

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

RICHARD JONES and MARK PAGE, *Medieval villages in an English landscape. Beginnings and ends* (Windgather Press, 2006). xviii + 270 pp. 78 figs. £19.99.

The possible emergence between about 800 and 1200 of nucleated settlement and common-field systems continues to present problems to landscape historians and archaeologists. The form and chronology of the introduction of nucleated settlement and common fields across central southern England in the later Saxon and early medieval centuries remain contested, as does the connection between settlement nucleation and common fields, and the restriction of such landscapes to 'champion' England.

The book reviewed here focuses on twelve parishes within the medieval royal forest of Whittlewood, lying across the borders of Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, an area of wood and wood-pasture relatively marginal and atypical given its location in the heart of 'champion' England. It aims to explore the problems outlined above in the belief that 'many English landscapes and settlements followed similar paths of development, so ... the interpretation [of this research has] significance beyond the boundaries of Whittlewood' (p. xvii).

This is an engaging and readable book which provides a consistent and coherent narrative, describing the development of a localized landscape from the prehistoric into the early modern periods. As the landscape history of a diverse and under-researched region, it is first class. There is, however, some ambiguity concerning the link between the narrow geographic focus of the book and the wider questions it hopes to address. That difficulty lies squarely in the applicability of its results to landscapes of nucleated settlement and large open arable fields, since Whittlewood is not representative of 'champion' England.

Whittlewood appears to have been a lightly-populated area from the post-Roman centuries onwards, characterized by large areas of woodland and grassland. It was peripheral to the more arable regions in which estate centres were located, and with which its landscape contrasts. Its pastoral character appears, moreover, to have been

deliberately protected and preserved throughout the late Saxon and early medieval periods, so that not only were settlement planning and common-field creation delayed until much later than elsewhere, but significant areas of wood and wood-pasture survived into the medieval landscape. Such differences in landscape character and in the contexts of landscape change must suggest doubts about the general applicability of Whittlewood to questions about the chronology and origins of the form and distribution of nucleated settlement and common fields. It seems unlikely that the political, economic and cultural drivers in predominantly arable areas in the eighth and ninth centuries were identical to those in a region of mixed husbandry two centuries later.

On the other hand, many of the more generalized conclusions drawn by the authors resonate with those of current research in areas more typical of 'champion' England. Settlement nucleation throughout the Anglo-Saxon period *does* appear to be a more hesitant, staged and complex process than hitherto supposed. Settlement planning *does* appear to be a late phase of that process. Common fields *do* appear to result from slow expansion from an arable core. And, perhaps most importantly, 'What cannot be substantiated anywhere but in a few special cases ... is a link between nucleation and the abandonment of outlying farmsteads, the freeing up of the countryside, and the laying-out of the open fields' (p. 104). Such general conclusions, while important, now need more refinement.

It seems that the Whittlewood Project, far from being complete, has only just begun. The important distinction between Whittlewood and champion landscapes needs to be grasped firmly and set at the centre of research. That research needs to test rather than state the belief that processes of settlement nucleation and common field creation followed roughly the same trajectories across the central province regardless of agricultural economy or of period, by comparing Whittlewood with straightforwardly champion parishes. This might allow the construction of detailed chronologies and processes that flesh out and make more meaningful the more general conclusions now current.

This fascinating and detailed study of the landscape development of twelve parishes in central England has

done what good research should: illuminate problems as well as conclusions and point the way to further work. It will provide a rich resource for many years to come.

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ADRIAN BELL, CHRIS BROOKS and PAUL DRYBURGH (eds), *Advance contracts for the sale of wool, c.1200–c.1327* (List and Index Society, 315, 2006). I + 244 pp. £27 to non-members from The Hon. Secretary, List and Index Society, The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU.

Any student of the medieval and early-modern history of England knows full well the great importance of wool in its economy and society. From at least the eleventh to the mid-fifteenth century, it provided England's overwhelmingly dominant export, accounting for at least ninety per cent of total export revenues; and from then until the mid seventeenth century it accounted for the very same proportion of export revenues in the form of manufactured woollen (and worsted) cloths. Scholars are therefore highly indebted to the List and Index Society, and especially to the three editors named above, for the publication – in both the original Latin and in English translation – of 203 wool contracts, arranged in chronological order, from 1231 to 1325, taken from TNA's Exchequer Memoranda Rolls (E 159, E 368) and also from the Plea Rolls (E 13) and Close Rolls (C 54). The exceptionally important Appendix I (pp. 176–219) presents the first complete publication of the well-known 'Exchequer Schedule' of 1294 (E 101/126/7), when Edward I sequestered the assets of foreign merchants during his war with France. It contains the submissions of the twelve leading Italian mercantile companies involved in the English wool trade, providing another 220 implicit wool contracts (contained within document nos. 204–16: one for each firm, plus the cover document), presented in full detail. Appendix II presents some dozen miscellaneous documents (nos. 217–228) on wool sales that have been selected from various other archival sources in TNA.

The bulk of the documents, those in the main section, are entitled 'advance contracts for the sale of wool', though not all the documents in this collection are in fact such contracts. The actual 'advance contracts' are chiefly in the form of *recognizances* of debt by which the English wool sellers acknowledge having received specific sums of money, in English sterling, for the future delivery of specified quantities of wool, at specific dates. It is possible, as the editors admit, that some of these contracts were drawn up to disguise usurious and thus forbidden loans; but most certainly appear to be genuine contracts for future deliveries of wool to a wide variety of firms

whose importance in the English wool-export trade cannot be doubted. Such contracts will undoubtedly prove to be of very great interest (and perhaps astonishment) to financial historians, for most them would not know that such supposedly modern financial instruments were so used as early as the thirteenth century. Whether the Italian merchant firms had purchased the wools at a cash discount for future delivery up to twenty years later, or whether they had made loan transactions with the wool as the collateral, the 'implied rates of interest', according to the editors, 'have been calculated as between 10 and 40 per cent with the median rates being between 18 and 22 per cent per year'.

For readers of this journal, however, the more important issues are the voluminous data on the wool sales themselves: the identities of the buyers and sellers, and the prices (though discounted) of a wide variety of wools, some of which were then the very finest that Europe had produced, and, as such, an absolute requisite for the production of the highest quality luxury woollen broadcloths. These 203 contracts (all of which this reviewer read) contain the names of 101 lay producers and 114 monastic producers, listed in the introductory information that the editors supplied. In terms of volumes of wool sold, however, the balance was far more highly skewed towards the latter. Thus, while the lay growers sold, over this 95-year period, a total of only 983,827 sacks (each of 364lb weight, or 26 stones of 14 lb), religious orders had contracted to sell 4600,827 sacks, along with ten whole annual crops, and other wools worth £571 6s. 8d. (sold by the Templars). Of these orders, the Cistercians – not surprisingly – were by far the most important in selling about 2900 sacks in 73 contracts. The others were: the Cluniacs with 963 sacks in eight contracts; the Benedictines with 403 sacks and one crop in seven contracts; the Augustinians with 372 sacks in 13 contracts, and the Premonstratensians with five sacks and two whole crops in three contracts.

Of equal interest is the identity and rank order of the buyers. English and other northern European merchants constituted a very distinct minority: the English accounted for only 1128,231 sacks and two crops (38 contracts); the Flemish, even more surprisingly, for only 18 sacks (in three contracts); the northern French, for only 50,462 sacks (five contracts); and the Germans, for only one sack and one crop (in two contracts). Thus the bulk went to southern merchants, of which the French Cahorsins (major medieval bankers) accounted for 600 sacks and one crop (20 contracts). The Italian merchants, chiefly from Lucca and Florence, then enjoying their heyday in both the English wool trade and English finances, purchased the largest single share: almost 4000 sacks and six whole crops in 150 contracts. Those from

Lucca accounted for 1990 sacks and two whole crops, in 97 contracts. The most important by far were the Riccardi, with 1400 sacks (87 contracts). They were followed by the Gualtieri, with 450 sacks (five contracts); the Bettori, with 31 sacks (one contract); the Bellardi, with 20 sacks (two contracts); and the Gotele, with two whole crops. Florentine merchant-banking houses accounted for even more: 2000 sacks and four whole crops, in 47 contracts. That included: the Frescobaldi, with 1258.519 sacks (28 contracts) and the above-mentioned Templar wools; the Cerchi with 249 sacks (two contracts); the Mozzi with 229 sacks (two contracts); the Pulci-Rimbertini with 69 sacks (three contracts); the Spini with 50 sacks (one contract); the Falconieri with 38.154 sacks (four contracts); the Bardi with 13 sacks (five contracts); and the Peruzzi, even more surprisingly, with only 8 sacks (one contract).

As the editors are quick to point out, the aggregate total of the wool in these advance sales contracts represents only a very small percentage of total exports over this long period. Indeed, the seeming preponderance of the religious orders may reflect the fact that most of them were asset rich (in lands and livestock) but cash poor, and thus in greater need than most lay estates of such liquid funds, chiefly of course from Italian merchant-bankers. That very, very few Flemish wool merchants were also bankers may also explain their minimal role in these 'advance contracts'.

The wealth of data in these documents cries out for tabulation in spreadsheets, which, I hope, the editors will provide in their forthcoming book, *The English wool market, c.1250-1350* (CUP). It would be fascinating to see, for both sellers and buyers, in chronological order, the exact quantities of wool in each of these transactions, the institutional and geographic location of the wools so produced, the names and locations of the buyers, the grades of wool, and the related prices, even if discounted, compared with those in other wool price schedules from this era.

I have two minor criticisms about an otherwise exceptionally valuable publication. First, the editors should have taken care to inform the readers that, while some of the English and Welsh wools were indeed the finest ever produced, some were not, because England, especially then, produced a very wide variety of wools, some of which were mediocre in quality. Furthermore, in this period both the Low Countries and Italy also produced a very wide variety of woollen cloths, and neither region came to specialize in very high quality, costly woollens, requiring uniquely, as noted earlier, the highest grades of English wools (from the Welsh Marches, the Cotswolds, and Lincolnshire) until after the 1330s, i.e., after the end of this series of documents, by which time, furthermore,

the Cistercians and other monasteries had largely ceased to play a major role in the English wool export trade.

The other and very minor criticism is that the editors should also have informed the reader that wools were priced both in pounds sterling and more commonly in marks. The latter, whose abbreviation was simply *m.* (not explained in the text), was worth two-thirds of a pound sterling: i.e. 13s. 4d. Seasoned scholars already know that – but probably not many graduate students who are just beginning their doctoral research.

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JEAN BIRRELL (ed.), *Records of Feckenham Forest, Worcestershire, c.1236-1377* (Worcestershire Historical Society, New Series 21, 2006). xxvi + 212 pp. 2 illus; 2 maps. £28 plus p&p from WHS, Worcestershire Record Office, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP.

The royal forests were a point of contention for the English since they were first created by William the Conqueror after he took control of England. The new conqueror created royal forest preserves and maintained control over the right to hunt deer, wild boar and hare, to cut trees, and to clear any area for agriculture (assart). Perhaps about a quarter of England was reserved as royal forests in the twelfth century and in the thirteenth century there were still seventy royal forests. The control over the forests deprived the upper classes of the right to hunt in royal forests without a warrant from the king and promised stiff penalties to ordinary men who wanted to claim a bit of protein or wood for their own use. The royal forests were a new imposition and resistance to forest laws never died out. Poaching and other encroachments were common. Magna Carta also addressed the issue of forest rights.

Birrell, who has written on the royal forests, has provided a very valuable resource for students of the forest with her book of records of Feckenham Forest. While still one of the most important forests in the middle ages, it is only a part of what was reserved in 1086, according to the *Domesday Book*. A map shows the extent of the forest in 1300. Royal rights to forest lands had to be protected with keepers, who patrolled the forests, and courts that could arrest offenders. The chief forest court was the eyre. Itinerant justices work as a team and moved from forest to forest on specific circuits. They visited at several year intervals and the trials and reviews of the king's forest rights went on for weeks. The justices called together hundreds of men who had property near the forest. It was a cumbersome business and died out by the end of the thirteenth century.

Birrell has published the plea rolls from the eyres of

1262, 1270, and 1280. A bill of complaint about felonies and trespasses is late thirteenth century. In addition she has included early rolls of assarts in the forest, a perambulation of the forest in 1300, and an inquisition of 1362. These records, located in The National Archives, are now available through her translations in full or in abstract. A glossary of terms at the end makes the cases easily accessible. An index of persons, places, and subjects aids researchers in pursuing their specific interests in the records of the royal forest.

Forest rolls are under-utilized for the study of economic and environmental history. The records show the importance of the forests for timber, as a source of additional agricultural land through assarting, and for the use of acorns for feeding pigs. Environmental history is just becoming an important area of historical research and forest records would be an exciting source on both the illegal pursuit of animals and also on the use of the vert (or the green materials and land of the forest). Those studying the economic and social history of a region could enrich their accounts by looking beyond manorial records to see how the forests supplemented local economies. For those who would like to know about the role of forests in the life of the nobility and other poachers, the forest rolls are invaluable.

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BRYAN WAITES, *Monasteries and landscape of the North York Moors and Wolds* (Tempus Publishing, 2007). 65 figs. £17.99.

In 1997 Bryan Waites published *Monasteries and landscape in north-east England* (Oakham: Multum in Parvo Press), which brought together a number of his earlier papers, notably in the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* and *Borthwick Paper* 32 published by the University of York. The preface to *Monasteries and landscape of the North York Moors and Wolds* describes it as a 'new edition in a completely different format, with extra illustrations and some revision of the text' of Waites's earlier book. However, the revisions are not numerous. With some changes in paragraphing and the addition of a new concluding paragraph for the Introduction, the text is basically the same as the earlier edition. Some of the Latin has now been translated for the benefit of non-Latinists but some minor errors have been perpetuated. The notes have not been updated and there are still some references from earlier articles to cartularies in the British Museum rather than the British Library; only a handful of references to works published in the last decade has been added to the notes and bibliography. It is disconcerting that all matter in the endnotes – text as well as authors, titles, and page numbers – are in italics

rather than following the conventional format. The text is nicely laid out and the maps are more professionally produced than in the 1997 edition. The number of illustrations has been increased; however, many are of a quality inferior to their counterparts in the 1997 edition: for instance, that of Rosedale on p. 154 (1997) is clearer than that on p. 169 (2007), and the photograph of Rievaulx Abbey in 1956 (p. 145) has been replaced by a much less clear illustration of the abbey in 1840 (p. 158). Some errors seem to have crept in during the process of reprinting (e.g. p. 232, note 58 has Burton Flerning for Burton Fleming). In this respect the book is rather disappointing.

However the text remains a thorough assessment of the importance of the monastic orders in the development of the landscape of the North York Moors and Wolds. The major houses discussed are those of Whitby, a Benedictine abbey enjoying a location on the cliff tops above the North Sea; Cistercian Rievaulx on the southern edge of the Moors; and the priory of Augustinian canons at Guisborough on the northern fringes of the Moors. However Waites's analysis is set in the broader context of the expansion and dominance of abbeys and priories of all orders within the geographical region. There is a wealth of information here on arable and pastoral farming on monastic estates, monastic industrial enterprise, and the monastic contribution to the medieval wool trade. This book will remain a valuable resource for monastic historians and those with an interest in the North.

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OLIVER RACKHAM, *Woodlands* (Collins, New Naturalist Library, 100, 2006). xiv + 609 pp. 26 tables; 172 figs. £45.

This beautifully produced and profusely illustrated book is the latest product of a scholarly career spanning many decades and several disciplines. With chapters on the historical development of woodland, the sources for studying woods and the history of modern forestry, as well as on the properties of trees and woodland ecology, it will appeal to historians, botanists and foresters alike. *Woodlands* contains a good deal that is familiar, but it is not an attempt at a definitive summation of the author's past publications. Some new topics are interspersed among old favourites, and there is more emphasis than previously on comparing British woodlands with those of other countries, particularly Greece, Japan and North America. Just as significantly, here the author is concerned more with 'investigations' than 'results', and has 'no particular theory to promote' (p. ix). The nagging question for many readers will be whether this book

pushes the conceptual bounds established by Rackham's earlier work.

Woodlands includes some 22 chapters on a variety of topics. The first two chapters outline the properties of trees, followed by several on woodland history. A slightly isolated chapter on wood-pasture (or 'savannah') is succeeded by four on sources. These chapters discuss archives, archaeology, pictures, photographs and fieldwork, pollen analysis having been treated with the woodland history earlier on. Later subjects include the uses of wood and timber, woodland plants, highland and lowland types of woodland, and the pathology of trees. Some chapters are analytical in approach (like those on forestry), others more descriptive (studies of Blackmoor Forest in Somerset and Scottish pinewoods). The free rein given throughout to 'investigations' proves a useful antidote to gliding over uncertainties in difficult areas, but it does not always help to sustain a strong sense of direction. There are few obvious errors, though the misdating of the Black Death and of the important accounting day of Michaelmas (29 September) appear to be unfortunate typos (pp. 66, 173). The index-cum-glossary is excellent, but the bibliography is notably short and does not include everything cited in the footnotes.

It is a strength of Rackham's approach that he seeks to understand woods as an active ecological force, not simply a plastic and finite resource moulded by human intervention, and this is elegantly summed up by a description of landscape history as 'the history of human default as much as of human action' (p. 184). But at the same time, historical readers at least might have liked to have seen more analysis of the human dimension: perceptive passages on the significance of cultural attitudes and economic circumstances in shaping man's exploitation of woods could have been extended and tied in more closely with the treatment of ecology. More could have been said, for instance, about how the development of woods has been affected by regional and local differences in access to rivers and markets. There is some fresh new thinking on the impact of modern forestry and on conservation and future prospects. The extended treatment of highland as well as lowland woodlands broadens the East-Anglian basis of much of his research, while the brief excursions overseas suggest future lines of enquiry for comparative studies.

One or two of Rackham's longstanding views, such as those on medieval parks and hunting, are coming to be challenged by recent research, and it would have been interesting to see more of a response from him to this. The work of landscape historians, for instance, is increasingly suggesting an early and widespread interest in establishing parks both as hunting grounds and as landscapes designed to convey a sense of grandeur

around high-status residences. This interest seems to have been shared by kings, lords and gentry, and to have influenced the choice of sites for parks and the way they were managed, including perhaps the cutting of clearings (or 'trenches') in woods, which Rackham appears to view solely as anti-highwayman measures (p. 208). It may not, therefore, be adequate to distinguish forty medieval 'country-house parks' from what he sees as the usual 'deer-farm parks' of that period (p. 138). Likewise, research on hunting is making it less tenable to characterize the twelfth to fifteenth centuries as a lull between peaks of royal and noble participation (pp. 158–9); hunting was a leisure activity which developed in sophistication and social meaning over the course of the middle ages.

This book is a trove of information and insightful comment. Those familiar with Rackham's previous publications will come across a few new ideas, while newcomers will find this an enticing introduction.

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DAVID DICKSON, *Old world colony. Cork and south Munster, 1630–1830* (Cork University Press, 2005). xviii + 726 pp. 20 tables; 110 illus; 8 maps. £33.00 (hbk); £19.95 (pbk).

Make no mistake about it, this is one of the great books of rural history (and much more) of our generation. Dickson's book tells the story of Cork and its hinterland ('south Munster') over a period of 200 years, from the maturity of the Munster plantation before the cataclysm of 1641–2 and the Cromwellian reconquest, to the collapse of the regional economy after 1820. Hence the book is divided into two broad sections: 'Crescent, c.1630–c.1770' and 'Reckoning: c.1780–c.1830' separated by a single chapter, 'Intermezzo'. The ambition of writing a history of a city and its hinterland over such a long period is probably unparalleled in British and Irish history and the results are simply marvellous. There are few aspects of society which are left unconsidered. Dickson moves with ease between the rural and urban economies, between Protestant and Catholic society, between gentry demesnes and the rise of the malt and porter trade. The learning is enormous: Dickson is equally adept with Irish verse and customs accounts. The prose purrs along like a Rolls Royce, with some memorable turns of phrase coined along the way. The penalty of such a breathtaking vision of a whole society over 200 years is size and, one might add, portability. The text runs to 500 pages, supplemented by a further 141 pages of endnotes, plus appendices and index. I suspect that few other than reviewers will read it from cover to cover. Most will see it as three parallel books – about rural, urban and

commercial, and religious developments – and will read selectively just as this review concentrates on one of the three themes.

Munster was the earliest area in Ireland to be extensively colonized by the English in the late sixteenth century. The first Munster plantation was overthrown in 1598 and then re-established after the final English defeat of the Ulster Gaelic lords in 1603. It was a colony based on a paranoid fear of the native Irish: but by the 1630s the English, first and second generation, seem to have relaxed with a degree of tolerance of the Catholic Irish. This all fell apart in the months after the Ulster Rising in 1641 and there then followed a decade of war, and, at the end of that war, renewed confiscation and expulsion. Over the following thirty years, colonial society was re-established, only to collapse once more after the accession of James II and the war of reconquest fought by William III on his accession. Again, there were confiscations, and by the early eighteenth century laws were increasingly being introduced to place the Catholic population under a variety of disabilities. The story of the seventeenth century is thus one of confidence built – and lost; of capital created – and wasted; of uncertainties and instabilities in landowning. Land confiscated was not inevitably lost to the families of its previous owners, some of whom continued as lessees; but each successive period of disturbance allowed more English settlers to secure land. There were large-scale expulsions of Catholics after the Williamite wars of 1690–1 and a determination to make the new Protestant settlement ‘impregnable and irreversible’. Confiscation of land was matched by the exclusion of Catholics from the civic life of Cork. Uncertainty remained until the accession of George I: Dickson quotes a writer of 1714 as saying that ‘people begin to improve, plant etc. as expecting they are now doing it for themselves and their own prosperity, and not for those to whom the lands would certainly have come, if the grand design had taken place’ (p. 67). The big trade of Cork remained largely in Protestant hands for much of the eighteenth century but the diaspora of Catholics onto the continent gave them the networks of relatives, friends and co-religionists on which international trade could be sustained.

The first half of the seventeenth century is marked by the emergence of the great Anglo-Irish settler families of whom the Boyles, earls of Cork, were the greatest (they acquired several additional titles for cadet branches). They remained an organizing principle in Munster society throughout the seventeenth century: in the early eighteenth, in a reversal of the expected processes, they tended to sell out (often because, like the senior line of the Boyles, by then earls of Burlington, their attention became focussed on England), and for

that reason Munster society in the eighteenth century became a much more open gentry society. ‘The regime of the gentry’ is described at length in Chapter 3, where we learn not only who the new entrants to the gentry were, but of their tastes, houses, marriages and political interests. They had the advantage throughout the eighteenth century of sitting on an appreciating asset. Dickson estimates that the income of solvent proprietors rose five- to six-fold between the 1690s and 1810s. The background to this, in the first instance, was the development of an efficient cattle-processing industry based on Cork and a more dispersed butter export trade. Later, in an about turn, cattle were largely abandoned for corn, especially in those districts with access to the sea or inland waterways.

In Chapter 4 Dickson describes the development of the Cork victualling trade based on bullocks from north and west Cork, but also from further afield in north Kerry, east Limerick and much of Tipperary. Beeves sent to Cork were slaughtered and the meat barrelled, much of it for export to the Americas. Dickson suggests 50–80,000 head of animals were slaughtered annually (although some late seventeenth-century writers offered higher estimates) in a short slaughtering season. There were secondary industries based on the hides, tallow, glue-making and the like. The Munster economy also had extensive rural textile industries. Indeed, one of the many areas in which Dickson is marvellous is in his painstaking assembly of all the local – often estate-sponsored – attempts to develop artisan industries.

This prosperity was achieved despite the best efforts of the English. One of the paradoxes of English policy in Ireland is the paranoia with which they viewed Irish Catholics but their determination to exclude the Irish from English markets and economically hobble the Protestant colony. What one therefore sees are repeated moments of reinvention as the Irish, excluded from markets by English legislation, looked for new outlets or products. This is not simply the familiar banning of live cattle imports into England. In 1699 for instance, the export of Irish cloth (except to England) was banned although there is some evidence of a continued (but illegal) cloth trade to Portugal. Subsequently yarn spinning for Norwich and other English towns emerged as a profitable trade, the duty on which was finally lifted in 1739, a rare victory for Irish interests over the English. The development of sail cloth manufacture trade from the 1720s was assisted from 1745 with an Irish export bounty: the English retaliated in 1750 with their own export bounty which severely knocked back the Cork manufactory.

This reinvention also characterized the overall farming economy of the region. Having been forced into

the butter and Atlantic victualling trades in the later seventeenth century when the export of live cattle was forbidden, from the second quarter of the eighteenth century there was a further re-orientation of the rural economy into arable and mixed agriculture to produce corn for the English market (Chapter 8). The result was that corn was grown in the most improbable of places – certainly where no one would attempt to break the ground today – and butter production confined to more remote areas. The trade in barrelled beef declined and in its place emerged a trade in preserved pork. By the end of the eighteenth century a new trade in live animals had emerged and in processed or semi-processed goods – bacon, candles, soap, shoes.

Naval victualling offered considerable opportunities during both the war against the thirteen colonies and the Napoleonic Wars. Dickson describes the development of such specialties as the supply of ships' biscuits: but this trade largely crashed with the downsizing of the army and navy after 1815. The cost of wartime bonanzas was that Cork was unable to serve its normal markets to anything like the same degree and by the end of the Napoleonic wars, the options for export from Cork had become far more limited than they had been half a century before. Wartime prosperity fed back into – and was assisted by – the development of the regional infrastructure in terms of both roads but also coastal shipping. Practical steps were taken to improve the quality of butter coming to market: again, all aspects of enterprising self-help. The impression is that at the beginning of the nineteenth century – and perhaps for a decade or two thereafter – south Munster had achieved a degree of prosperity and commercial success, not only as an agricultural producer but also as a manufacturing centre with a nascent factory manufacturing trade. This is not to say that Munster society was wholly comfortable with itself. Catholics had achieved a high degree of integration into society by the end of the century and looked for emancipation, the possibility of which seemed close in the early 1790s and then receded for a generation (the young Daniel O'Connell makes his appearance in the final pages of the book). There remained a residual preference amongst landlords for Protestant tenants, but there is no real sign that Catholics were still discriminated against in the way they had been. Indeed, they were welcomed into some of the voluntary militias of the late 1770s. But there was an increasing level of agrarian disturbance in the 1790s which developed out of earlier agitations against enclosures and tithes and elided into the more revolutionary ambitions of the United Irishmen. The disturbances of 1798 in Munster were just that, disturbances rather than rebellion, but also a part of the development of a political consciousness which operated

below the horizon of parliamentary politics. Attacks on tithes were perhaps inevitable as the re-orientation of the agrarian economy revitalised corn tithes: but the campaigns against tithes can also be seen as a means by which small producers under price pressure hoped to cut their costs.

The truth is that the reappearance of commercial *arable* agricultural in Munster in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was only possible because of the potato (discussed in Chapter 8). In Munster we have a society which grew a crop substantially for export and in which not only the labourers, but the farmers themselves, lived for the most part (if not exclusively) off another which had only a limited export potential. The high yields of the potato from indifferent ground with a modicum of manure and the willingness of labourers (or the entrapment of labourers) to take a cottage and potato ground in lieu of wages allowed the emergence of a low wage-cost economy with no incentive to achieve real gains in labour productivity. There was perhaps nothing wrong with this if we approach the matter without hindsight; but it is a further element in the costs carried by Munster as the distant supplier of a highly commercial and sometimes fickle market. This was the key problem for the south Munster economy. Local demand was not large – especially given the immiseration of a large part of the population and their reliance on self-produced potatoes – and the very commercialization of the economy made it vulnerable to falling prices and changes in taste in the English market. The end of war, the running down of military victualling, the post-war slump after 1815 and the default of the leading Cork banks in 1820 all made the 1820s a desperate decade in Munster. Its textile trades were overwhelmed by English factory manufactures. The later spread of the Dublin banks into the area suggests that the essential vigour of the Cork economy had been undermined. The response to under- and unemployment was migration, and Dickson argues that the 1820s were more of a turning point in Munster history than the Famine decade.

It would be an interesting exercise for Dickson or someone else to examine the parallels for the trajectory of the Cork economy elsewhere in Britain: in such an account the failure of provincial banks – expressions of local loyalties and regional commercial networks as well as repositories of local savings – will doubtless play a part. Where Cork certainly differs from England is in the arc curved by its landlords. It is clear enough from what Dickson says that the larger Plantation estates tended to dissolve in the first half of the eighteenth century and sold out to the sitting tenants. The remaining estates also tended to withdraw from active estate management through the use of leases for three lives and leases

to middlemen – a form of subcontracting – until late in the century. Some landowners queried whether the letting out of large parcels to reliable Protestants who sub-let was the best way of proceeding as early as the 1740s, but it was only much later in the century when a general distaste for middlemen emerged and estates – often in the teeth of opposition from their existing lessees – started to re-establish direct tenurial contact with the individual occupiers of their lands. This was perhaps the adoption of English estate management by Irish estates, sometimes overseen by English stewards. (Arthur Young spent a year as an absentee's estate steward in 1777–8 and appears to have suffered for the precocity of his reforming ideas.) Other late eighteenth-century resident landowners also experimented with agrarian improvements and exhibited a willingness to invest in new buildings. Some circulated improving agricultural literature: but it is unclear how far they influenced their tenants.

What was unclear to this reader is whether late eighteenth-century Cork rural society should be characterized as one of small, independent freeholding farmers and small gentry (often sub-tenants) or of absentee estates. The correspondence between the local agents of the Anglo-Irish estates and their head agents or English-domiciled proprietors is the bedrock on which some of the later chapters of the book are built and this perhaps gives a rather misleading impression. And one would like to know to what degree freeholding farmers were bought out by their neighbours, surrounding gentry and Cork merchants in the more depressed years of the century. We need to resolve these questions to achieve an understanding of the rising agrarian violence of the district. To judge from their pre-occupations, these were movements of farmers, but were they movements of tenants or freeholders? Given the absence of any all-embracing late eighteenth-century source, even of the quality of the English land tax, there is perhaps no easy way of establishing this without assembling the data townland by townland, but this might usefully be done in the future. Local history in its purest form might also do something to clothe the farmers – whether tenants or otherwise – and even their labourers. Of necessity, this is a book of the broad sweep rather than the individual, but one hopes that more can be done to recover individuals, their experiences and attitudes, for one of the most interesting questions posed by the book – and again a comparative matter – is how it was possible for such strong solidarities against tithe owners and landlords to emerge in Ireland but not in Britain.

Dickson's is not a theoretical work. The Cork region, or south Munster, is pragmatically defined as the reach of the Cork newspaper (pp. xii–xiii) and whilst Dickson often seems to exclude the peninsulas of west Cork from

consideration, copper mining in Allihies and the urban development of Kenmare and Bantry do creep into his account. Nor is there any attempt to place the development of Munster in any intellectual frame drawn from development economics; indeed there is little reference to the modern literature of the industrial revolution. And so some will feel that the work is old fashioned, a piece of local history rather than contemporary economic history: and yet it is hard to see what more theory could have contributed. Nor does it have a political axe to grind although some will doubtless raise an eyebrow at the title. There are occasional difficulties following the text when the focus of the work remains Munster but the prime action is happening elsewhere – a problem notably in the account of 1798. There is also an element of mystery about the illustrations. At one level the book is well-illustrated with 110 figures: but these are never referred to in the text (nor are they indexed) and have a largely separate existence with long explanatory captions. Was the book envisaged as an unillustrated one, with the figures added in during production? Regrettably the quality of their production is not always high and what are plainly glorious oils and watercolours of Cork and its surrounding district do not always convey their full impact. To have had figures such as no. 74 (Grogan, 'Boats on the Lee below Tivoli') or no. 89 (Rienzi, attrib., 'Panorama over Fermoy') as colour plates would have allowed them to sing.

In this respect a little more expenditure would have been beneficial, but it would be wrong to end without offering a word of congratulation to the publishers. If Dickson says that 'it is of course somewhat unfashionable in the present age to attempt a monograph on this scale', then it is even more unusual these days for a publisher to accept the risk of such an enormous project and we must be grateful to Cork University Press.

Whether in hardback or paperback, the book is a bargain. The journey it traces is a fascinating one with repercussions and echoes for other pre-industrial economies in Ireland, Britain and further afield. It is a journey I urge you to undertake. In a word, wow!

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HADRIAN COOK and TOM WILLIAMSON (eds),
Water meadows. History, ecology and conservation
(Windgather Press, 2007). viii + 151 pp. 48 figs. £19.99.
I gave one of my first papers, together with a colleague (an ecologist), at a joint archaeological/ecological symposium in 1969. We sought to distinguish, in an historical-ecological context, the water meadow from the flood meadow and washland, and to emphasize the need to preserve examples of each. We were both taken aback at

question time, when the distinguished field archaeologist, Collin Bowen, made a trenchant attack upon water meadows for the destruction they had inflicted upon the archaeological evidence for the earlier use and occupation of riparian lands. However grievous the loss, Collin Bowen would surely and warmly welcome, some forty years later, the present volume of cross-disciplinary studies – an approach he did so much to promote.

The volume arises from a conference held in Salisbury, close to the famous Harnham Meadows, in March 2004, which drew on published, archival and field evidence, enlarged by the insights provided by present-day practices, including current agri-environmental grant-aided schemes. Jointly edited by a hydrologist and soil scientist, and by a landscape historian, the volume includes many highly relevant and well-produced maps, diagrams and photographs, which illustrate further the significance, location and functioning of this almost-lost agricultural technology.

There are contributions from Joe Bettey, Christopher Taylor and Tom Williamson, and two chapters by Roger Cutting and Ian Cummings providing what has been lacking for so long from such studies, the experimental evidence as might help assess the validity or otherwise of the various claims made for such irrigation systems – the heating of the sward so as to induce an early bite, the alleged fertilizing effect upon the meadow soils, and how such effects were optimally achieved through the timing and rapidity of surface flow. The findings of my co-presenter, Derek Wells, those forty years ago as to the comparative species-poverty of the watermeadows are generally borne out, albeit now more comprehensively and with much greater rigour. The substantial chapter by Hadrian Cook reports what I guess to be the closest study made so far of the hydrology, soils and underlying geology of the Wessex watermeadows. Another by Kathy Stearne assesses the feasibility of sustaining and extending the few remaining operational watermeadows. Without close knowledge of the variety and complexity of former systems, attempts at reinstatement might easily give an erroneous impression of past usage and, unwittingly, further impair such archaeological evidence as remains of the watermeadows themselves. There is distillation of the skills and experience gained by Peter Martin on the Britford Water Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest, on the River Avon near Salisbury, since the 1950s.

The threat to the 'floated' water meadows of the Golden Valley in Herefordshire from a natural-gas pipeline, described in the current issue of *Rural History Today* (13, July 2007), emphasizes the topicality of the issue, and the fragility of such historical evidence as does survive. All the contributors stress how much there remains to be discovered about the origins and development of

such bed- and catch-works in Britain and the near continent, including the extent to which such visually-striking investment met an essential agricultural-need rather than being a response, in part at least, to fashion. Did water meadows ever realise the potential their boosters claimed?

The present volume is likely to have a very long shelf-life, whether as an aid to research and teaching, as a guide to the conservation of such meadows, or simply as an immensely readable and attractive reference work, frequently referred to by those fascinated by the farmed landscape.

JOHN SHEAIL

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MICHAEL HANSON (ed.), *Ducal estate management in Georgian Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. The diary of William Gould, 1783–1788* (Thoroton Society, 44, 2006). £16.50 incl. p&p from Adrian Henstock, 24 Long Acre, Bingham, Nottingham NG13 8BG.

William Gould came from an old-established farming family in upper Dovedale on the Derbyshire-Staffordshire border, where he was the tenant of a substantial farm at Pilsbury, a former monastic grange that been part of the Chatsworth estate since the Dissolution. His reputation as a progressive farmer led to his appointment, when he was 40 years old, as chief land agent and house steward to the Welbeck abbey estate of William Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, third Duke of Portland and future Prime Minister, a position that he held until his death fifteen years later. He kept up the tenancy at Pilsbury, even though it was many miles away, and in 1784 took on further estate duties at Chatsworth, where his son, Joseph, eventually became land agent to the fifth and sixth Dukes of Devonshire. During his time at Welbeck, William kept a detailed diary, of which four of the original five volumes survive in the possession of his descendants. Michael Hanson's edition contains an informative Introduction, placed in the context of wider scholarship, and provides lengthy selected entries (in modern spellings) from the years 1783 to 1788.

Gould was responsible to John Heaton, one of the leading land agents of his day, who was based in London and had an estate near Romford. Heaton was not only auditor to the Duke of Portland, but also agent to the Duke of Devonshire. The Duke of Portland was absent for most of the time, but took a keen interest in his estate during his visits. Gould provides many interesting and sometimes amusing comments about his aristocratic employers, such as:

1 October 1787: The Duke went out with Boaler to shoot on Carburton Forest this morning, though

I suppose he has not shot these twenty years, they found plenty of partridges and His Grace shot a number of times but did not kill a bird, on his return he told me he thought shooting the most insipid diversion a man could follow, and thought he should not go any more.

As for the servants in the great house, Gould thought 'they are in general a parcel of thieves and designing persons'.

Gould was assiduous in the performance of his duties. The editor has calculated that in the five years beginning in 1783 he visited 144 different locations on horseback, by chaise or coach, in many parts of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and also into Cheshire, Staffordshire and Leicestershire, with two visits to London. He travelled about 9,265 miles in these five years and was on horseback nearly one day in three, in all weathers. He was a man of strong religious and moral beliefs, with only occasional lapses, such as the one noted in the entry for 20 February 1783: 'Fit for very little business today from drinking too freely last night'.

His job involved collecting rents and tithes, viewing and valuing properties, chairing meetings of parishioners to discuss enclosure, supervising the erection of farm buildings, devising ways of improving land (including drainage schemes), and prosecuting poachers. Much of his time was spent on 'improving' the poor-quality land in the district that we now know as The Dukeries. He found, for instance, a 'rabbit warren upward of 800 acres of barren poor land, it lays open to some other lordships and is good for little, the stock of rabbits upon it is by no means sufficient'. On 2 April 1783 he noted that:

Frith Pasture, which contains about 400 acres of very poor land. I compute there is about 170 of white dry land, 130 ling inclining to peat moss, neither very wet nor dry, and 100 very wet and strong peat moss, it lays exceeding cold and high and is of but very little value, and when improved will answer very little other purpose than a sheep farm.

On 16 June 1783: he observed that in one of the woods 'no care has been taken to keep up the fence, consequently the young spring is ruined by the cattle, and have ordered it all to be stubbed and the trees felled in order to convert it to tillage'. Woodland management was one of his major concerns. His diary contains numerous references to the planting on a large scale of thousands of ash, thorn, sycamore and oak trees. On 6 January 1783, for instance, he

viewed the unimproved Carburton Forest piece, and find about 5 acres covered pretty strong with gorse, the other chiefly ling, we propose taking up about 20

acres for a crop of turnips to prepare the same to sow ash-keys and acorns next winter.

Again, on 15 January 1783, he visited the Nursery, where

we agreed the spruce firs, Virginian cedars, American plants, walnut trees and elm should stand another year, the remaining part of the ground [to be] prepared to receive grass seeds or whatever His Grace may direct'.

The diary has numerous entries of general interest. On 10 June 1783 he visited Beeston and 'saw the procession of a number of young men incorporated together for the purpose of supporting each other, commonly called a sick club'. On 19 February 1784 he

divided the Scotch bullock and about 14 stone of beef purchased at Worksop with about five pounds-worth of bread among the poor at Welbeck, Carburton, Norton, etc. We made the collection for bread amongst ourselves and the farmers ... which afforded a liberal supply to all the industrious poor of those places and was very acceptable at this inclement season.

And on 16 March 1787, in a scene reminiscent of Anthony Trollope's *The duke's children*, he noted that more than 100 gentlemen of the hunt and hounds at Worksop Manor Lodge had hunted all day but had failed to find a fox.

This edition of Gould's diary is illustrated with contemporary views, maps and portraits. It is a very useful contribution to the local history of the east Midlands and will provide agricultural historians with many small insights into a period when land agents were becoming influential figures as great landowners invested in improving their estates.

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K. D. M. SNELL, *Parish and belonging. Community, identity and welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (CUP, 2006). xiv + 541 pp. 5 tables; 31 figs. £60.

It could be argued that Keith Snell has been working on the parish and local attachment for the whole of his prolific academic life: from the ground-breaking *Annals of the labouring poor* (1985) to the superb *Rival Jerusalems* (2000), not to mention his impressive interdisciplinary work on the regional novel. *Annals* was a perfect demonstration of combining the quantitative and the qualitative; *Rival Jerusalems* showed the possibilities of high-level number crunching. There is no other historian like Snell; in terms of historical technique, energy, and range, he is like a one-person combination of E. P. Thompson and (the whole) Cambridge Group!

So another book from the world's leading historian of rural England is cause for celebration. And Snell has more to say about the parish and belonging: over 500 pages worth. One chapter, on the new poor law, is the size of a small monograph.

Parish and belonging has the Snell wit. This is, he writes, a book about belonging by someone with no 'strong sense of belonging' (p. 3). There are quips about the tendencies of poor law guardians, including their inability to see their desks for the drawers (pp. 246–7). We are told of the place called 'Nowhere' near Yarmouth (p. 375). There are intriguing asides, including one about the impact of the 1850s drawing pin on church and chapel doors (p. 344). The book has his unique combination of scholarly fetishism and diligence – footnotes jostle with the main text again and again, sometimes even achieving formatting dominance. There is much evidence of the Snell range: from George Eliot to the chants of Chelsea football fans; from folktales to the UK Data Archive, SPSS, and GenMap. The book has his local enthusiasms that become the reader's enthusiasms – this time it is the Forest of Dean. It has impressive quantification expressed almost laconically: 'To explore these issues more extensively, 18,442 marriages were analysed from the published registers of sixty-nine parishes, scattered across eight counties' (p. 168). 'To explore the issue further I analysed about 16,000 gravestones in eighty-seven burial grounds' (p. 469). Finally, there are themes within themes: regional variation comes through strongly in chapter after chapter.

Most importantly, *Parish and belonging* demonstrates Snell's ability to totally rethink accepted wisdom, and to do so openly: 'When I began to explore this subject, I anticipated finding ...' (p. 178). The marriage patterns that he established, different to those predicted, were an increase in endogamy (both partners from the parish) from 1740–1840, and with a decline when it came (Snell uses the work of others here) notable both for its lateness in the late nineteenth century and its rapidity. He establishes that relief under the new poor law (1834–1929) was in the local community, the parish rather than the workhouse, as it had been under the old poor law. Eighty per cent of poor relief was outdoor relief. The symbolism of the new poor law workhouse was powerful but scarcely represented the reality of day-to-day practice. Though this chapter returns to the theme of the centrality of the parish in the nineteenth and early twentieth century world, it could stand alone as the best short history of the new poor law. In short, the parish was important throughout the nineteenth century (Chapter 6 is a fascinating account of the role of the parish overseer); and may have actually increased in importance. Over 4000 new parishes were

created in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see Chapter 7).

Parish and belonging is an impressive administrative history – one could call it 'the new administrative history' at the risk of unleashing another historiographical beast – but it is far more than that. Snell is concerned with cultural practice as well as structures. It is not mere chance that he begins the book with chapters on local xenophobia and the languages of settlement, and ends with one on the inscriptions on gravestones – that is, belonging demonstrated in widely differing cultural forms. *Parish and belonging* is a fine work of rural history by a masterful practitioner, rethinking, reconstructing, (gently) challenging, and dazzling at every turn of the page.

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ROGER YOUNG (ed.), *Sparsholt, 1841–1901. A Hampshire village microhistory* (Wessex Historical Databases 3, 2006). CD. £11.75 incl. UK p&p from Wessex Historical Databases, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Winchester, Winchester SO22 4NR.

'Microhistory' involves studying a community in minute detail from a wide range of sources, thereby gaining insight into the history of all its individual families, buildings and institutions. More importantly, by studying such aspects as demography, occupations, household size, migration and servants, the wider picture of the community's fortunes can be traced over time and both its social structure and geography can be reconstructed. Many of these results can be displayed on tables and maps.

This CD publication uses as a case study the village of Sparsholt three miles outside Winchester, which is fairly typical of many arable estate villages in the south and east of England with a Victorian population of fewer than 500. It provides a guide to the *process* of microhistory and begins with a sound introduction succinctly summarizing the methodology involved, grounded on the latest thinking on census and demographic analysis. However after this there is no further text, simply a series of tabulated transcripts of the census data for Sparsholt from 1841 to 1901 and of two detailed estate surveys of 1842 and 1851, together with a useful blank template for anyone wishing to carry out similar exercises for other communities. A serious omission is a map which would have allowed readers to gain a feel for the local topography.

The census tables are annotated with additional information from other sources, including the results of a 'house repopulation' exercise. This is one of the key processes of nineteenth-century microhistory – a technique

to give a spatial dimension to census data by matching all the households listed in 1841 or 1851 with the properties in which they lived. For this purpose the existence of a near-contemporary tithe map and schedule, or similarly detailed survey is vital. In the case of Sparsholt, only just over ten per cent of households were initially identified with properties on the 1841–3 tithe record (compared with nearly 17 per cent for a similar exercise in a Derbyshire market town). However by bringing in a variety of other sources such as parish rate books, estate rentals, and parish registers the matching was completed with approximately 98 per cent success. Again, however, neither maps nor analytical tables are provided to demonstrate what has been learnt from this exercise. In addition one would expect such a detailed study to throw up occasional stories of ‘human interest’ – extended households of farm labourers, interesting migrants, sad cases of hardship and so forth – but the text is not enlivened by one single example.

The basic problem with this CD is that it does not deliver what it says on the can, which claims to show ‘in micro-detail the changing demographics of a Hampshire village through the time of feast and famine in Victorian England’. In practice there is more famine than feast as one seeks in vain for meaningful summaries of the *results* of such a study; in fact it had this reviewer re-examining the CD case to see if he had missed a second disk! For example, although the author tells us that the national agricultural returns for the village were a useful source for charting the effects of the agricultural depression from the 1870s onwards, he does not hint at what these were.

Although production on CD has the advantage of offering electronic searching of the data, the layout of the census tables (on Microsoft Excel spreadsheets) is frustrating to use. Each household is not separated from the next by a space or a bold line (as in the original records) and the over-generous width of the columns means that personal information such as occupation, age and birth-place cannot be read in one view without constant resort to the horizontal scroll bar.

This publication introduces a valuable case study which is a useful template for comparative researches in other communities. It is just a pity that the author could not have included a few more samples of his conclusions to prove to others *why* such exercises are worth doing. As it is he has provided the user with the tools, some building blocks and a tantalizing plan but rarely revealed any parts of the finished structures. Is it too much to ask for a Volume Two?

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HEATHER HOLMES, *Tattie howkers. Irish potato workers in Ayrshire* (Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, Ayrshire Monographs 31, 2005). 192 pp. 10 tables; 12 illus; 2 figs. £4.50 from William Layhe, Chairman Publications Committee AANHs, 30 Woodend Road, Alloway, Ayr KA7 4QR

This study is an outgrowth of Heather Holmes’ wider research programme focussing on the history of Irish migratory potato workers in Scotland, who formed the backbone of the seasonal agricultural workforce in many parts of the country until after the Second World War. It complements her more extended analysis of potato workers in the Lothians, published as series of articles and in her fine monograph ‘*As good as a holiday. Potato harvesting in the Lothians from 1870 to the present*’ (2000). In contrast to that expansive study, this enterprise is narrower in scope, with a different geographic focus. It documents the experiences of Ayrshire workers – who have tended to be at the margins of most narratives of the migratory labour force – and extends the analysis of their work in the potato fields beyond the Second World War. A scholarly apparatus is evident in the study’s 884 endnotes (which are not, curiously, structured by chapter); readers seeking more sustained historiographical, theoretical and methodological discussions (particularly critical evaluations of reports, printed and oral, that are key sources for this study) are best advised to consult Holmes’ other monograph. In this study they will find rich detail of the rhythm of the Ayrshire harvest. Indeed, the great merit of this slim book is the window it offers onto the daily work of the potato workers over a hundred years, as well as the insight it provides into the commercial, agricultural and legal regimes which governed their work in the fields. Drawing on a range of evidence, it encompasses analyses of the age- and sexual profile of the workforce, the (changing) structure of the labour market, and critical discussions of the relatively slow adoption of harvesting technology. On this last point Holmes’ work makes a valuable contribution to the wider literature on labour systems and the dissemination and adoption of agricultural technology. Evidently the availability of a low-cost, flexible supply of Irish seasonal labour served to extend the period of manual harvesting in Ayrshire longer than in other potato-growing districts of Britain (pp. 69–70). Readers seeking details on the experience of these workers from the Irish side of the migration process (beyond the relatively short discussion here, drawn from parliamentary reports whose empirical accuracy Holmes and others have wisely qualified), would benefit from reading this study alongside Anne O’Dowd’s *Spalpeens and tattie hokers. History and folklore of the Irish migratory agricultural worker in Ireland and Britain* (Irish Academic Press, 1991). It details

complex household labour strategies which embraced a range of activities, including migratory labour to Britain. Holmes acknowledges the paucity of sources available to reconstruct the volume of seasonal traffic across the Irish Sea, as well to document the early development of large-scale potato farming in Ayrshire, which centred on the early 'Epicure' variety. She is precise in her delineation of the commercial structures which underpinned the industry until the 1960s, and in discussing systems of labour recruitment that proved resilient over many decades. Dimensions of this study which merit further analysis include the ethnic division of labour on the potato farms, especially in relation to new technologies and systems of authority in the potato field (mentioned briefly on p. 61), as well as a sustained examination of the role that the Second World War played in reorganizing (or perhaps maintaining) pre-war commercial and labour structures. Evidently, in the composition of the workforce, and in the systems of harvesting potatoes, the war induced some significant changes; but the curious persistence of this workforce through the following two decades also raises intriguing questions about the extent to which the conflict disrupted the patterns of seasonal migration and systems of labour. This study complements Holmes' extensive examination of the Lothian workforce. It surveys a broad range of features of work in the south-west Lowlands, some of which were distinctive and linked to the unique rhythm of the early harvest, while others, such as the protracted efforts to establish legal oversight over accommodation, were broadly similar to experiences in the Lothians. It will no doubt lead many interested readers to Holmes' other studies, in which they will find comprehensive documentation and a valuable historiography of this much-understudied workforce in Scottish agriculture.

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ROBERT MALCOLMSON and PETER SEARBY (eds),
Wartime Norfolk. The diary of Rachel Dhonau, 1941–1942 (Norfolk Records Society, 58, 2004). xiv + 269 pp.
6 plates. £18 plus £4 p&xp from Hon. Secretary, NRS,
29 Cintra Road, Norwich NR1 4AE.

Mass-Observation was founded in 1937 by Tom Harrison and Charles Madge to create 'an anthropology of ourselves'. This was to be achieved by enlisting 'ordinary people' as volunteers to 'observe' the world around them and report to the organization on a regular basis through open-ended questionnaires ('directives'). These asked for opinions on current events, fashions or simply everyday life. They were also asked to observe other people going about their day-to-day lives. In 1939 fearing (unjustifiably as it turned out) that the organization would be

suppressed under wartime regulations, they asked their members to keep diaries for the duration of the War with a view to producing a unique record of the conflict.

The M-O observers responded well. In the next six years several hundred diaries were sent to M-O in London. A few lasted all six years, more, like the one reprinted here, lasted only part of the War. What is certain is that the vast majority succeeded in their aims and present a unique insight into the experiences of the people of wartime Britain. The diaries, and the rest of the collection covering the period 1937 to 1947 is now held in the Mass-Observation archive in the library of the University of Sussex.

However, very little of the material generated by M-O is rural. The reasons for this are simple. Although there was no attempt to discourage rural writers, those who founded M-O believed that the nature of 'mass' modern society was urban, and much of their own work was centred on Bolton and London as representative of that society. Nevertheless there is some rural material in both the directives and especially in a small number (about 20) diaries. These vary in quality and interest for the agricultural or rural social historian. There is, for instance, the diary of a Cambridge undergraduate which contains excellent material on wartime farming. Despite being medically unfit, he wished to contribute to the war effort and worked as a farm worker in Buckinghamshire and then as a forestry worker in the east Midlands. Another diary, that of a rural schoolmistress in Sussex, gives a detailed account for the whole of the War of village social life.

The diary of Rachel Dhonau is one of the 'rural' diaries, although it has to be said it offers little, on the surface at least, for the agricultural historian. Against that, it does present a fascinating account of a rural small town, Sheringham on the north Norfolk coast, in the middle years of the war. Although born in Norfolk, Rachel and her husband Jakob spent the immediate pre-war years in Paris. With the fall of France they returned with their young son to London, and then with the onset of the blitz they moved in September 1940 to Rachel's mother's home in Sheringham. At that point Jakob volunteered and entered the army as a private.

By 1941, when the diary begins, Rachel was very unhappily separated from Jakob and working full-time in the Sheringham food office, one of some 1500 local offices dealing with the administration of wartime food regulations. In March 1942, she took up a teaching post in Norwich, where she stayed two or three nights a week in a hostel.

Like many of the other wartime diaries, Rachel's is at the core a personal account. We know what she reads, what films she saw, what programmes she listened to on

the radio and what she thought of them all. In March 1942 the *News of the World* is delivered instead of the *Observer* and she is horrified, '... what an incredible paper. Murder, rape, pornography. What a world this is' (p. 115). She also reports the war and especially the rumours of war, which are again a feature of most diaries. It is difficult from the standpoint of the present-day to see how much credence was given to rumours of invasion, always thwarted with terrible German casualties, and second-hand accounts of the carnage inflicted by bombing. She herself experienced some of that first hand in Norwich, and wrote an account of bombing and morale for M-O which is included as an appendix. Aircraft, ours and theirs, provide a constant, noisy and fearful backdrop to the whole text.

It is in these details of the everyday that the strength of the diary lies – an authentic voice of rural, provincial England all too seldom heard in accounts of wartime. However, to many who read this journal the account of the food office with its day-to-day bureaucracy will provide a real insight into the local world of wartime food production and distribution. In August 1941, for example, she confronts the seasonal demands of agriculture alongside the normal work of the day:

I dealt with the harvest applications (most of the farmers who have already applied and had permits for tea, sugar and margarine begin again with applications for cheese), bee applications, counterfoils, coupons (Monday being the day when butcher's supplementary permits have to be issued), queries about milk and eggs (p. 19).

She also dealt with animal feed and with farmers confused and angered by wartime regulations:

... did a few animal feeding stuff permits and took phone calls, largely from milk retailers, informing us they wouldn't retail milk under the rationing scheme. All this milk business is made difficult because we also have the Milk Marketing Board to cope with. These poor farmers feel quite confused having separate sets of instructions to cope with (p. 25).

As well as the particular needs of the farming community, the day-to-day business of rationing, of shortages and even the black market recur, constantly giving an insight into local problems which are absent from the bigger accounts of wartime. There is also a memorable description of the petty tyrant who ran the office, was universally disliked and, in the end, was her main reason for leaving to teach in Norwich.

Very few of the M-O diaries are available outside the archive, and for that reason alone this is a very welcome publication. But there is more than that. It gives a very

unusual inside account of the war from, if not the countryside, at least a country town. It is full of insight on day-to-day life which constantly reminds us of the local, mundane realities of wartime, but it also speaks to national concerns. Rachel, in common with many diarists, comments on the war and social change. As someone who was broadly left-wing, she welcomed Beveridge and supported the Soviet Union, even starting to learn Russian. However, especially given the years of the diary which are reprinted here (there are a further 14 months in the archive) it is the grimness of wartime provincial life which comes through time and again. Rationing, widespread shortages of the items of everyday life, the absence of a loved one, and, in the middle of the war, no real end in sight, dominate, and point out time and again, just how central simply making ends meet was, especially for a woman. She sums this up in a part of the diary not printed in full: 'I am getting extremely tired of this shoddiness. Everything is shoddy – paper, clothes, wool, food. Ersatz. Truly the era of the second rate' (p. 241).

Yet like many of her generation she had hopes for the future. Beveridge promised a better land after the War in both rural and urban areas. She read widely and critically and was very uncertain about the conduct of the war, especially the bombing of Germany. But she hoped for better. In September 1942 she replied to an M-O directive on post-war problems which mentioned agriculture. Her comments, not in the diary, are simple and express the feelings of many country people of her generation: 'I wish things could be arranged that my husband and I could have a farm after the war'. Unfortunately this was not to be.

ALUN HOWKINS
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Elsewhere and General

DALE SERJEANTSON and DAVID FIELD, *Animals in the Neolithic of Britain and Europe* (Oxbow Books, 2006). xii + 178 pp. £28.

Animals were of central importance in the lives of Neolithic people in Europe and Britain (from the seventh millennium cal BC in Greece, and from the fourth millennium cal BC in Britain). They were staples of subsistence, means of exchange, sources of wealth and standing, both as living stock and meat to be distributed in feasts, and potent symbols, both in themselves and by association with human identities; they were good to think as well as good to eat. But was their significance the same everywhere? Did people rely on animals in different ways in different places and at different times? Can we see pattern in the development of animal use

through time and from region to region? And can we address all dimensions of the importance of animals with equal success using archaeological evidence?

Studies of animals in the Neolithic, and in both earlier and later periods of prehistory, are at a very interesting stage. Specialists maintain their necessary rigorous skills of identification and analysis, but have broadened the scope of their interpretations beyond the purely economic and technical (if they were ever quite so neatly confined), and at the time more prehistorians interested in modelling social and conceptual aspects of past communities have been looking at animal bone data much more closely, especially at their deposition and treatment in varying contexts. This book, another in an established and successful Neolithic Studies Group series, and produced to its usual high standards by Oxbow Books, very nicely illustrates many of these trends. Its range is impressive: geographically from Greece to Britain, and thematically from wolves and dogs (Clark), wild game (Boyle, Zeiler) and animal fodder (Dineley) to the integration of sheep with crop cultivation in lowland Greece (Halstead), evidence for ploughing with cows on a modest scale from an early stage at Knossos on Crete (Isaakidou), patterns of consumption at caves on the Adriatic coast (Miracle), and feasting and symbolism in southern Britain (Serjeantson, Pollard, Field). Diversity is the overall impression, and this is celebrated in the closing paper by Alberella.

There are both possible trends and stubborn questions remaining within this diversity. The use of wild game declines quite rapidly in some contexts, both in the early Neolithic of Greece and that of southern Britain. Halstead argues in passing for this as a clue to an introduced way of life in Greece, more or less sedentary from the outset, while Pollard is inclined to see potential symbolic or conceptual significance in the avoidance of wild game in southern Britain. Boyle, on the other hand, underscores the point that wild game can still be plentiful in later Neolithic assemblages in parts of central and western Europe. The killing and partial dismemberment of an aurochs in a late Neolithic or early Bronze Age context in west London are suggested by Cotton and colleagues to have been done in a consciously archaic manner.

Using the rich data from the settlement mounds of northern Greece, Halstead argues that animals, notably the numerically dominant sheep, were closely integrated with crop cultivation, but played a subsidiary role overall in early Neolithic diet. They may have functioned, within small-scale, intensive subsistence regimes, as sources of manure, grazers of crops in danger of excessive early growth and hence frost damage, and as a flexible alternative to crops when and if those failed, though

normally crops and plants may have provided the major portion of consumed food. Cattle and pigs became more prominent in later stages of the Greek Neolithic. Other contexts provide both comparison and contrast. Using the data from one Croatian cave, Miracle documents how people in the middle Neolithic were concerned with the herding of sheep in spring, culling very young animals to boost milk or cheese production (in the late Neolithic, more cattle and pigs and also game and sub-adult sheep were slaughtered for meat in autumn). Whatever the overall patterns of use in the region, the experience of people, and the associations of the place, changed over time.

In southern Britain, Pollard argues for possible and fluid conceptual distinctions and human associations between wild game (perhaps deliberately avoided on the whole, but regarded as powerful and special), cows (perhaps redolent of the ancestral dead), pigs (sometimes associated with dead males) and sheep (perhaps on occasions associated with routine and even female activities). These suggestions are drawn from broad synthesis of the early Neolithic, whereas Serjeantson presents a long-awaited first detailed study of the animal bones from just one settlement, at Runnymede in the middle Thames valley. It is much harder here to provide models which integrate crop and animal evidence. Though the spectrum of use was probably broad, it is possible that here animals were more important than cereal or dairy products. Most of the meat eaten was from pigs and cattle, especially the latter. Most cattle were fully grown, and their apparently regular or at least recurrent slaughter implies consumption on a collective scale, perhaps in the form of feasts. An important, detailed study of bone fragmentation, however, serves to complicate this straightforward picture. The bones of both cattle and pigs are highly fragmented, which may imply their use in soups and stews rather than in fillets or roasts. Whether this indicates other forms of communal eating is left as an open question.

ALASDAIR WHITTLE
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JOYCE MARCUS and CHARLES STANDISH (eds),
Agricultural strategies (Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California Los Angeles, 2006; distributed by Oxbow Books in the UK). x + 424 pp. 6 tables; 86 figs. £18.

Without doubt, the most troubling aspect of this book is its inappropriate and misleading title. The product of a symposium on water management and agricultural strategies, the book's focus is more on the former than the latter. The book contains little about crop plants, tillage, planting, harvesting, and related aspects and activities

such as calendars and labour. It is almost entirely about water, its management, and the physical and social systems developed for its distribution and utilization. And, were it not published by an archaeological institute named prominently on the cover, one would not quickly realize that it is about prehistory. It does, however, draw on numerous ethnohistoric and ethnographic parallels.

Containing fifteen chapters by some of the best archaeologists working in the field, the book is organized regionally – Middle East, South Asia, Europe, Oceania, Mesoamerica, South America – as well as having an introductory and a discussion chapter. Africa, East Asia, Southeast Asia, and North America apparently did not have any hydraulic societies worthy of inclusion, or, perhaps, they will comprise a future volume. Each chapter has its own list of references, which frugal scholars, especially those with strong regional interests, who prefer to photocopy chapters rather than buy books, will surely appreciate. This format, however, has its drawbacks. There is much duplication in citations, but more problematic than an increased page length is the lack of consistency in regard to subtitles. For example, Ester Boserup's 1965 book, *The conditions of agricultural growth*, is cited in six chapters, only two of which include the all-important subtitle – *The economics of agrarian change under population pressure*. And, this oversight is more than simply one of copy-editing. All too often, indeed nearly always, archaeologists focus on the shortcomings of population pressure as an explanation, and forget that Boserup was not an anthropologist but an agricultural economist by training and a development consultant by profession, and that the real importance of her work lies in microeconomic theory. Only three of the contributors, Morrison, Kirch and Erickson, seem to understand and appreciate this point, and their chapters are richer for it.

Given the book's sub-continental organization, myopic, parochial, and provincial regional specialists will quickly thumb their way to those two or three chapters that cover their area of interest. This is of course due to archaeology being regionally-rooted rather than topically-focused. The book would be much more important than it is had it been organized thematically. For example, one of the symposium's goals was to develop comprehensive models to explain how water management and agricultural strategies operated over long spans of time (p. 2). Models of sustainability, an issue not even mentioned in the index, based on data synthesized from a number of examples (not case studies) would be a monumental contribution. The same goes for other issues such as localized versus centralized decision-making, and household consumption versus state use.

Although this book is not all that it could be, it is nevertheless a fine volume. Each of the chapters is a major contribution in its own right. For brevity, I will only highlight a few. Robert McC. Adams articulates convincingly that as large as the irrigation system was in Sasanian Mesopotamia, it was actually only one aspect of a complex society that constructed other equally large features with 'top-down' policies. Heather M.-L. Miller provides great insight into the way land ownership and its correlates restricted the hierarchical power of state-level political units. In dealing with medieval Spain, Thomas F. Glick makes an important point by illustrating the difference between the long-held notion of 'variability' and the previously not-considered notion of 'stochasticity' in regards to stream flow and the availability of water for agriculture. Finally, Gary M. Feinman demonstrates that the prehispanic Zapotec had a powerful state even though agriculture in general and irrigation specifically, as well as other aspects of the economy, were situated domestically.

These few examples should illustrate that two themes run through the entire volume, the seminal ideas of Karl Wittfogel, and scale. Much has been written about the former, and doubtless will be for years to come, even though there is probably not much more to be said. The latter, however, is a topic that deserves a great deal of future attention, and this volume might be considered a call-to-arms on this point. There are many nuances to water control and agriculture that have long been overlooked – overshadowed – by previous work that focused on obviously important large features, systems, and issues.

WILLIAM E. DOOLITTLE
University of Texas, Austin

ISABEL ALFONSO (ed.), *The rural history of medieval European societies. Trends and perspectives* (Brepols, 2007). viii + 310 pp. €60.

This is a book which compares the 'national historiographies' (the editor's phrase) concerning the medieval rural histories of several countries or regions across Europe. What I had expected when I began to read the book was a series of useful essays concerning the current state of knowledge about medieval rural societies across Europe and how that knowledge base had formed over recent decades. The illusion of such a consistent approach was quickly dispelled, however, as the content of the various chapters seemed very much determined by the authors' respective expertises and sometimes, it appeared, by their obsessions, to the point that what was actually in a chapter often seemed at odds with its title. For example, the chapter written by Christopher Dyer and Phillipp Schofield about the agrarian history of medieval Britain

was really only about England (there is a single reference to the large or multiple estates in late medieval Wales and Scotland but nothing else Welsh or Scottish in their chapter); Benoît Cursente's on the rural history of medieval France was almost solely concerned with southern France (Cursente almost seemed to consider northern France as being 'done' and thus, by implication no longer interesting); while Julien Demade's somewhat polemical (but fascinating) chapter on the medieval countryside in German-language historiography seemed mostly concerned with the contention that Third Reich interests and agenda, particularly over the issue of 'domination', have continued an eerie march of the undead through post-war German historiography.

None of the above is meant as severe criticism of this volume. Although the content and perspectives of the various chapters may strike readers as uneven and at times eccentric, there is certainly much to be learned from this book. The chapter by Dyer and Schofield mentioned above did conform most to my preconception of what the book would contain, especially in providing an informative and very valuable overview of recent work on medieval *English* society from the Anglo-Saxon period to the sixteenth century. The chapters on Spanish (by José Ángel García de Cortázar and Pascual Martínez Sopena) and Italian medieval rural society (by Luigi Provero), two historiographies which lagged behind other countries in Europe, show how much was owed to neighbouring countries, especially France. Pierre Toubert's *encastellamento* thesis, for instance, stressing the importance of fortification to rural social development, was important to both Spanish and Italian scholars in developing their views about their respective rural societies during the middle ages. The vibrancy of the new work on medieval rural society is also strongly featured in the volume, particularly in Cursente's chapter on southern France, where the footnotes bristle with references to new PhD theses, while the recent flurry of academic meetings and conferences in facilitating new information and views about medieval rural society is strikingly displayed in García de Cortázar and Martínez Sopena's chapter on Spain.

Perhaps, though, the volume is more important for what it says about how these historiographies were formed than about the information and metanarratives contained within them. Outside influences clearly shaped some historiographies (notably that of Spain's) more than others (English historiography has long been relatively insulated from outside influence, with perhaps the exception of the great French historians, Marc Bloch and Georges Duby). As mentioned above, the Demade chapter takes an admittedly controversial position, but nonetheless brings to our attention the

importance of the national and political context in the creation of these historiographies. One spinoff from this that surprised this reviewer was how consensus often seemed most forcefully expressed when actual information was most lacking. This comes through strongly in Piotr Górecki's excellent chapter on medieval peasants in Polish historiography, especially in the way that the rise of the Piast ducal power during the tenth and eleventh century has been seen to colour virtually all issues of the age, including that of rural society. There is almost a waiting for Godot quality here, as academics discuss various elaborations, all from the same scant evidential base, in expectation of the next seam of information (from wherever!) or perhaps the next great person's thoughts, before the field can move on to a fundamentally different view. In such intellectual environments, more emotionally charged elements about medieval rural societies can easily take hold, such as the heroic (if futile, according to Malthusian precepts) and surprisingly technically-oriented struggle for improvement in physical well-being, the clash between lords and peasants, the spirit of the 'frontier' (and its reaction, as in the ambivalence concerning Germanic settlement of the east, particularly prevalent in Polish historiography). The marked degree to which the emotional quotient subsides when considering early modern rural societies in western Europe, yet continues with arguably renewed vigour for this later period in eastern Europe (as perhaps most forcefully expressed in the Brenner debate of the late 1970s and early 1980s, to which curiously only the Dyer/Schofield chapter refers) signifies a major geographical fault line between eastern and western Europe in the consideration of their medieval and early modern rural societies. Nor has this fault line been driven solely by the 'facts', but also according to the emotional and political considerations existing within the various parts of Europe that have always had a much more important impact on history than the discipline likes to admit. Although this volume never articulates this in such a pointed way (Demade comes closest, as does Alfonso in her somewhat bemused introductory remarks concerning the directions that the various chapters took – like herding cats), the sheer unpredictability of how societies come to view and shape their histories is abundantly clear and forms a large part of the charm of this volume.

JOHN LANGDON
University of Alberta

PERRINE MANE, *Le travail à la campagne au moyen âge. Étude iconographique* (Editions Picard, 2006). 471 pp. €70.

Perrine Mane's book is a study of medieval agrarian techniques as represented in the iconographical evidence, and is the outcome of more than twenty years of work. Its intended audience is archaeologists and historians interested in tools and farming techniques. The book focuses on the study of the *realia* represented in iconography, and how it compares with the evidence of contemporary textual sources and archaeological findings, rather than on the iconographical material for its own sake.

The documentation involved is huge. Perrine Mane's study is based on more than 15,000 images ranging from the ninth century to the beginning of the sixteenth and covering a large part of western Europe, including France, England, Germany, Bohemia, Italy and Spain. The author surveys sculptures and paintings on monuments, tapestries, ivory carvings, seals, enamels, and, above all, illuminations and engravings illustrating a great variety of books from the Bible to medieval agricultural treatises, medieval encyclopaedias, medieval herbaries and bestiaries, armorials, astrological treatises showing the effects of planets on everyday rural life, and medieval legal sources dealing with agrarian practice. Due to the lack of historical sensitivity on the part of medieval iconographers, illuminations found in medieval copies of Roman books (such as Columella's or Palladius's agricultural treatises or Virgil's poetry) show peasants dressed in medieval garments and using contemporary tools.

Perrine Mane's book is in three parts. The first deals with the sources, and the problem of determining the date and origin of the images. The second part, which covers the production of crops, is divided into three chapters: the successive stages of cereal cultivation from ploughing to conservation of the crop; viticulture and winemaking; and more specialist crops such as Leguminosae, textile plants, herbaries and garden plants, fruit cultivation, tree felling and coppicing. The author draws on textual sources to cover important stages in agriculture's production chain (manuring the fields for example) which are usually missing in the iconographical record.

The third part is devoted to domestic animals and wildlife. The first chapter deals with sources of animal fodder including meadows and the use of scythes to mow hay crops, the second with animal husbandry (cattle, horses, donkeys and mules, pigs, sheep, goats, poultry, and bee-keeping), and the third with hunting and fishing.

Iconographical sources give us a unique opportunity

to understand better not just the materials of past agricultural practice but their mode of use. Their drawback is a lack of specificity with respect to place and time. Perrine Mane relies on the evidence of calendars to substantiate her argument that this iconographical material to some extent reflected local practices. Harvesting was usually represented in July in France, but in June in Italy and Spain, and in August in England and Flanders. This shows a degree of sensitivity to local conditions. Regional variations appear to be captured for some of the techniques represented, such as ploughing, threshing, the slaughtering of pigs, and the form of bee-hives.

Perrine Mane's book provides a comprehensive picture of medieval farming practices and peasant life, largely on the evidence of iconography but also drawing extensively on medieval agricultural treatises and other sources. A forty-page bibliography gives a wealth of references to recent publications – mainly in French. The subject index is most welcome, and will prove very useful for historians and archaeologists looking for information on specific tools, domestic animals or farming techniques.

ELISABETH ZADORA-RIO
CNRS, Tours

WERNER TROSSBACH and CLEMENS ZIMMERMANN, *Die Geschichte des Dorfes. Von den Anfängen im Frankenreich bis zur bundesdeutschen Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: UTB/Verlag Eugen Ulmer, 2006), 336 pp. 12 tables; 43 figs and illus. €39.90.

This is one of the most ambitious works to have appeared in European agrarian history in recent times, a history of Germany's rural communities over a period of fifteen centuries. Such a labour is beyond the scope of a single scholar, and the writing is shared between two of Germany's more active agrarian historians, with Werner Trossbach covering the period up until 1800, and Clemens Zimmermann the last two centuries; a temporal break that also roughly divides the book in half. The book provides an almost exhaustive and impressive synthesis of recent work on the authors' main themes and provides an essential guide to German agrarian history. It should be a recommended first port of call for anyone wishing to work in this area.

Why a history of the 'village', rather than a history of rural society more generally? What the volume really offers is a history of rural farming *communities*, and the focus of the work is firmly on the quality of interaction among villagers, and between villagers and outsiders. Great weight is placed upon rural social structures, and forms of communication, especially in more recent times the development of 'new' media such as the cinema. This social history has strong economic

roots as control over, and dissemination of property is presented as the key to the social order and attendant kin relations. This reflects recent trends in German agrarian history that have provided a wealth of detail on property-holding and, especially for the period since the eighteenth century, anthropologically-influenced studies of village life; a literature much richer than that available on the same themes for Britain. This methodological and thematic emphasis means, however, that areas prominent in recent British rural history receive less attention here: the practice and achievements of agriculture itself, lordly culture and practices, manorial organization, and material culture.

The book proposes eight main chronological periods. The establishment of lordly controls over the land and serfdom between 750 and 1150; settlement expansion and the formation of village 'communes' (*Gemeinden*) between 1150 and 1350; a time of settlement 'stabilization and differentiation' lasting up until the Thirty Years War (1618–48); the time of the well-studied pre-industrial village 'on the threshold of modernity' between 1650 and 1800; developments between 1800 and 1880; an age of increasing penetration of the village by outside influences, and new forms of social organization such as voluntary associations between c.1880 and 1933; the Nazi period; and the age of most rapid change from 1949 on. Of these, it is the late medieval and early modern that receive the greatest weight, for it is argued that much of Germany's economic geography and forms of communal life were essentially laid down quite early in this period and consolidated as time went on. Indeed, while the authors, in line with recent studies, are keen to stress the continually-evolving lines of tension in village life, change and social polarization occurred at a slow, drawn-out pace. Only after 1880 did the institutional and social lines of village life begin to shift more rapidly.

The authors view the long-term history of village life as characterized by tensions between a hierarchical order, exemplified at an early date by lordship, but later by oligarchies of powerful property-holders increasingly integrated into the functions of the state; and a more egalitarian, corporative principle largely expressed between property-holders and reaching a highpoint in the Peasants' War of 1525, but that re-merged in various forms, including southern German liberalism, during the revolutions of 1848. This argument of a *longue durée* of rural politics that continued to exercise strong influence in the twentieth century, along with the longevity of rural institutions, should present British readers with a striking point for comparison. Is the apparent absence of anything equivalent 'on the island' the result of different property and institutional structures, or simply the absence of research? The authors are also drawn to the

conclusion that the level of rural support achieved by the Nazis in 1933 was not the culmination of long-term developments, but a rather more contingent event responding to the agricultural crisis of the preceding years and to some extent a generational revolution among rural powerbrokers.

However, the deepest shifts in village life belong to the period after 1949, with the consolidation of large-scale, technology-driven farming, and the shrinking of the agricultural workforce to a small minority within the countryside – patterns that have tended to reinforce the importance of the family in farm organization and as a focus of collective life, as ties with other groups have weakened. These trends appear similar in both of the post-war German republics, although deliberate management in favour of rural continuity characterized the east more than the west, with collective farm organizations providing substitutes for the village's older forms of sociability. The village as settlement, of course, endures, and may even be undergoing a revival. However, it is hard to see how the particular qualities of a *community* orientated around these settlements, the core matter of this excellent book, will be resuscitated in the new century.

PAUL WARDE

University of East Anglia

ROSA CONGOST, *Tierra, leyes, historia. Estudios sobre 'la gran obra de la propiedad'* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2007). 347 pp. €23.50.

According to Rosa Congost, we should all be suspicious of writings on landed property. Many scholars, she argues, assume an excessively linear view of history, whilst others are guilty of adopting a 'statist' or 'legalistic' notion of property, regarding as 'property rights' only those rights which a country's legislators agreed to enshrine in laws. Her deliberately provocative new book starts with the proposition that property relations – being social relations – must be observed from a plurality of angles. In addition, their study has to be based on the hypothesis of their mutability, irrespective of legal principles and institutional frameworks. Before undertaking this type of analysis, historians must free themselves from nominal conceptions of property which are either too abstract or too rigid. Above all, they should examine, with as open a mind as possible, the real conditions determining, in each society, the conformation and materialization of property rights. Moreover, a comparative perspective is indispensable to such an approach. In Congost's opinion, the expression 'property rights' is always preferable to the term 'property'. The question 'who has the property rights?' offers a far wider perspective and allows us to convey much

more complex realities than the simple question 'who is the owner?'

Rosa Congost's book is divided into three parts. While part one tackles the subject of property rights from a theoretical viewpoint, in parts two and three she aims to back up her arguments by focusing on a number of concrete problems. In so doing, she is able to draw on a lifetime's experience of archival research on the agrarian history of Girona in the north-eastern corner of Spain, which she describes as 'a rich laboratory that allows us to go from case study to theory' and vice-versa. One aspect of working on this Catalan province (in contrast to England or France) is that it does not fit neatly into models of historical development that have dominated historiography north of the Pyrenees. She is critical of the contribution of Douglass North and the New Institutional Economics school which turned England into a paradise of 'secure property rights'. Nor does she display a high regard for interpretations based on the idea of property 'engraved in the Napoleonic code' or which assert that the key historical process was the French Revolution of 1789. On the one hand, Catalonia did not enjoy the same level of economic growth as England. On the other, unlike in France, Spain's nineteenth-century liberal revolution did not suppress seigniorial rights. In a nutshell, Catalonia exemplifies 'the slow agony of seigniorial rights both *before* and *after* the liberal revolution'.

Spanish historiography, Congost tells us, was inspired by ideal models of development constructed from the historical realities of France and England. France was seen as the perfect model, liberated from the burden of feudal dues. For its part, the English model embodied the triumph of 'individual' property and the economic superiority of large estates. In general, Spain's liberal revolution was conceived of as a juridical-legal revolution, based more or less on the French model. Meanwhile, its success or failure has usually been measured in terms of the development of agrarian capitalism *a la inglesa*. Even so, Spanish liberal laws were very different to their French counterparts. Not least, they did not completely suppress seigniorial rights. In regions like Catalonia and Galicia, divided property existed in the eighteenth century, as did the predominance of peasant exploitation, while large estates were a feature of southern Spain since the Reconquest. Yet few scholars contend that Andalusia or Extremadura were model regions. In Congost's opinion, the function of the liberal state – in both France and Spain – was essentially the same, viz. to ensure and protect property rights. The principal difference between the two countries was that the French revolution led to the suppression (without indemnity) of a class of rights which Spanish liberal governments dedicated themselves

to defend. Indeed, the aim of Spain's liberal revolution was to put an end to the revolutionary process *a la francesa*.

Rosa Congost's mature reflections on property and property rights in contemporary Europe, especially in Spain and Catalonia, are the product of meticulous archival research, a fertile imagination, and a clear and concise writing style. A particular virtue of her path-breaking new book is how her detailed knowledge of the Spanish case is used to expose theoretical weaknesses in more general interpretations of the development of agrarian capitalism.

JOSEPH HARRISON
University of Manchester

JORDI PLANAS I MARESMA, *Els propietaris i l'associacionisme agrari a Catalunya, 1890–1936* (Girona: Universitat de Girona, Documenta Universitaria, 2006). 322 pp. No price given.

The nineteenth century was a time of great prosperity for Catalan agriculture. This region of north-eastern Spain witnessed not only a significant increase in the total surface area under the plough, following the disentailing of church and common lands, but also a much more intensive use of the soil. Farmers tended to specialize in the most profitable crops, partly directed towards lucrative export markets, prominent among them the vine. Along with many other regions of western Europe, the good times came to a dramatic halt in the last two decades of the century when the ubiquitous 'agricultural depression' made its appearance. Fortunately for Catalonia, thanks to its growing specialization in viticulture, the initial impact of the crisis there was felt later than elsewhere in Spain. Significantly, the destruction of French vineyards following the outbreak of the phylloxera virus heralded a boom in wine sales to the neighbouring country. By the late 1880s, however, the disease had spread across the Pyrenees frontier, whilst in the 1890s the French authorities imposed a ban on imports of foreign wine.

As Jordi Planas recounts in this revised version of his doctoral thesis, the first reaction of Catalan farmers to their own variant of the agricultural depression was mainly defensive. Spanish governments were urged to introduce higher tariff barriers, whilst farmers also protested against the level of taxation. Even so, in recognition that such measures could at best provide only temporary relief for the long-term structural problems of regional agriculture, farming organizations throughout Catalonia played an active role in lobbying the politicians in Madrid for the establishment of agronomical stations and agricultural colleges, together with the promotion of cooperatives and rural credit. At the forefront of the campaign to encourage improved techniques and

increase productivity on the land was the venerable Institut Agrícola Català de Sant Isidre (IACSI), the most important association of landowners in late-nineteenth-century Spain. This elitist body had been founded in Barcelona in 1851. Although IACSI clearly lacked the organizational capacities of its north European counterparts, such as the Belgian Broerbond or the Bund der Landwirte in Germany, it endeavoured to mobilize rural society, at both local and national levels, against a general background of mounting social conflict in the countryside, the diffusion of revolutionary ideas, and the rise of class-based peasant unions. In Planas's opinion, one of the main reasons why the ruling classes of rural Catalonia embarked on this high-risk attempt to strengthen vertical solidarity was to stave off their own economic and social decline. Indeed, such an argument fits in nicely with the doomed inter-class strategy adopted by the right-wing nationalists of the Catalanist Lliga Regionalista – with whom many (although not all) of IACSI's leadership were connected – over the same period. Before long, however, in the face of peasant violence during the so-called Bolshevik triennium of 1918–20, and again during the ill-fated Second Republic (1931–36), Catalonia's large landowners abandoned any idea of class collaboration, redirecting their efforts instead towards a backs-to-the-wall defence of private property.

Planas's well written and detailed study builds on earlier accounts on the problems of the Catalan countryside in the early twentieth century by, among others, Emili Giralt, Albert Balcells, Ramon Garrabou and, more recently, Montserrat Caminal and Klaus-Jürgen Nagel. With its excellent appendices, it will be an important source of reference for both political and agricultural historians.

JOSEPH HARRISON
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OSVALDO FAILLA and GIANPIERO FUMI (eds), *Gli agronomi in Lombardia: dalle cattedre ambulanti ad oggi* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2006). 431 pp. €38.

Itinerant instructors (literally 'itinerant chairs') of agriculture began their activities in 1895 in Lombardy and provided practical and theoretical instruction to farmers directly in their farmyards. This turned out to be the most effective approach to the modernization of north Italian agriculture during the period from the late nineteenth-century agrarian crisis up to and beyond the First World War. This volume collects papers on the subject given at two conferences held in November 2003 at the Museo Lombardo di Storia dell'agricoltura at San Angelo Lodigiano and at the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Milan. Although agricultural institutes were established in the 1830s and 1840s in Tuscany, Lombardy

and Piedmont (see G. Biagioli and R. Pazzagli (eds), *Agricoltura come manifattura. Istruzione agraria, professionalizzazione e sviluppo agricolo nell'Ottocento* (2 vols, Florence: Olschki, 2004), the vast majority of farmers did not receive formal instruction, nor had the farming community access to up-to-date technical information. Modern innovations, such as chemicals and implements, were not available to most. The *Comizi agrari*, agricultural meetings established in 1866 to provide provincial centres of innovation throughout Italy, proved to lack direct communication with farmers. But the itinerant chairs in agriculture were more successful.

Between 1895 and 1927 thirteen teaching posts were established in the Lombard provinces. At first they were privately sponsored and locally funded, but in 1901 and 1902 a number of public institutions – the Ministry of Agriculture, the Chambers of Commerce of the major cities, the Farmers' Association of Lombardy and others – came together to organize a communication network with local farmers and provide the chairs with regular funds.

Agriculture in Lombardy was varied. In the Alps, cattle prevailed, partly fed on locally-grown maize, while in the hill region maize fed the labouring classes, and wheat, vines and silk were cash crops. On the plain, wheat and water meadows were the major sources of income. The insects *Phylloxera vastatrix* and *Diaspis pentagona* had had devastating effects in the vineyards and mulberry groves respectively, and the teachings of the itinerant instructors pointed to alternative sources of income. Close personal contact between agricultural experts and farmers provided a direct channel of communication that enabled diffusion of technical improvements. In the Alpine valleys and the hills of Lombardy, areas under maize were reduced and substituted with such fodder crops as clover and lucerne, which supported cattle in larger numbers and those better fed. Although clover and lucerne cultivation had been practised in the same region since the 1550s, it had had a limited diffusion because of institutional barriers (see M. Ambrosoli, *The wild and the sown. Botany and agriculture in western Europe, 1350–1850*, 1997). Old ploughs were replaced by modern ones, while selected wheat, rice and maize seeds increased crop yields per hectare. Larger areas under forage crops and the use of silage, linseed and oilcakes raised the number of horses and cattle in the region. Improved stallions and bulls were imported from Belgium, England and Switzerland and breeding stations were established.

Then, experts turned their attention to milk production. Hygiene was poor in the dairies although cleanliness had been advocated since the early 1800s. Meadow acreages increased as the crisis of the silk industry

proved irreversible and mulberry trees were uprooted. Milk production rose everywhere, with the provinces of Lodi, Cremona and Mantua increasingly favouring a Parmesan type of cheese as the main product of their dairies. It appears that the many authors have forgotten that the *grana* cheese known throughout the world as 'Parmesan' was once more justly called 'Lodigiano' (cheese from Lodi). The wholesalers of Lodi used to collect, store and market the cheeses produced from a large region of pastures and meadows along both sides of the Po. Particularly relevant is the contribution by Arrigo Caleffi on the province of Mantua (pp. 169–240). Here, the itinerant chair operated between 1895 and 1935 before these duties were subsumed by the provincial agricultural authority. In 1896 the members of Mantua's association organised a programme of rural conferences covering manuring of arable and meadows, mulberry cultivation and silkworms, viticulture, the conduct of field trials of crops, and co-operation. Although between 1886 and 1887 phosphates had been distributed to local farmers and in 1902 the local production of nitrates began, the major source of progress came from lucerne cultivation. *Luzernières* sustained agricultural growth in every sector, and along with beet provided fodder for cattle that more than doubled in number between 1881 and 1914. The growing national and international market for Parmesan cheese allowed local dairies to pay farmers a fair price for their milk, while US legislation on food purity in 1909 stimulated improvements in *grana* cheese processing. This upward trend was sustained between the two wars. A similar story is told by Gianpiero Fumi on the province of Cremona (pp. 87–128).

It is impossible to do justice to the many contributions, all rich in data and local information about crops and individuals (e.g. pp. 294–304 on Bergamo, and Gaetano Forni on the history of the agronomist as a professional). The contribution by Osvaldo Failla on fruit tree cultivation as contributor to the modernization of Lombard agriculture (pp. 365–83) is also noteworthy.

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K. LYNNGAARD, *The Common Agricultural Policy and organic farming: an institutional perspective on continuity and change* (CABI Publishing, 2006). 224 pp. 12 tables. £49.95

The central problem in writing the history of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union (EU) is to explain change: how can one simultaneously account for the absence of significant change over many years and its presence in the long run? Numerous reasons have been suggested for both. Resistance to change has been explained by the political power of the farm

lobby at a national and EU level, the particular national policies of France and Germany, the difficulty faced by non-specialists in understanding technically-complex policy mechanisms, and the perception of agriculture as something special. Conversely, budget crises, international trade negotiations, EU enlargement and the increasing ability of outsiders to penetrate the formerly closed circuit of agricultural policy negotiators have all been advanced as reasons for change. Political scientists as well as those whose incomes depend on it have therefore both been interested in finding some unified theory to account for the evolution of the CAP in the past and to predict what might occur in the future, and it is with this research that this book is concerned.

Lynggaard argues that all CAP change is determined by what happens in the relevant institutions of the EU, such as the Directorate-General for Agriculture, the European Commission as a whole, the various European pressure groups, the Special Committee for Agriculture, the Agriculture Council, and the European Parliament. He identifies three strands – rational choice, historical, and sociological – in previous attempts to explain changes in CAP institutions, and claims that they all have limitations of one kind or another, often being better at explaining the lack of change than its occurrence. Therefore, he suggests, a new approach is required: the discursive institutional approach. Institutions are 'bits of discourse, which have obtained some degree of authority and been linked to sanctions' (p. 59). In turn, discourses are based on ideas. Meanings, and conflicts over meanings, appear when ideas are articulated into discourse, so change occurs when new ideas are turned into discourse and discourses attain some degree of authority within institutions. The discursive institutional approach thus suggests that ideas only attain meaning within an institutional and discursive context, and both institutions and discourses can change over time (p. 58). This implies an analytical strategy based on the study of texts. Institutional change can be identified by tracing the progress of ideas from less authoritative to more authoritative texts, with EU Regulations being the most authoritative texts of all.

Having set out this methodology in the first three chapters, Lynggaard then applies it to a case study: the incorporation of a policy on organic farming into the CAP. He points out that initial attempts at CAP reform took no account of environmental issues. It was the development of alternative ideas between 1978 and 1985, together with the existence of a CAP funding crisis in the early 1980s, that produced the Environmentally Sensitive Areas policy, which Lynggaard identifies as the first CAP policy involving environmental concern. It was from this point that organic farming began to be seen as

a potential solution to CAP problems, or, at least, some of them, and he then goes on to trace the development of organic farming policy in the EU and various member states up to 2005.

This is not a book on organic farming. The term does not appear in the index, and the first significant discussion of organic farming does not appear until page 99. Nor is it intended to be. Organic farming is simply used as a case study to explore the virtues and limitations of a different way of explaining change in the CAP. Lynggaard himself concludes that his study creates more questions than answers. One simple – perhaps over simple – way of describing the discursive institutional approach is that it involves thinking in detail about the meaning and purpose of what individuals and institutions say and do. If this is the case, it is surely no more than the approach always used by historians. On the other hand, it may be argued that model-building economists and political scientists have tended to simplify away some of the detail

that Lynggaard argues is important. Equally, his conclusions on what produces CAP change are a mixture of the traditional (change follows crisis) and the less expected (the European Parliament Environment Committee was influential in getting organic farming incorporated into the CAP).

This is not a book to be read for pleasure, because the style, especially in the theoretical chapters, is convoluted to the verges of incomprehensibility. But it asks some interesting questions about the boundaries between political analysis and history, and the methodologies it discusses are by no means irrelevant to changes in other circumstances and periods. Hitherto the history of the CAP has been largely neglected by agricultural (although not political) historians. As they begin to consider it, they will find much in this book to make them think about the various ways of approaching their work.

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