was also, at least in the early days, an excellent hands-on salesman. He is given proper credit here for his inauguration of the branch business, which became an essential ingredient of the firm's growth, and for dealing with the problems posed by the Granger movement and the more frequent labour unrest, as the firm got larger, and intimate contact between masters and men became a thing of the past. However, as time went on his energies were diverted to other things; lobbying at Washington on tariffs, currency, and the (never built) Hennepin canal between Rock Island and Chicago, or promoting the amalgamation of the leading plough firms into a Plow Trust (along the lines of Standard Oil), which would have bolstered the farm machinery manufacturers against the steel suppliers. However, if it had succeeded, the Trust would have entailed the end of Deere as an independent company, although Deere would have had a commanding position in the new organization.

In all, this is a most useful addition to the literature on Deere and Company, and the environment in which the business operated.

PETER DEWEY

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MOON-HO JUNG, *Coolies and cane. Race, labor, and sugar in the age of emancipation* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2006). xi + 275 pp. £32.50.

While it is not so specified in the title, this book is about the controversy in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century over the employment of Chinese workers ('coolies') on the sugar plantations of the Caribbean region, with a focus on southern Louisiana. Originating not only from China but also India, coolies were first introduced in large numbers to the West Indies in the late 1830s as replacement workers for recently emancipated Africans. As the use of such labourers intensified, abolitionists in the U.S. denounced it as a new form of chattel slavery, and in February 1862, soon after the outbreak of the Civil War, convinced Congress to pass a law prohibiting American ships from engaging in the transportation of 'coolies' from China.

In Louisiana, after the Civil War and with the abolition of slavery, sugar growers were faced with a black work force that was no longer easily managed. Inspired by the experience of their fellow planters across the Gulf of Mexico, they too experimented with the importation of Asian, particularly Chinese, contract labourers as a possible solution to their labour troubles. They sought the Chinese initially from Cuba – from among those who had finished their eight-year contracts – then from southern China and finally from the west coast of the United States. As a result, by the early 1870s Chinese had become 'familiar sights on sugar plantations up and down the Mississippi River and its bayous' (p.184).

Most of the Chinese in Louisiana, who totalled around two thousand, came originally as large 'gangs of low-wage workers' (p.199) on three-year contracts. On arrival, however, they began protesting against their inferior pay and their harsh working conditions and quickly 'established a pattern of quitting work whenever they felt their rights violated' (p.189). They soon 'remade themselves' as smaller 'independent, itinerant labor gangs that engaged with employers for brief periods or finite tasks' (p.205) such as during the hectic grinding season. The planters, furious at their disobedience but desperate for farmhands, had no alternative but to take them on and also to pay them higher wages. The experiment with Chinese as replacement workers on the sugar plantations thus turned out to be a failure, at least in Louisiana.

Jung's book, however, is not so much about the

Chinese workers themselves – only the sixth and last chapter focuses on them – as it is about how they were, as he puts it, 'imagined' by others. Americans of the period commonly referred to the Chinese as 'coolies.' A vaguely-defined term of uncertain origin, it carried the dual connotation of involuntary emigration and long-term (though not permanent) servitude, which were what motivated the enactment of the anti-coolie-trade law of 1862. Jung makes a persuasive argument that this little-known legislation was significant as 'the first federal statute to restrict immigration into the United States' (p.37) as well as a direct precursor of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Similarly, it was by equating the Chinese with coolies that the anti-Chinese elements in American society were able in 1870 to deny them the right of naturalization. But Jung otherwise does not attempt to resolve the empirical question of to what extent the Chinese in Louisiana, regardless of how they might have been imagined, were in fact voluntary immigrants or involuntary 'coolies.' Instead, he is content to state that 'in a nation struggling to define slavery and freedom, coolies seemed to fall under neither yet both' (p.6) and that they seemed to inhabit a 'netherworld between slavery and freedom' (p.72).

Jung also argues that coolies played an important role in the social construction of 'whiteness' in the United States. Opponents of coolie labour in the post-bellum South sought an alternative work force in white immigrants from Europe; in the process, all Europeans – even such heretofore disdained groups as the Irish – came to be seen as 'white.' As Jung concludes, 'The movement to exclude coolies ... eventually helped to forge a white national identity across regional and class divisions' (p.223).

The book, a revision of a Cornell PhD thesis, is thoroughly researched. The author has scoured and made excellent use of a wide range of local and regional newspapers and periodicals, U.S. diplomatic correspondence and Congressional reports, contemporary books and pamphlets, and unpublished papers of planter families. The book is well organized and generally well written; its ideas, however, are not always clearly expressed, in part because of the author's rhetorical fondness for paradoxes.

The author, too, might have said more about the process of sugar cultivation and manufacture and the precise role that the Chinese labourers played in it. And he might have been more explicit about the terminal date of his study. Is it the end of Reconstruction in 1877, or the enactment of Chinese exclusion in 1882? Both are possibilities, but neither is highlighted. Instead, the book ends with the 'racial imaginings of coolies' (p.222) and the ultimate fate of the Chinese in Louisiana

remains unresolved. It's a disappointing conclusion for an otherwise fascinating book.

EDWARD RHOADS
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RICHARD PERREN, *Taste, trade and technology. The development of the international meat industry since 1840* (Ashgate 2006). xxi + 285 pp. 39 tables. £55.

Trade, taste and technology is a compilation and analysis of a substantial amount of historical information on the important business of the international meat trade. Moving from the 1840s into the early twenty-first century, Richard Perren has skilfully organized an examination of colonial and post-colonial trade between Europe, especially the United Kingdom, and English and Hispanic speaking nations in newly settling lands. Drawing on his own extensive research, on contemporary and recent monographs and articles, and a range of government documents, publications of Non-Governmental Organisations and internet sources, he examines what happened to the meat carcass after slaughter. A complex web emerges in which individual entrepreneurs, large and multinational corporations, government bodies and consumers interacted to direct meat to feed millions of Europeans who were unable to supply themselves. While mainly welcomed, this meat trade at times was challenged on account of health and safety issues.

As with many agricultural industries, meat distribution has been subject to major technological changes as well as having to respond to economic fluctuations, natural hazards and consumer tastes. In the nineteenth century, which here spans the years from 1840 to 1914, it became possible to transport meat thousands of miles from the Americas, Australia and New Zealand to European markets initially because of salting and then canning techniques. But the development of refrigerated freight trains and ships from the 1870s extended not only the amount of meat carried either in chilled or frozen form, but shifted the emphasis to beef rather than pork or lamb. By this time big business was organizing the North American industry and soon its modernizing impact was felt in Argentina and Uruguay. Investment in South American operations meant that when the North American market absorbed more of its domestic product, North American firms could still dominate the transatlantic trade, primarily to the United Kingdom. Australia and New Zealand remained apart in international trading patterns in terms of their product, lamb and mutton, and their smaller corporate enterprises.

Two world wars interspersed with a major world depression disrupted market and trading patterns between 1914 and 1945. During these years governments intervened more actively to shape and manage the

international meat business. In both world wars the British government, facing the need to import meat at higher cost, prioritized feeding military forces adequately while the civilian population faced rationing. In all European countries at war, livestock production was given a lower priority than arable production and grain was given the most assistance as cereals were perceived as being the most efficient use of resources under wartime conditions. During the inter-war years when there was a general overall growth in the meat industry, despite periodic fluctuations and downturns, the British government both supported home production at the same time as establishing an imperial preference system after 1930. The latter policy created some dilemmas as the government still wanted to sell manufactured goods to Argentina, one of its main beef suppliers.

In the late twentieth century, changes in consumption patterns, the marketing of new varieties and cuts of meat and new arrangements for processing meat intersected with government policies and economic fluctuations to suggest different directions for the meat trade. The long-term decline in red meat consumption, especially beef, and the rising popularity of fat free poultry, especially chickens, only partly explains recent developments. The meat industry, already under scrutiny from government regulations, shifted its emphasis from large urban packing units to rural areas where labour was non-unionized, innovative technologies could be more easily introduced and road transport was the main means of domestic shipment. Higher standards of living and the spread of the two wage-earner families in most western mature economies stimulated the demand for ready-prepared cuts of meat, convenience foods and an increase in eating out, often in fast food and restaurant chains. These new cuts of meat were increasingly supplied to supermarkets and fast food chains with a concomitant decline in butchers whether as chains, such as Dewhursts in the United Kingdom, or independents. Such a low-cost philosophy of sales did not, however, prevent the rise of new large processing firms such as Tyson Foods in the United States and Bernard Matthews in the United Kingdom. Though consumers have continued to eat meat, the industry has frequently been criticized, partly because of the intensive and inhumane methods of factory livestock farming, the appearance of animal diseases like foot and mouth and BSE and the perception that the agricultural sector has been given special governmental assistance.

Trade, taste and technology is a major contribution to economic history in general and to agricultural and commercial history in particular. It is a masterful synthesis of interdisciplinary research and could only have been written by someone with a deep and clear

understanding of both the history of meat processing and the workings of the international economy. Agricultural historians may find the chapters focusing on public policies, and regulating the meat industry to be of most direct interest to their own research, but there is something for any historian who wants to find out how industrializing and post-industrial nations managed to satisfy demands for meat when domestic supplies were inadequate. Certainly this in an anglocentric volume, but the United Kingdom was the main market for imported meat in Europe in the late nineteenth century and continued to import meat in bulk into the 1970s when entry into the European Economic Community marked some more changes of direction.

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ERIC W. MOGREN, *Native soil. A history of the DeKalb County Farm Bureau* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2005). xi + 228 pp. Illus. \$24.95.

On 9 February 1912, Henry Parke stood before the assembled newspapermen of DeKalb County, Illinois, telling the throng of the newly founded Soil Improvement Association. Its intent, he said, was to work for 'making DeKalb County the banner county in the state ... Let us all pull together – the editor, the banker and the farmer – and secure for DeKalb County that prize which surely will reward us [with] better farmers, larger yields, higher land values, better roads, better schools, better industrial conditions and a higher standard [of living] ... We can make DeKalb County known around the world' (p.54).

Eric Mogren's *Native soil* elucidates Parke's promise, which ultimately led to the transformation of the Soil Improvement Association into the DeKalb County Farm Bureau (DCFB), one of the earliest affiliates of the American Farm Bureau Federation and one of the most continually successful. Mogren is at his best in discussing the needs that brought the DCFB and its precursor into existence. As farmers struggled to make their once-fertile soil productive again via limestone and phosphates and the able assistance of their county extension agent William G. Eckhardt, so they grappled with their changing place in the politics and society of twentieth-century America.

Particularly telling is Mogren's chapter on the First World War and the disruption this brought not only to Illinois agriculture, but also to that of the world. With surpluses looming worldwide, the DCFB sought new ways to market its members' grain and livestock, as well as wool, poultry products and milk. They also turned to the federal government for assistance, contemplating the McNary-Haugen plans, the Agricultural Marketing Act and the arrival of Roosevelt's New Deal. Although the

treatment of the DCFB from the 1930s to the 1970s is rather thin, a detailed portrait of a farmers' organization emerges.

Local history at its best, Mogren's work is meticulously researched, lavishly illustrated and exceptionally well written. If there are flaws, they arise from the author's failure to tie the local more directly to the regional and the national. For example, the Illinois Agricultural Association, the equivalent of state farm bureau federations in other states, is never given its due for aiding in the creation of the American Farm Bureau Federation. Nor does the American Farm Bureau Federation play much of a role in Mogren's work despite being the largest general farm organization in the United States, and the parent agency to the DCFB. Similarly, the role of the Country Life Movement in the genesis of the DCFB and its nationwide counterparts is not given its due, nor are Mogren's repeated general references to 'Progressive-era' movements and motivations especially helpful. A bit of contextualization would have been useful at points along the way.

Throughout the text, the challenges facing farmers and their responses to those challenges are given the foreground. The former included dubious markets, overwhelming surpluses and problems in input purchasing; the latter co-operative marketing, insurance, wool pooling, and purchasing guidance and collaboration. As Mogren closes his volume, however, he poses the most difficult question of all: What does the future hold?

In earlier chapters, Mogren had the benefit of the historical record to demonstrate what occurred when farm conditions deteriorated or when government policies worked to the disadvantage of agriculturalists. But it is in his final chapter, where he speculates about the future, that the author is at his finest, meriting the purchase price of *Native soil*. Chapter Six, 'The Future' begins by rehearsing the successes and failures of the DCFB through the better part of a century, then sets out the issues it and other farm organizations will face over the course of the twenty-first century. Among the problems the author foresees are the greying of the American farmer, the encroachment of suburbia on traditionally agricultural regions, changing diets, and ever-rising taxes. His belief that organizations like the DCFB can solve these problems is strong, nearly as strong as the faith of founding DeKalb County Soil Improvement Association member Henry Parke.

Native soil should attract a good number of readers, particularly those interested in Illinois history, the history of agricultural movements, and the history of agriculture itself.

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