

Book Reviews

Great Britain and Ireland

BRUCE M. S. CAMPBELL, *Land and people in medieval England* (Ashgate Variorum Collected Studies series, 2009). xxii + 320 pp. £70.

This is the third volume of a trilogy of collections of essays in which Professor Campbell gathers together many of his significant contributions to our understanding of medieval England. The earlier volumes looked specifically at agricultural innovation and at fields and farming systems, but the present volume is no less firmly rooted in agricultural history. In the author's own words, it is concerned with 'the numbers, types, and conditions of people in late-medieval England and the relationships of those people with both each other and the land'. It contains only eight essays, some of them much longer than normal article length; among them is Campbell's 70-page seminal analysis, from 2005, of the early fourteenth-century agrarian problem.

Within this broad field, the essays cover an impressive range of topics. Given the extent and depth of Campbell's knowledge of medieval Norfolk, the detailed studies of population and the land market at Coltishall and of the complex manorial structure at Hevingham come as no surprise, and Norfolk evidence is brought to bear in other contexts too. But another article discusses, no less knowledgeably, the Winchester pipe rolls and there is a particularly thought-provoking study of the contrast between north and south in medieval England. The three other essays are more in the nature of general surveys, but always firmly based on the evidence of specific documents and places.

In the introduction, Campbell refers to earlier economic historians whose work was 'unencumbered by an excess of detailed empirical information'. No one could say this of his own work – which is not to say that it is overweighted with evidence, all trees and no wood. On the contrary, the evidence is brought to bear on general issues with impressive effect. One of Campbell's strengths is his use of numerical analysis;

another is his undaunted capacity for sheer slogging. We see both in his account of 4090 Inquisitions Post Mortem and in the new and interesting light they throw on lords' revenues: the relative importance of tenants' rents and their services, free and customary, in the first half of the fourteenth century and the way this varied from one part of the country to another. Where evidence is defective – as in the gaps in the series of manorial court rolls at Coltishall – computer-based statistical methods are used to get round the difficulty. Campbell is well aware of current technology and much of the work in the book demonstrates how the computer has opened up a whole new approach to the relevant records. There is still a place for the detailed case study, but we are now for the first time in a position to test it against a much broader body of evidence, the total picture, to discover what is typical, what is unusual in a particular area or region.

Campbell no less properly points the way forward to work that needs doing, areas where we have more to learn. One is a corollary to his comparison of north and south in medieval England: 'Research into social and economic relationships and developments in the remoter, less congested, less urbanized, and more pastoral northern and western parts of the realm (and beyond in Wales, Scotland, and Ireland) has lagged far behind' – though the pioneer work of Dr Angus Winchester and others is beginning to set this right. Another is the need for more work on free tenants, still an under-researched area despite all that has been done since F. M. Powicke first drew attention to them in 1938.

Most readers of the trilogy of essays will already be familiar with some or much of the contents. But it is invaluable to have them brought together in this way. They are coherent, interesting and easy to read. And they remind us how much we owe Campbell for our expanding and deepening knowledge of the English medieval countryside. They are an important contribution to this knowledge.

P. D. A. HARVEY
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JOHN BARRATT and NICOLA BANNISTER, *The archaeology of a great estate: Chatsworth and beyond* (Windgather Press, 2009). xiv + 218 pp., 93 figs. £20.

Most of the historic landscape surveys commissioned by English Heritage, its Scottish and Welsh counterparts, or by private landowners remain as typescript reports with limited circulation. They are working documents intended, firstly, to record the surviving historic features and, secondly, to provide agreed methods of management to ensure the preservation of the archaeological remains. The Chatsworth survey has broken free from the confines of this type of document, and the series of commissioned studies of the landscape archaeology of the estate around the great house have been re-cast as a book for a wider audience. In fact, it is the second such book; the earlier one examined the features of the park and gardens. These books are aimed at the reader who might want to investigate in detail the local landscape and understand how it reached its present form.

The area of the survey was defined by the current Chatsworth estate, but it is a broad swathe of Derbyshire landscape, measuring some 35 square kilometres, and provides a cross-section of the Peak District. It takes in the better land of the Derwent valley and the upland heather moors to the east. The ephemeral prehistoric remains have survived in the uplands alone: elsewhere they have been removed by subsequent agriculture. The Bronze Age fields on the moors are often poorly defined, sometimes marked only by cleared stone in otherwise stony ground. These uplands reverted to open moorland in the late Iron Age and Roman periods because of the deteriorating climate. Evidence for contemporary agriculture in the Derwent valley is slight, as it has been erased by later activity. A clearer picture only emerges again in the late medieval period. The ridge and furrow of the open fields has been preserved within the later parkland around Chatsworth, where there is particularly fine survival of the landscape. In each township there was a village or hamlet, usually of irregular form, set in the middle of its open fields. In areas of the poorer soil there were holdings in severalty, sometimes associated with isolated farmsteads. Harewood Grange is one of these, and is defined by a boundary earthwork on one side and moorland on the others. Medieval charters indicate that it had rights of grazing on the adjoining wastes on Harland Edge. A surviving medieval cross base on Beeley Warren might mark the boundary of the monks' holding.

The present-day landscape is largely the result of the work undertaken since William Cavendish purchased

the Old Hall at Chatsworth and the associated land in 1549. The estate was progressively extended during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the largest addition was made through an exchange of land with the Duke of Rutland in 1823–5. It is not possible to make a sharp distinction between the parkland around the house and the surrounding farmland. The entire landscape around an eighteenth-century great house was modelled to provide gardens and vistas stretching far beyond, and in the nineteenth century, aristocratic influence extended to the creation of estate landscapes proclaiming wider ownership. At Chatsworth this is seen in the extension of the gardens and the diversion of the coach road in the early eighteenth century. In the 1760s the park was remodelled by Capability Brown and again from 1826 onwards under Joseph Paxton. The buildings of the village of Edensor at the gates of the park were reconstructed or altered in the 1830s and 1840s to create a model estate village.

This sequence of landscape development is repeated around numerous great houses across England. Chatsworth is by no means unique. The strength and the limitation of this volume is that it is a detailed study of one place. It does not seek to set the history of the estate landscape into a wider context and is essentially descriptive rather than analytical. It is clearly aimed at the visitor to Chatsworth and has an excellent chapter describing and illustrating the historic features to be seen along a series of walks through the park and estate. Agricultural historians may quarry this volume for examples of features found elsewhere, but the limited use of the estate archives and the emphasis on the visible landscape suggest that it has not been written with that audience in mind.

MARK GARDINER
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GLENN FOARD, DAVID HALL and TRACEY PARTIDA, *Rockingham Forest. An atlas of the medieval and early-modern landscape* (Northamptonshire Record Society 44, 2009). 312 pp., 46 figs. £20 excl. p. & p.

This attractive new historical atlas covers some 221 square miles of northern Northamptonshire, encompassing the entirety of the royal Forest of Rockingham as defined in the late thirteenth century, as well as additional historically wooded areas to its south. It is an area with huge potential as a testing ground for theories about historic landscape evolution – a zone firmly within 'village England', but heavily wooded until the later medieval period, with open fields surviving until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and excellent conditions for earthwork preservation.

This is an eye-catching, colourful, large-format volume that will be valued for its superb visual material as much as its textual content. The mapping that forms the centrepiece of the volume is derived from methodical field surveys and scrutiny of available documentary sources, combined with systematic use of Ordnance Survey mapping and earlier cartographic sources. The work builds on David Hall's meticulous mapping of open fields in the 1960s, enhanced by the application of Geographical Information System technologies. Following a concise introduction to the area's topography and medieval administrative structure, readers are afforded a useful overview of the Forest and its hunting landscapes and woodland management; the development of the area's open fields and the pattern of enclosure are also summarized. Especially detailed is the section on the origins and character of medieval settlement. Characteristic plan-forms in the region include villages that developed in linear fashion along valley sides (including some notable 'paired' settlements on opposite sides of valleys), and others that grew by infilling broad droving routes. The authors like to see manorial sites and churches inserted into settlements at the same time as Saxon estates were fragmenting, although in most cases direct evidence for the dating of village origins is tenuous at best. Some of the accompanying historic map extracts are spectacular, and the full-colour production does them justice; in particular, features of the elite landscape, such as parks, lodges, castles and mansions, leap out at the reader.

Maps for three different periods (c.1300, c.1700 and the 1880s) are spread over many pages and form the core of the volume; the first two map types are in full colour and the last takes the form of compiled black and white OS sheets. With this quality of mapping it can only be wondered how a nasty grainy image found its way on to the front cover. That large chunks of the entire data set are available online (at <http://www.rockingham-forest-trust.org.uk/>) poses interesting questions about publication in the traditional form of an historic atlas. Digital technologies, affording the user the ability not only to pan across and zoom into seamless maps, but also to overlay different sources, means that some might question whether traditional publication is, indeed, the ideal medium for a data set of this sort. At the end of the volume a handy gazetteer is ordered by township, and serves well to bring up to date earlier work published in the 1970s by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England.

It is refreshing to be able to avoid the customary quibble about the price of such an elegantly produced

volume: at £20 it represents exceptional value for money. Overall, the level to which diverse data sources are integrated and analysed is remarkable and the entire exercise is a model that deserves future application to other contexts.

OLIVER CREIGHTON
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JOHN MULLAN and RICHARD BRITNELL (eds), *Land and family. Trends and local variations in the peasant land market on the Winchester bishopric estates, 1263–1415* (University of Hertfordshire Press, Studies in Regional and Local History 8, 2010). xv + 175 pp., 15 figs., 38 tabs. £18.99.

The Winchester pipe rolls – the series of enrolled accounts of the manors of the Winchester bishopric estate, the earliest of which dates from 1208/9 – offer many riches to the agricultural historian. One is the information they contain on the entry fine, or the money paid by peasant tenant to landlord in the manor court whenever a villein or customary landholding was taken up by a new owner, and on similar fines paid on the marriage of a customary tenant, an occasion which often involved land transfer. These entry and marriage fines and their accompanying details represent a formidable body of evidence for the peasant land market. This book analyses thousands of fines, taking as its start date 1262/3, the year from which a new arrangement of the relevant entries in the sources permits systematic analysis. Collectively, the fines provide a rich picture of the inheritance, sale, and leasing of peasant tenements on well over 50 manors scattered across seven southern English counties.

The volume is the culmination of two major research projects that ran between 1996 and 2003. Mullan has published some project results in previous chapters and articles, and Mark Page, who undertook the original data collection on the period to 1349, has published others. It is only with the appearance of the present book, however, that one can begin to appreciate the sheer quantity of data generated by the projects, as well as the wide range of issues in the study of the peasant land market upon which this information sheds light. The book's detailed findings are set in context through an introductory chapter by Paul Harvey, which surveys previous work in the field.

The eight substantive chapters begin with a discussion (ch. 2) of the conditions on the bishop's estate, which provides the context in which the market in peasant property evolved. The next two chapters describe the units of property transferred, and the tenure by which they were held. While unfragmented standard units (virgates, half virgates etc.) were very important, the

traffic in a range of miscellaneous plots of unvirgated land and of cottages, messuages, and houses is a central theme. Then, in Chapters 5 to 9, the fines are used to trace the major changes in land transfer patterns over the period. There is a special focus on the extent to which transfers took property outside the family and to the degree to which *inter-vivos* rather than *post-mortem* transfer predominated. The book's broader findings are in many respects in line with the existing picture, describing the population losses of the fourteenth century that lead to a breakdown of links between family and property and to the emergence of a genuine market in land, which in turn permitted substantial individual accumulations.

The book does not restrict itself, however, to a broad-brush overview of the whole estate. One of the criticisms often made of the Winchester pipe rolls is that, while they yield unparalleled data, they were created by an exceptional landlord who practised a centralized and conservative estate policy. Mullan and Britnell tackle this issue head on, demonstrating how their evidence reveals variations in the land market – at the manorial and regional level – that have nothing to do with seigneurial directives, but everything to do with local conditions. In this way, they are able, using a number of examples, to show how general trends played out in specific manorial contexts.

The study is also admirably alert to the significant role of subletting. The holdings transferred between peasants represent units of ownership, and not necessarily of cultivation. Holdings could be sublet, but the extent and functioning of this practice is as yet inadequately explored. Mullan and Britnell explore it for the Winchester estate as far as they can. They find, though, that many of the recorded subleases were for lives, and conclude that shorter subletting contracts went unrecorded. Parts of the large, late medieval accumulations of holdings – such as the 100 acres or more scattered across East Meon manor, passed on by Thomas Knoller to his widow Nicola in 1399/1400 – were presumably sublet, as the authors note. However, it is difficult to observe this happening in practice.

All in all, this is an impressive study. Its generalizations about broad patterns are compelling, because they are based on such large quantities of data, while its local case studies enhance our understanding of how specific features, such as inheritance customs or soil quality, could either encourage or hold back traffic in land. It should offer a welcome stimulus to research on the medieval peasant land market.

CHRIS BRIGGS
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SHERRI OLSON, *A mute gospel. The people and culture of the medieval English common fields* (Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2009). ix + 242 pp. \$75.

The 'Toronto School' of medieval historians, established by the late J. A. Raftis in the 1960s and 1970s, specializes in the court roll-based study of Ramsey abbey manors in eastern England. Characterized by the detailed reconstruction of individual families and communities, Sherri Olson's analysis of two Huntingdonshire villages is firmly rooted within that tradition. *A mute gospel* examines several different aspects of rural society and culture, including the extent and uses of peasant literacy, the prosecution of trespass in the manor court, and changing patterns of personal naming. Two distinctive features of the book call for special mention. First, Olson is heavily influenced by modern cultural theory, and analogies are drawn with such varied societies as those of classical Athens and nineteenth-century slave communities in the United States. Secondly, the author does not engage with critics of the Toronto School's methodology and overlooks much recent relevant research, particularly that published by British historians.

The book focuses on the well-documented manors of Ellington and Upwood, both open-field parishes to the south-west of Ramsey. Conveying a sense of place is not Olson's chief concern and she provides no description of these manors, or even a map outlining their distinctive features of landscape and settlement. Reconstruction of the physical landscape is very much secondary to reconstructing the mental landscapes of the inhabitants, though several chapters demonstrate that the two are inextricably intertwined. At Ellington, for example, Olson claims that distinct neighbourhoods (called Coten and Sybethorpe) emerged in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries and entered into local consciousness because they were inhabited by an unusually high proportion of women. The suggestion that some places were distinctively female in the Middle Ages may be true, though difficult to substantiate with any certainty. But it is not tenable, in this case, to argue that the preponderance of women created newly recognizable communities. Nowhere in this book does Olson make clear that, like many other parishes with nucleated villages, Ellington also included some dispersed settlements. Coten and Sybethorpe were hamlets whose separate histories and identities almost certainly long pre-dated their first appearance in the surviving manor court rolls.

Other assertions made by Olson are also unlikely to go unchallenged. In a discussion of the village court as an arena for performance, ritual and storytelling,

an incident of park-breaking in which several villagers 'maliciously' ploughed up land is related to the observance of Plough Monday celebrations, marking the resumption of labour in January after the winter holiday (p. 82). But an alternative explanation of the case, which was heard on 3 December 1299, is that land-hungry tenants attempted to convert a few extra acres to tillage during the winter sowing season. More successful is an interesting chapter on the chronology of trespass, in which Olson argues that, before the Black Death 'the term *transgressio* for landed trespass showed a strong, though not exclusive, tendency to refer to trespass against the lord's landed interests' (p. 161). By contrast, in the post-plague era, trespass was as likely to be committed against neighbours, individuals, and the community. The nature of the offence had also changed, from deliberate acts of damage (to wood, grain, and meadow) before the plague, to a 'new spirit of violation by inaction' thereafter, in which tenants failed to clean ditches, mend hedges, and clear footpaths (p. 170). By the fifteenth century, it is claimed, an atmosphere of lawlessness had arisen, caused by the increasing number of animals in streets that seemed so empty of people.

This is in many ways a disorientating book for British agricultural and social historians. The emphasis on cultural theory, the failure to take account of much relevant historiography, and the lack of topographical context make it difficult for readers to fully engage with the arguments presented and to evaluate the interpretations proposed. By no means is this a bad book, but it stands somewhat apart from the mainstream of current medieval social and economic studies. For that reason its impact, like the countryside it describes, will probably be muted.

MARK PAGE

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CHRISTOPHER DYER and RICHARD JONES (eds), *Deserted villages revisited* (University of Hertfordshire Press, Explorations in Local and Regional History 3, 2010). xix + 207 pp., 40 figs., 6 tabs. £14.99.

This book originated in a 2008 conference to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the study of deserted villages as a field of academic research. Bringing together a number of writers from a variety of academic backgrounds – archaeology, geography and history – the editors have sought to rejuvenate and reinstate the subject as an important and dynamic field of research and one that has much broader implications far beyond settlement studies. It is a timely contribution providing an opportunity for scholars to take stock of research to date and, in the light of recent theoretical and

methodological developments, to question many of the assumptions and myths that have adhered to the subject over the intervening years.

The difficulties of dating and assigning a single cause to settlement desertion, and indeed the extent and nature of abandonment itself, are highlighted in interesting ways in this collection. In an early chapter, Richard Jones addresses the problems inherent in the vocabulary of settlement classification and periodization, which prioritizes 'deserted medieval villages' above other settlement types and phases of abandonment. More than a matter of linguistic nitpicking, inadequate terminology continues to frame, often without consistency, county archaeological databases and thus impacts upon the interpretation and understanding of regional and local patterns of settlement desertion. Thoughts on the problems and possibilities of field work and the interpretation of the remains of deserted sites are offered by Paul Everson and Graham Brown in an engaging account of their field visit to a number of village sites in Leicestershire, equipped with the earthwork plans originally published in an article by W. G. Hoskins in 1956. Their discussion reflects the dissatisfaction with 'comfortable pigeon-holing', welcoming instead inconsistencies and the possibility of change over time. Reflecting upon his work at Wharrah Percy, Stuart Wrathmell similarly urges a more sophisticated analysis of settlement histories beyond simple classifications. In his chapter on the material artefacts recovered from deserted medieval sites, archaeologist David Hinton questions the often-assumed correlation between poverty and abandonment. Finding little difference in the objects found in peasant and high-status households, and little in the way of distinctive regional characteristics of assemblages, he invites reflection upon our modern notions of economic worth tempered by a more sensitive consideration of the cultural and social meanings afforded to material goods.

The question of settlement size and socio-economic viability is a recurring theme. In an essay on upland settlements, Robert Silvester reconsiders the retreat from 'marginal land' hypothesis, prominent twenty years ago. He cautions against equating the cessation of cultivation with abandonment and argues, as do others, that abandonment is complex and unpredictable and cannot be pinned down to a single process. As several contributors point out, the extent and meaning of desertion needs to be carefully contextualized. Many deserted medieval settlement sites were not entirely abandoned, with some continuing to exist well into the eighteenth century. It has long been recognized that settlement size constituted an important factor

in areas dominated by wealthy landowners and yet, as Williamson forcefully argues, the relationship between post-medieval designed landscapes and settlement desertion was complex and not necessarily concurrent. Whereas depopulation and shrinkage once signalled the terminal demise of a community, this volume shows the resilience of settlements, including hamlets, isolated farmsteads and, in Wales, seasonal dwellings.

An important investigative strand of the book deals with the experiences of individual communities and households. The most explicitly theoretical perspective is provided by the archaeologist Sally V. Smith, who offers a spatial reading of late medieval peasant households, highlighting the profound differences in dwelling across a compact geographical area. Christopher Dyer brings new documentary evidence to bear on debates concerning the dating and causes of desertion. Exploring the destabilizing impact of neighbourhood disputes and anti-social behaviour, Dyer moves away from economic and environmental determinants to consider instead the internal disruptions to village life caused by the breakdown of socio-economic relations. The activities of non-elites in bringing about settlement change are also examined by John Broad in his study of abandonment and the 'metamorphosis' of two Buckinghamshire villages in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While acknowledging the role of landlords in bringing about village depopulation, he also highlights the incremental changes brought about by tenant farmers, often newcomers, following the enclosure of common land by agreement and the creation of ring-fenced farms. As well as recognizing the agency of non-elites in transforming settlement patterns, the essays demonstrate how micro-studies of spatial organization, socio-economic relations and underlying cultural shifts can offer valuable insights into patterns of survival, shrinkage and abandonment among broadly comparable economic and physical environments.

Unsurprisingly, important and fundamental shifts have taken place since the mid-twentieth century in the ways settlement sites are surveyed and interpreted yet, as each chapter in turn effectively demonstrates, we still do not fully understand the causes of settlement desertion. The lack of a coherent explanatory model, once accepted within 'deserted medieval village' studies, has been replaced by an inquisitive approach that celebrates complexity and diversity and problematizes the labels and assumptions that have long been attached to the subject. Though the editors set out to raise the profile of deserted settlement studies, the overall value of the volume is

somewhat underplayed in their concluding comments. The issues and questions raised here do indeed resonate far beyond settlement studies, not least among social and environmental historians interested in issues of sustainability, household economies, meanings of place, belonging and the reformation of community identities in the face of change. For its chronological depth, interdisciplinarity, wide-ranging insights, and relentless questioning of prescribed knowledge, this collection is to be highly recommended.

NICOLA WHYTE
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NICOLA WHYTE, *Inhabiting the landscape: place, custom and memory, 1500–1800* (Windgather Press, 2009), ix + 181 pp., 40 figs. £20.

The field of landscape history has long been dominated by a preoccupation with tracing the ways in which the emergence of agrarian capitalism and associated economic processes steadily and inexorably transformed the physical environments occupied by people in the past. Nicola Whyte's important and pioneering book challenges this prevailing paradigm through a close study of the county of Norfolk. It forges a fruitful link between recent theoretical approaches to the landscape as a cultural construct and perspectives and arguments that have been a hallmark of influential work on the social history of early modern England over the last two decades. The result is a monograph that significantly recasts our understanding of both the making of the post-medieval landscape and the spatial dimensions of the formation of social and economic identities and relationships between 1500 and 1800. Through skilful examination of two key sources – cartographical material surviving in local and national archives and records from the central law courts – Whyte is able to reconstruct in revealing detail how the early modern inhabitants of East Anglia perceived, negotiated, and appropriated the material world surrounding them. The keynotes of her analysis are an emphasis on the agency of the populace at large in shaping the rural environment and recognition of the capacity of the landscape to function as a powerful catalyst and stimulus to custom, right, and memory. Reacting against the tendency to regard the landscape as merely a passive backdrop to structural forces that fundamentally altered its use and reconfigured class relations, Whyte paints a picture of the complex interactions and conflicts that occurred between individuals of all social ranks over the spaces and places that they inhabited and traversed.

Chapter two of the book examines the extent to which the Reformation altered the spatial framework

of sixteenth-century spiritual topographies, not merely by eliminating many reminders of the Catholic Church that demarcated the landscape – monasteries, chantries, hermitages, pilgrimage chapels and wayside crosses – but also by re-orienting religious practice more firmly around a reduced number of parish churches. Whyte's findings about Protestantism's 'rationalisation' of the traditional foci of religious and liturgical life are particularly striking and have implications that call for further investigation. Chapter three explores the effects of administrative developments that led to the growing encroachment of the Tudor and Stuart state on local communities, notably through the consolidation of the parish as an instrument of welfare provision and jurisdiction. It also highlights the gradual transformation of Rogationtide perambulations from a religious ritual into a mechanism for demarcating parochial boundaries and articulating rights and responsibilities. In chapter four, Whyte turns to the local 'geographies of custom and right', and shows how enclosure and other changes in land use fostered networks of association that cut across conventional socio-economic divides. In contrast with accounts predicated on a polarity between ambitious and avaricious landowners and subjugated tenants and commoners, she underlines the extent to which enclosure and other changes in land use could result in alliances as well as clashes and tensions. Chapter five assesses how physical landmarks surviving from the past were assimilated into new matrices of belief and action. The 'afterlives' of standing crosses as territorial markers, of saints' days as critical junctures in the agricultural calendar, and of prehistoric barrows as sites for the interment of the deviant dead, illuminate the manner in which material relics and remains affected the lives of future generations. In a culture of limited literacy and vibrant orality, such physical structures were critical in shaping contemporary outlooks.

Sensitive, nuanced, and persuasive, *Inhabiting the landscape* demonstrates how local and micro-history can illuminate larger questions about religious, social and economic change. Straddling the boundaries between landscape and social history, Whyte's book has significant implications for scholars in both fields and should help to encourage greater dialogue between them. Its publication coincides with a kind of 'spatial turn' in historical studies that is gathering momentum. A model of interdisciplinary endeavour, it also sets a fresh conceptual agenda and a methodological example that deserves wider emulation.

ALEXANDRA WALSHAM
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TOM ARKELL with NAT ALCOCK (eds), *Warwickshire Hearth Tax returns: Michaelmas 1670, with Coventry Lady Day 1666* (British Rec. Soc. Hearth Tax Ser. 7; co-published as Dugdale Society 43, 2010). xiv + 566 pp., 25 figs., 29 tabs., 18 maps. £35.

Seventh in the British Record Society Hearth Tax series, the volume for Warwickshire is a monument to the excellent research and analytical skills of its editors. In addition to a transcript of a full set of returns and a selection of exemption certificates, it offers an extensive introduction to using the returns, in conjunction with other records, to illuminate a very wide range of features of Restoration Warwickshire. Although the detailed discussion of the administration of the Hearth Tax (pp. 12–23) applies specifically to that county, the guides to the various methods of collection tried by the government – sheriffs, receivers, farmers and receivers again – and to the qualification for exemption are lucid accounts of complex issues that will be invaluable to anyone studying the Hearth Tax.

Apart from Coventry, which was assessed separately, Warwickshire is blessed with no fewer than eight virtually complete returns. In his meticulous analysis of the 1670 lists, however, Arkell concludes that even these are far from perfect; for example, about 4 per cent of the householders were named incorrectly (p. 43). Moreover, since there are numerous inconsistencies in household numbers, including exemptions, within each parish, he urges caution when using tax returns as indicators of household numbers in a community. Perhaps he is being rather too negative here, since such problems are only apparent precisely because so many Warwickshire returns have survived; elsewhere one has to use what few returns are available, and be grateful.

There is a complex analysis comparing the county's towns with their rural hinterlands. Arkell reconstructs rural 'sub-regions' of at least a thousand households by 'spotting those parishes that were broadly similar and then grouping them together' (p. 62), the similarity being the proportion of households with three or more hearths. Although he justifies these groupings, the written analysis of his findings does not always tally with the percentages plotted on Map 3. The histograms illustrating hearth numbers within individual parishes (Figure 1) provide much more convincing graphic evidence of differences between various regions.

Arkell then deconstructs the connection between the number of hearths in a house and the householder's social status (pp. 73–87). Looking at the 'meaner sort', for example, he compares the occupations of non-chargeable and chargeable male householders. He concedes, not surprisingly, that 'simple hearth numbers alone can rarely be equated with different occupations

or status' (p. 87), not least since occupational data rarely disclose dual employment. 'Wealth and poverty: the elusive issue' (pp. 88–102) reassesses the crude equation of wealth with hearth numbers that has bedevilled many previous studies. Arkell analyses a sample of 50 probate inventories using various methodologies – calculations not only of the total inventory value, but also of 'material wealth' and 'consumption goods' – and compares them with hearth numbers but, again, few clear correlations can be identified, not least because crop values varied according to the time of year. His analysis of poverty (pp. 97–102) is particularly sophisticated: drawing on various poor relief records he demonstrates that contemporaries distinguished between those of the 'poorer sort' who did or did not receive relief, as well as between those who did or did not pay taxes.

Within the introduction there is a marked inconsistency in the geographical units used to assess the significance of the returns. In his own analyses, Arkell has consistently followed contemporary parochial boundaries by drawing together relevant 'constablers', chapelries and 'ends' into whole parishes. In the mapping section, however, Alcock has attempted to retain those smaller units as separate areas, but has only done so where their boundaries can be defined. The various maps showing percentages of households with particular numbers of hearths follow the style of those in previous BRS volumes: the Hearth Tax Project's funding dictates the presence of such maps, but this reviewer has yet to be convinced of their usefulness.

Alcock's section correlating standing and depicted houses with Hearth Tax returns is fascinating. Particularly relevant is the design and construction of Warwickshire housing: much work on the Hearth Tax has ignored local building styles, which dictated the number of hearths almost as much as the 'wealth' of the builder or occupant. The discussion of the use of coal for fuel draws attention to different methods of heating, although braziers, which did not need a hearth, are not mentioned: in coal-burning areas, one hearth did not necessarily mean only one heated room. The detailed analysis and tabulation of 681 probate inventories that can be linked to hearth numbers and room totals (Table 25) deftly dispels the fallacy that one-hearth houses (whether chargeable or non-chargeable) were by definition pitifully small, although of course the homes of those too poor to be inventoried probably were.

In addition to the comprehensive introduction, there are the returns themselves; detailed digests of those returns (Tables 28 and 29); separate indexes of persons, places and subjects; and two keys for the mapping units.

Warwickshire historians are fortunate to have not only eight full sets of Hearth Tax returns but also such an all-encompassing printed volume, which, for all my gripes, contains the best introduction to any published returns and which historians of other counties would be well advised to read.

HEATHER FALVEY

Rickmansworth

COLIN PHILLIPS, CATHERINE FERGUSON and ANDREW WAREHAM (eds), *Westmorland Hearth Tax, Michaelmas 1670 and surveys, 1674–5* (British Rec. Soc., Hearth Tax Ser. 6; co-published as Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Arch. Soc. Rec. Ser., 29, 2008). xvi + 355 pp. £35.00.

This is the sixth volume in this series, three of which have been of northern counties, County Durham, the West Riding and now Westmorland. We may have to wait a long time for the volume for Cumberland, because it is reported here that the county's returns are not only incomplete but also in poor condition, and so for the time being this volume will have to serve to illustrate the economy of the far North.

The volume proceeds on lines that are well established and familiar. It prints the return to the Exchequer of the Michaelmas 1670 tax and a rather exceptional survival, a survey made by the farmers of the tax for Westmorland in 1674–5 for the Westmorland JP, Sir Daniel Fleming, which remains amongst his papers. A shorter survey for Kendal is also included. Rather alarmingly, the surveys show how much more assiduous the farmers were in finding taxable hearths than the parish constables. The total number of households found in 1670 was 5131, the total in 1674/5, 6833, and, for hearths, 7110 and 10,446 respectively (Table two). Such is the efficiency of seventeenth-century private enterprise over parochial administration! Table three shows just how volatile from return to return the number of households was, as well as the difficulties of comparing differing returns for neighbouring counties. All of this is explained and tabulated with clarity. The centrepiece of the volume for those uninterested in the micro-topography of the county are the two essays by Colin Phillips, one on the economy and society of the county about 1670 and the other on 'Westmorland in the Hearth Tax documents' in which he deploys a career-long interest in the county (and Kendal in particular) to good effect.

This was an extremely poor county. In the county as whole, 83 per cent of all households were one-hearth households in 1670 and 73 per cent in 1674/5. The proportion was higher in the north of the county ('The Bottom') than in the south ('The Barony'), 89.9 per cent and 67.5 per cent respectively in 1674/5. Phillips is

adamant that individual poverty should not be inferred from the possession of a single-hearth property and shows that some of those living in apparently poor conditions had high levels of wealth at probate. In general, the use of probate documents in his contributions is very attractive, and Phillips integrates recent work in vernacular architecture. He contributes a couple of pages of discussion on the problem of fuel in the county – no local coal, little woodland and a reliance on peat and turf. In the end, though, the problem of fuel supply, and the difficulties it posed for housing, were probably greater than he allowed. He draws attention to the significance of the ‘grate’ in inventories but does not draw on the architectural evidence of chimneys at this point. Others might want to take this up. Phillips’s discussion of the shifting occupancy of houses in Kendal is of great interest.

Like its predecessors, the book is a delight to handle. Being a much smaller county, the single page maps (by Mike Shand) work much better than in the West Riding volume. It is also well illustrated with pictures of representative buildings and pictures reproduced from manuscripts. Amongst the latter are two splendid drawings by the herald (and later political arithmetician), Gregory King, of Appleby and Kendal seen from the west. The latter, shows a very significant (and modern for its time) house on the east side of Highgate close to Kendal church. Whose house was it? Phillips does not tell us, but it would be interesting to know.

In assessing the earlier West Riding volume, this reviewer made some sharp comments on the index. It is doubtless not the power of my pen that has made the Hearth Tax team prepare a proper index of persons on this occasion, but it is extremely welcome. So, all in all, this is a job well done. One hopes that the series can maintain the momentum – and the funding – to make the appearance of further volumes a regular event even if some of them will have to be of southern counties.

R. W. HOYLE
University of Reading

ALAN W. FOX, *A lost frontier revealed. Regional separation in the East Midlands*, Studies in Regional and Local History 7 (University of Hertfordshire Press, 2009). xiv + 210 pp., 86 figs., 11 tabs. £35.

Like topless sunbathing or tear gas in the streets, some things that seem natural in France do not always translate very well to Britain. This has been true of the quest for regions and regional identities in historical perspective. After a century of Febvre, Braudel and a plethora of theses and books reconstructing the geo-social regions of France, the idea that people, as well as vines, should have their own particular

terroir is almost a cliché of Francophone scholarship. In England, by contrast, although Charles Phythian-Adams’s innovative work on regional formations has been widely admired, it has not been much imitated or developed.

Alan Fox’s in-depth depiction of a social-spatial fault-line between east Leicestershire and west Lincolnshire provides a highly methodical, meticulously researched, well-grounded and very welcome test of Phythian-Adams’s hypotheses about regional ‘societies’. Phythian-Adams’s thesis is, broadly, that the geographical distribution of social contacts and interactions is shaped by natural features such as major watersheds. These have provided barriers to communication and mobility for millennia, and have even helped to define (and been reinforced by) administrative boundaries. This is not crude geographical determinism, but might be described as geographical ‘structuration’ – that is, such watersheds provide some of the parameters that shape, channel and delimit human interactions, and therefore contribute to the definition of the experiences and identities of the populations within them (not always in predictable ways). Although to the outside observer the barrier between Leicestershire and Lincolnshire seems to lack the existential drama of that between Yorkshire and Lancashire, Fox explains that it fits most of Phythian-Adams’s criteria. The bulk of the population was concentrated within major river basins, while the frontier between the counties coincided with a relatively sparsely populated limestone heathland. Each of these areas was oriented towards a ‘primate’ town – Leicester, Nottingham, and Lincoln. This seems to have been recognized by a county structure established early in the eleventh century, under Danish rule.

Fox tests this hypothesis carefully and systematically through this volume. He organizes his analysis into three parts. Firstly, he explores the applicability of Phythian-Adams’s hypothesis to the border area that he has selected, particularly in relation to its physical geography and history. Secondly, he examines aspects of the area’s economic, social and cultural history, to determine whether different experiences of population growth, wealth and poverty, enclosure and vernacular architecture and culture indicate a sharp separation around the county boundary. The evidence is mixed. West Lincolnshire was marginally more prosperous than east Leicestershire. Enclosure histories did not vary dramatically, but there may have been a small net inflow of population from populous Leicestershire into unenclosed parishes in Kesteven in Lincolnshire. Patterns of vernacular architecture and speech exhibited some quite marked differences. Thirdly, Fox moves onto examining the evidence of spatial contacts, generated

by marriage alliances, probate links, kinship and dynasties, and then transport and economic flows.

This evidence is the most suggestive. Marriage links were comparatively weak across the heathland, compared to intra-county alliances, both among marriage partners and their sureties. While Fox does not find strong evidence of the presence of 'dynastic families' spreading out across several parishes, the paucity of cross-border connections appears to confirm the marriage data. Even so, his comment that 'some of the Lincolnshire bondsmen also hint at a connection with farm animals' (p. 120) could, perhaps, have been rephrased, although it may embody dark Leicestershire suspicions! In some ways, Chapter Eight is the most interesting one in this third section, because it mentions two impediments to mobility that could have been embedded more firmly in this analysis. The first of these was that Leicestershire and Lincolnshire hiring fairs were out of phase. In Leicestershire servants were hired annually from Michaelmas, whereas in Lincolnshire hiring was concentrated around Mayday. These fundamental differences in the agrarian labour cycle must have had profound effects on the movements of the (most mobile) unmarried labouring population. Secondly, it deals effectively, but in a relatively limited number of pages, with the road network, which was oriented very strongly north-south rather than east-west. The Great North Road ran through the eastern side area, and must have exerted a tremendous alternative 'field-of-force', pulling migrants south towards London. The modern A606 speared north-west, taking travellers to Melton Mowbray and Nottingham. Roads carry possibilities as well as people, and it may be that the powerful influence of these prospects crowded out many cross-border links. Neither of these observations denies Fox's assertion that the border between the two counties appears to have formed a tangible societal barrier, or that the county boundaries may have been drawn up to reflect a pre-existing disposition of connections and networks. Instead, they merely suggest that some of the reasons for the patterns within this region may lie outside it.

This study is the most thoroughgoing test and demonstration of aspects of Phythian-Adams's thesis. It is based on rigorous and exhaustive parish-by-parish analyses, including a phenomenal family reconstitution of fourteen parishes in this border area. Fittingly, perhaps, this is research on the epic scale of an *Annaliste* doctoral thesis. The end result is persuasive, even if the concluding discussion, which pushes back the 'region' to the Danelaw, based on surname and place-name, might not persuade early medievalists. Yet, although the idea of geographical 'structuration' is fascinating,

and plausible, this reviewer suspects that further research will be necessary before the sceptical *rosbifs* are fully convinced. In particular, Phythian-Adams's ideas now seem quite a long way removed from recent work on identity formation, which stresses the multiple, overlapping and contextual nature of identity. While this can sometimes be stretched to atomized anomie, it does imply that although the spatial boundaries of regional 'societies' were formative in some contexts, it may yet be difficult to demonstrate that these provided the hook on which all else hung.

H. R. FRENCH
University of Exeter

J. BRENT and P. GOODWIN, *Working the land in Romsey: a history of farms and farming in a Hampshire parish* (Romsey: Lower Test Valley Archaeological Study Group, 2009). 208 pp., 42 figs. Available from <http://ltvas.org.uk>, £5.95.

Romsey is a market town on the River Test in Hampshire, most notable for its 'big house', Broadlands (home of the late Lord Mountbatten). Today it provides little agricultural employment, but it still has the feel of an agricultural town, particularly on market days. The proximity of the river and the Broadlands estate mean that there are still fields close to the town centre, and Romsey continues to host the oldest surviving agricultural show in England.

The genesis of this little book lies in a project initiated by Hampshire County Council, who were concerned by the 'inappropriate conversions of old barns'. A team started work, but concluded that it would be more interesting to take a wider look at the history of farms and farming in the area. This book is the result. The authors, who are not attributed on the cover of the book, acknowledge 'contributions from LTVAS colleagues & members of the local farming community'.

A wide range of source material has been used – from archaeological reports, through Dr J. Latham's 'Notes for a history of Romsey', to the National Farm Surveys of 1940–3 – to trace farming in the area from the Early Iron Age to the present day. The first chapter covers the period 'Before the founding of the abbey' in c.907 in just a few pages: limited archaeological evidence tells us that an Iron Age presence was followed by a Roman villa and some activity in the mid-Saxon period and later. 'The Lady as Lord: 900AD to 1539' is much longer, padded out with background material explaining the significance of the Romsey information. There are delightful illustrations from manuscripts in the British Library, including one of medieval nuns netting rabbits with ferrets, and a painting of the last

Abbess of Romsey herself, on the reredos of the Abbey Church. In 'The dissolution of the Abbey to the first Lord Palmerston', our attention is drawn to yeoman farmers and their 'well-built houses', which can still be seen in the area today.

The strength of the book lies in its treatment of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in the chapters on 'The great landlords: Palmerstons & Flemings, 1736–1840' and 'The Golden Age, 1840–1870'. Here, use is made of the two estate archives – the proportion of Romsey-specific material is much higher than in earlier chapters – showing that 'the agricultural history of Romsey has mirrored national trends': the disappearance of husbandmen, the increase of 'landless poor', the replacement of copyholds by leases for lives, and the decline of yeomen farmers. Romsey, in common with many other places in the South, experienced its share of rural poverty, 'Game Wars' – illustrated by the exciting story of a Broadlands poacher who was eventually hanged for the murder of one of Palmerston's gamekeepers, despite the whole town, including Florence Nightingale, rallying behind him – and the Swing Riots. During the 'Golden Age', improvements such as the model farm built by Lord Palmerston, the plan for which (unfortunately reproduced too small for the captions to be legible) is still recognizable in the aerial photograph, were offset by impoverishment of farmland in favour of game (later, bizarrely, Palmerston's step-son, Cowper-Temple, was to cause problems for tenant farmers by not allowing rabbits to be killed, out of concern for animal welfare). This chapter ends with a great deal of entertaining information about prizes given to agricultural labourers by Palmerston, for example, to 'Moses Sillence and his wife for the neatness and cleanliness of their cottage and premises'.

Once we reach the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in 'Troubled times: 1870–1914' and 'Agriculture at war: 1914–45', the text is enlivened by photographs. The theme of 'mixed farming', which seems to have run through the whole story, is now broken by some interesting specialization, including chicken farming, dairying, and tomato growing under glass. In the last chapter, 'Within living memory', we see the tomato nursery being replaced by a garden centre, farmland close to the town being gobbled up for housing, and even the Broadlands estate being encroached upon for sports fields.

The original 'barn conversion' project is memorialized by the 'Gazetteer of major farm buildings today' which gives the farm name, grid reference, current use of lands and surviving buildings, a few historical and other notes, and the estate to which the farm belonged.

Although there is a bibliography, there is a complete lack of footnote references. But there is much of interest here for anyone who knows the area, particularly the denizens of those 'housing developments', who may have wondered what the land was like before they arrived.

C. E. M. GLOVER
University of Winchester

MICHAEL HEATON, *A farming history of Spratton, 1766–1914* (Spratton Local Hist. Soc., 2009). 72 pp., 66 figs., £4. Available from Spratton Local History Society, 6 Yew Tree Lane, Spratton, Northampton, NN6 8HL.

The village of Spratton lies six miles north-west of Northampton in the rolling countryside on the edge of the Northamptonshire Uplands. Like the surrounding parishes, it was enclosed at the height of the parliamentary enclosure movement in the second half of the eighteenth century. Today the compact village and medieval church are surrounded by a landscape of neatly hedged, straight-sided fields. Most of the agricultural land in the parish is currently in the hands of six or seven big and medium-sized farmers who mainly have it down to livestock along with smaller acreages of wheat, barley, beans and rape (pp. 45–9).

Such was not always the case, as Heaton's short history of the parish in the 250 years since the parliamentary enclosure amply demonstrates. Thus for example, landholding was more equally split between big and small landowners at the time of the enclosure in 1766, when those holding less than 100 acres farmed about 25 per cent of the parish (p. 12), while in the mid-nineteenth century most of the parish was farmed by a small number of large landowners (p. 27). Extensive research has allowed Heaton to trace the changing landholding structure of the parish from 1766 up to the Second World War, as well as to include detailed information on landholding, crops and rotations practised in 2009. The changing fate of Spratton's farmers is represented on eleven maps – some in colour, some black and white – which show the location of the various landowners' and tenants' properties. All this is accompanied by detailed genealogical information on the leading farming families in the parish, as well as other useful illustrations including a reproduction of the landscape historian David Hall's map of the pre-enclosure field system and Heaton's own reconstruction of the now lost 1766 enclosure plan.

Nevertheless, Heaton could have said more about how the shifting landholding structure of the parish impacted upon other aspects of the village experience, as well as about the parish's changing appearance in the

250 years since enclosure. The information represented on the impressive series of maps also cries out to be more clearly summarized at the end of the book, either by means of some basic statistics or in a concluding discussion. More importantly, considerably more could have been done to set Spratton's history in the context of wider research on Northamptonshire, the Midlands and Britain more generally. While Heaton does briefly discuss how climatic shifts, the coming of the railways and fluctuating wheat prices affected farming in the parish, some of this analysis would have been improved by reference to the wider literature. Significantly, a number of key works on Northamptonshire are never mentioned, perhaps most notably Jeanette Neeson's *Commoners*.

Overall then, this is a highly detailed and lovingly researched piece of local history abundantly illustrated with maps and photographs. That said, ultimately it needs to do rather more to be either of interest to those without a local connection or of use to those looking for comparative material to draw on in more substantive histories of rural landholding.

BRIONY MCDONAGH
University of Nottingham

VAL PORTER, *British pigs* (Shire Publications, 2009). 56 pp., 84 figs. £5.99.

The majority of British pigs are intensively reared white hybrids living indoors in large units. This book is not concerned with them, although it recognizes their existence. It is about the sort of pigs, mostly belonging to traditional breeds, more likely to be found on smallholdings or in farm parks, and is presumably aimed at visitors who want to know more about the pigs they have seen, or smallholders interested in the origin of their pigs. This is not an insignificant number of people, since 46 per cent of all herds had less than ten pigs in 2005, but it is only a small proportion – 3.1 per cent in 2005 – of the national pig herd.

After an opening chapter on the traditional role of the pig (which includes the only picture that this reviewer has ever seen of a pig being hand-milked), there is a discussion of the evolution of domesticated pigs in Britain, followed by chapters on individual breeds. These are divided into the coloured breeds, such as the Large Black, Saddleback, Berkshire, Tamworth, and Gloucester Old Spots among others, and the white breeds, such as the Large White, Middle White, Landrace, British Lop, and the now-extinct Lincolnshire Curly Coat. Most of the breeds covered in these chapters will be familiar to agricultural historians, but we might not be so well acquainted with what are called 'new pigs'. These are covered in a third chapter

and include the Jinhua and the repulsively wrinkled Meishan – both imports from China; the woolly-coated Hungarian Mangalitsa – probably related to the Lincolnshire Curly Coat; the Froxfield Pygmy – bred, unlike most pigs, to be small, because that is an advantage in the laboratories where they are most likely to be found; and the Pennywell miniature pig – also bred for small size because children prefer to pet small animals in the farm park in which it originated.

The main strength of this short book is in the illustrations, which are numerous and comprehensively captioned. Readers requiring a rapid identification of traditional breeds will also find it useful, but as an introduction to the history of the pig it fails to provide much detail or further reading. All the modern references are to the author's own works, with no mention of Julian Wiseman's *A history of the British pig* (1986) or Malcolmson and Mistoris's *The English pig: a history* (1998). There is also one intriguing but unreferenced statement: the Berkshire breed is 'said to have a good sense of humour' (p. 24). Is this, perhaps, an allegation arising from P. G. Wodehouse's identification of Lord Emsworth's prize sow, the Empress of Blandings, as a Berkshire? I think we should be told in a future edition.

PAUL BRASSLEY
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MATTHEW REED, *Rebels for the soil: the rise of the global organic food and farming movement* (Earthscan, 2010). ix + 168 pp. 4 tabs. £49.99.

Rebels for the soil is not a work of history. The author, Matthew Reed, is specific on this point, stating that it is not 'an encyclopaedia of who did what and when in the organic movement across the planet over the last century' (p. 11). Instead, it is a work of political sociology underpinned by a substantial and – in this reader's opinion – problematic historical account.

Reed's primary argument is that the global organic food and farming movement should be seen as a persistent and durable social movement whose history can be organized around four phases or 'waves'. The first wave occurred during the inter-war years, when a 'critical community' coalesced in Britain and Germany, concerned about the consequences of modern farming for soil fertility, nutrition and the spiritual health of society. From the Second World War and through the 1960s the organic movement became an organized 'transnational' force co-ordinated by organizations such as the Soil Association and the Rodale Institute. This was, according to Reed, the movement's second wave and a time when it was highly marginalized. Reed is correct to insist that these wilderness years should

not be dismissed as a failure, since it was during this difficult time that much of the groundwork for later success was laid. He also points out that this second phase included a focus on research farms, such as the Soil Association's farms at Haughley Green in Suffolk, which mirrored the emphasis on experimental farms by the conventional agriculture of the period.

A third 'wave' in the history of the organic movement began in the early 1970s, Reed argues, when environmentalism and the threat of pollution overcame the movement's earlier, narrower focus on soil fertility and nutrition. This was also the moment when standard setting and marketing of organic food became a priority, eventually leading to the successes of the last decade of the twentieth century and the first years of the twenty-first, when organic products became a significant niche element of mainstream food culture in the developed world. A fourth 'wave' is currently emerging, says Reed, centred on the ways in which organic agriculture fits, or does not fit, within increasingly urgent policy debates about food security – or 'peak food'.

This bird's eye view of developments within the organic movement is useful and, at times, thought-provoking, although it must be acknowledged that Reed's four-wave schema is relevant only in terms of the British movement. The claim on the cover of *Rebels* that it charts the global organic movement is misleading. This reviewer presumes that the publisher, Earthscan, insisted on a global history; the decision has done Reed no favours, since his consideration of organic developments in continental Europe, the USA, Australia and New Zealand is sufficiently cursory and erratic as to be almost insulting.

Reed's far more substantial historical account of the British organic movement is also frustrating. The level of detail, pace and approach to explaining the movement's history varies so considerably and shifts so often and unpredictably that the book should come with a warning that it is not to be read by those who are not already well informed about the history of the British organic movement. Yet *Rebels* seems designed by Earthscan as an introduction for FE students, the very people least equipped to gain from Reed's convoluted and, at times, mildly inaccurate historical account.

At times, Reed plunges into highly detailed explanations about, for example, the founding of the Soil Association, while in other places he fails to name significant actors involved in shaping the key organic ideas he has outlined. There are also some inaccuracies and odd bits of trivia. Why does Reed include a small box about Eve Balfour's participation in the 1930s anti-tithe protests in a chapter that is not focused on the inter-war period? What is more, what has prompted

him to assert that Eve Balfour had close dealings with Sir Stafford Cripps? If she did, this reviewer would love to know the basis for this claim. Reed also concentrates on the political tenor of the early Soil Association, to the exclusion of its primary activities and achievements.

Essentially, the problem with *Rebels* is that it offers an unbalanced historical account designed to substantiate a more interesting set of political arguments about the contemporary organic movement. Provided this is accepted and the book is read with caution, Reed's discussion about the nature of the British organic movement today and about recent and current events is interesting. In particular, Reed's comments about the movement's long-standing aversion to public protest (with the exception of the successful participation by organic supporters in a confrontational late-1990s and early-2000s campaign against genetic modification) are useful.

ERIN GILL
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CHARLES BOWDEN (Director), *The last sheep sale* (Bellingham: The Heritage Centre, n.d.). DVD, running time approx. 45 mins. Available from <http://www.northern-heritage.co.uk>, £12.99.

Bellingham is close to where the river Rede meets the North Tyne, and behind the High Street lies an extensive area of sheep pens and sale rings that formed the livestock market, or 'mart' as it is more commonly called in Northumberland. There thousands of sheep from the surrounding hills were sold every year, until 1 October 2004, when the last sale, which forms the subject of this DVD, was held. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as railway branch lines spread across rural Northumberland, Bellingham was part of a network of livestock markets, with counterparts in the neighbouring small towns. The town's market was established in 1861, but by the middle of the twentieth century several of the smaller markets in the district began to close as motor transport took over from the railway, the post-Second World War expansion of Kielder Forest took over the land previously devoted to sheep-rearing, and new regulations favoured concentration on the larger markets such as the one at Hexham, further down the Tyne valley. Eventually Hexham and Northern Marts, the firm that owned both the Bellingham and Hexham markets, decided to close the smaller of the two.

The story presented here is a conflict between those who saw the decision as the sad end of an era and others who believed it inevitable, with several seeing it as both. There are interviews with farmers who sold their sheep at Bellingham for decades, with the auctioneers, and

with a director of Hexham and Northern Marts who has a detailed knowledge of the history of the market and appears from time to time to put what is happening into historical context. It is a well crafted and clearly structured production that presents a vivid picture of what used to be an event of great local importance, and explains why it has disappeared.

From the wider perspective of agricultural history this DVD provokes two reflections. It is, as far as I know, the first non-print text to be reviewed in this *Review*. Does its use of old still photographs, and its account of why the market rose and fell in economic significance, raise the end result beyond a piece of primary evidence into a work of explanatory history? And if so, should we also review television history programmes, exhibitions, re-issued archive films, vintage machinery shows, museum displays, websites, e-books, or any other non-print format that attempts to shed light on the rural past?

PAUL BRASSLEY
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JAMES G. PATTERSON, *In the wake of the Great Rebellion. Republicanism, agrarianism and banditry in Ireland after 1798* (Manchester UP, 2008). vi + 201 pp. £50.

Hitherto the historiography of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Irish rural rebellion has been dominated by studies that could be described as belonging to the 'spasmodic' school of protest studies. In a sense this is not too surprising, for, to many commentators at the time, Ireland was seemingly in a state of constant rebellion. Against a limited metropolitan toll of the Jack-a-Lent riots, Luddism, the Bread or Blood riots, and Swing, historians of Irish protest have documented the Houghers' movement, Whiteboy movements, Rightboy movements, Ulster Oakboy and Steelboy movements, Ribbonism, Rock, and the Tithe War. Arguably the most important – and certainly the most politically iconic – 'movement' of all was that instigated by the United Irishmen, the initially middle-class and Belfast-based organization that blended republicanism and Tom Paine's natural rights discourse in seeking parliamentary reform and Catholic and Dissenter emancipation. Such a heady mix of doctrines and goals proved massively attractive not only to the merchants and traders of the major Irish towns but also to the tenant farmers and cottiers of rural Ireland. Their planned rising of 1798 was brutally put down by the combined forces of Dublin Castle and the British state, and the last of the republican rebels was crushed at Vinegar Hill, County Wexford, on 21 June.

Conventional understandings relate that, thereafter, with the exception of a small-scale rising supported by a French landing at Killala, County Mayo, in July 1798, the United Irishmen had been totally routed, the absolute nadir coming in July 1803 when Robert Emmet returned from his exile in France to lead one last failed rising on the streets of Dublin. Patterson's welcome study, building upon Nancy Curtin's pioneering revisionism, offers a useful corrective. Focusing upon counties Antrim and Down in Ulster, south Muster, Galway and Mayo, and South Leinster, Patterson not only shows the value of studies of republicanism and agrarian protest between the landmark episodes of rebellion, but also demonstrates that wherever one looks in the archive it is possible to find evidence of continued United Irishmen organization and activity after 1798. This persistence in the face of the bloody repression of the 'Great Rebellion' and the subsequent imposition of martial law over large parts of Ireland attest to the widespread popular adherence to the tenets of the United Irishmen and the continued fear of reprisals amongst landlords, Church of Ireland clergymen and magistrates. In Antrim and Down – major Presbyterian settlements – overtures by the Orange Order proved remarkably ineffective at converting Presbyterian farmers and linen weavers to Loyalism: Patterson shows that the resurgent Defender movement proved a greater attraction, thus rejecting the received notion that Dissenters flooded to Orangeism. Sectarianism was not a by-product of the failure of the 1798 rebellion: its emergence can be pushed back, Patterson persuasively argues, at least another five years. Indeed a broadly based United Irishmen organization is shown to have been remarkably enduring against the repeated purges and systematic sweeps of the countryside by the yeomanry. Even post-1798 fissures and a failure to agree on strategies did not render the organization politically inert.

In Cork, an agrarian county then wealthy on the back of the Atlantic provisions trade, and in the surrounding counties, much of the post-1798 protest assumed forms and practices of earlier Whiteboyism, secret agrarian societies noted for their use of violence against the persons and property of tithe-holders and rack renters. Yet such an interpretation masks the more complex organizational forms and political doctrines assumed by the protestors. They were, Patterson shows, without doubt, United Irishmen. In large part, protests in this area as well as in South Leinster, can be attributed to the extraordinary efforts of 'rebel' leaders, individuals who often had links with France. Arguably though, Patterson's most important contribution is to show that, against the ready resort by Loyalists to violence against Catholics and their property, and in the form of Dublin

Castle's use of summary and post-trial executions, the post-1798 actions of the United Irishmen were far more violent than before. This 'brutalization' of Irish society was the important legacy of the failure of the Great Rebellion.

In conclusion, Patterson's superb book stands as a landmark in the study of Irish society at the turn of the nineteenth century. It is splendidly researched and constructed, convincingly argued and does not pull its punches. One minor criticism is that Patterson tends to over-egg his pudding by offering copious detail and multiple examples to back up his assertions, thereby disrupting the flow of his argument. But this is small beer. Together with Dooley's *The murders at Wildgoose Lodge* (2007) and Huggins's study of protest in pre-famine Roscommon (2007), Patterson's study offers a useful new model for Irish protest studies wherein the dramatic episodes of conflict are grounded in the local socio-political contexts as well as the prior and subsequent protest histories.

CARL J. GRIFFIN
Queen's University, Belfast

DEBORAH WILSON, *Women, marriage and property in wealthy landed families in Ireland, 1750-1850* (Manchester UP, 2009), xiv + 233 pp., 15 tabs. £55.

This is a substantial addition to the scholarly treatment of the financial and property arrangements of landed society, which stems from Habakkuk's pioneering work. Deborah Wilson's book is indeed devoted to Irish, largely Ulster, landed families, but needs to be read in the wider context of the British Isles. Her study is based on an exhaustive, detailed, analysis of the records, mainly in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, of twenty landed families. These were all in the magnate class, with Irish estates yielding at least £10,000 a year in gross rentals, and hardly surprisingly, with that scale of wealth, most of the twenty were either Anglo-Irish, with estates in England or Scotland as well as in Ireland, or were inescapably part of metropolitan aristocratic society when important family concerns like the marriage market were involved. Thus although Wilson goes to great pains to try to show that the arrangements and conventions of her Irish group were significantly different from the British model, the evidence she supplies scarcely supports that view. All of them habitually used the same form of marriage settlements, with trustees to preserve contingent remainders, as their mainland peers. Admittedly there was a sharp difference between Irish and Anglo-Scottish marriage law from the early eighteenth century, when Irish statutes designed to prevent Catholics marrying Protestant heiresses were passed; but there seem to be no instances among the

sample of twenty families in which these laws were of any relevance. There were indeed instances of marriages entered into without parental consent or approval, but these were because of financial or social disapproval, not religious difference, and similar cases in mainland families are not hard to find.

The strength of the book lies in the thoroughness with which Wilson has combed through all the marriage settlements and wills of these twenty families, and a fair amount of correspondence and accounts, extracting and tabulating a large amount of data on the portions brought to their marriage by brides, the pin money secured on the husband's estate, the jointures provided for widowhood, the portions envisaged for daughters and younger sons, and the bequests made in widows' wills. There is also plenty of information on the appointment of trustees to secure a wife's independent control of specified property, usually estate she had brought to the marriage, possibly a postnuptial addition to her portion given by her father, or sometimes a life interest in property given by an affectionate husband. All this shows that there was frequently a substantial difference between the sums provided in a settlement made before marriage and the amounts of income actually received by wives and widows, a point with considerable importance for arguments about the position and fortune of women of landed families that derive solely from the provisions made in marriage settlements. A favourite argument has been that, from the sixteenth century onwards, aristocratic women were increasingly subordinated to their men-folk, mostly because on marriage they were forced to surrender their common law right to dower in return for securing a specified jointure in the event of widowhood. Ignoring evidence of the uncertainties, difficulties, and costs of enforcing claims of dower, which seemed to make the promise of a fixed amount of jointure a good bargain, it has been claimed that the annual value of jointure was consistently much less than the one-third of the husband's estate that dower provided, proving that the position of women was weakened by this central feature of marriage settlements. The actual position, Wilson shows, could be much more complicated and confusing. In at least a third of her twenty families, widows enjoyed jointures that were around one third or more of the gross rental of their husbands' estates and, while the rest had jointures that were certainly worth less than half the hypothetical dower-third, only one was left with less than £1,000 a year, which was twice the annual rental of many country squires.

Doubtless there was no shortage of women who would have been happy to be 'marginalised' at this level. Nevertheless Wilson likes to retain the fashionable

language of 'the marginalisation of women's interests in the landed estate' at the same time as providing much evidence that casts doubt on the concept. Her sample, after all, includes such eminently strong, not to say formidable, characters as Theodosia, Lady Clanwilliam, who elbowed aside her drunken husband and took control of the family's affairs, and above all Frances Anne, Lady Londonderry, who was not only the wealthiest heiress of her time but also an outstandingly successful businesswoman of early Victorian Britain. This book is not an easy read – Americans would instantly recognize it as an unredacted thesis, densely precise, where every will has always to be described as a 'last will and testament' – but patience is rewarded with ample supplies of original and interesting information.

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Europe and elsewhere

Études réunies par CORINNE BECK, FABRICE GUIZARD-DUCHAMP and JACQUES HEUDE, *Lit mineur, lit majeur, lit voyageur: mémoires et cours d'eau* (Revue du Nord. Hors série. Collection art et archéologie 14, 2009). 231 pp., 91 figs., 2 tabs. €45.

At the present time, when 'natural environments' are being transformed by human action at a greater pace than ever before, policy makers and spatial planners are directing increasing attention to the conservation of selected sections of the natural world. The management challenges that confront them intensify year upon year, but relatively little thought has been given as to just how 'natural' our natural environment really is. This question is the starting point for the volume under review, which contains the proceedings of a two-day colloquium convened by historians at the Université de Valenciennes et du Hainaut-Cambrésis at the behest of the *conseil-général* of the Nord *département*. The meeting was held in September 2008 at the Liessies abbey conference centre near Avesnes. Rather than examining the breadth of the natural world, participants focused on the issue of water in the environment, and on the ways in which the morphology and location of watercourses changed through time. Their sources ranged from archival records to observation and sampling in the field, with methods of analysis spanning the patient exploration of historic maps, meticulous scrutiny of historic texts, and examination of soils and sediment cores. Disciplinary approaches included not only medieval history and historical geography but also environmental archaeology and physical geography. Thirteen chapters plus a couple of

brief notes explore three themes: the changing location and use of watercourses; the relationship of the fluvial environment to human groups living nearby; and the ways that changes in watercourses are perceived and represented by local residents. Most of the discussion is directed to various parts of northern France, but stretches of central, southern and western France are not ignored. Most of the authors come from institutions in northern France but universities in other regions are also represented.

Five of the first six papers are emphatically northern in emphasis, with the changing relationship between land and water in the Canche valley being presented by three groups of authors who draw, in turn, on palaeoecological analysis (including carbon-14 dating), on the record of historical maps, and evidence from archaeological excavations of the Beutin shipwreck. A discussion of the changing course of the river Scarpe near Douai in early medieval times combines the use of documents with the analysis of soil profiles, whilst the paper on the changing course of the Rhône upstream of Lyons is derived in part from sediment analysis in the laboratory. The central section of the volume is more conventionally 'historical' in approach, with old maps and archival documents elucidating the changing configuration of the river Scheldt near Tournai, of the Meuse valley in Belgium, and of the Moselle at Metz in northern Lorraine. A remarkable photograph on p. 150 showing the old bridge at Moulins-les-Metz, now high and dry in a meadow, reveals just how much the fluvial environment of the Moselle has changed over the past five centuries. Two further papers trace the 'disappearance' of watercourses beneath the spread of suburban Nice, and the use of wetlands near Laon as defensive features to be flooded in times of war and drained once peace had been restored. The two papers comprising the final section identify the distribution of watermills in part of western France and their role as heritage features in local tourism schemes, and the on-going 'Confluence' project to revitalize the southern tip of the peninsula between the Rhône and the Saône at Lyon. Two short notes on the changing morphology of the Scheldt and on the culverting of much of the Furan beneath Saint-Etienne conclude the collection of essays.

This special theme issue of the *Revue du Nord* certainly provides ample evidence that the 'natural world', as exemplified by watercourses, is far from stable across time and has been changed profoundly as a result of human perceptions and action. A brief conclusion to this effect is entitled 'Des hydrosystèmes aux anthroposystèmes'. The volume is illustrated with a large number of maps, diagrams and photographs,

some of which are in full colour. Each chapter is provided with an abstract in English as well as in French, and a detailed bibliography. Readers of this review will identify with the debate about the 'naturalness' of 'nature', and with the complementarity of literary, cartographic and scientific modes of investigation, even if watercourses – and especially those in urban settings – are rather removed from their usual fields of enquiry.

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JONAS LINDSTRÖM, *Distribution and differences. Stratification and the system of reproduction in a Swedish peasant community, 1620–1820*, Studia Historica Upsaliensia 235 (University of Uppsala, 2008). 235 pp. 45 figs., 64 tabs., 2 maps.

The structure of agrarian society and social differentiation are venerable themes in rural history. Yet, despite a wealth of work from the very grand scale to local village studies, our knowledge of these issues is still patchy. It is particularly the case that much work on Scandinavia tends to be squeezed out of debates organized around 'ideal types' based on southern England, the Netherlands, and east Elbian Europe. To fill in some gaps, historians are well advised to read Jonas Lindström's excellent work, which approaches the issue of stratification in peasant society with admirable theoretical and linguistic clarity. It should be consulted by anyone interested in pre-modern agrarian society, landholding, and kinship relations.

The volume is a doctoral thesis employing excellent records from the central Swedish parish of Björskog, largely parish registers, land and livestock surveys, and tax assessments from the 1640s, 1713 and 1810. Before discussion of Lindström's results, some caveats are in order. He only examines *peasant* stratification, that is, the distribution of wealth in various forms among landholders. This might be justified by the limitations of the sources, especially as longitudinal studies of landholding kin are a key ingredient of his research. But forms of peasant stratification can only be understood in the context of the wider labour market. By the end of the study period, 'peasants' made up only just over half of households in the parish. This is thus not a study of social stratification more widely. At times, particular sources are pushed to their very limits and beyond, such as with the parish's probate inventories, whose coverage of even the landed population varies considerably over time, and can thus tell us little about changing relative wealth. Lindström's very specific focus on differentiation also leads him to use relative rather than absolute measures, which say something about

distribution, but nothing about the actual experience of being at different points on the distribution. Most of the study is based on the examination of quartiles, but as these quartiles are drawn from different measures in different sources at different dates, the possibility of comparison is sometimes weak.

There are nevertheless plenty of rich pickings, only a few of which can be covered here. Swedish land was owned by nobles and institutions, the Crown or as freehold. The latter was subject to a land tax that Lindström sees as a form of feudal tenure and it is thanks to this that source coverage of landholding in Björskog can be complete. By the 1810s we learn the salutary lesson for studies in other parts of the continent that the great majority of landholdings comprised a mix of owner-occupied and leased land. Rights of inheritance were generally strong and partible, but the Crown gave a right of redemption to one heir, leading to a common pattern that heirs paid off kin and became indebted earlier in life, and then paid off their debts by their fifties. Stratification was not Chayanovian and linked to the life-cycle, and family labour shortages were smoothed over by a wider labour market.

Over the whole period differentiation among peasants changed little but, especially following national policy during the eighteenth century, fixed rents led to a great decline in real burdens on Crown and freehold land. Households tended to respond to fortune by creating new local households rather than investment and accumulation, inevitably leading to quite high rates of downward mobility. Lindström's ability to trace the dynamics of kin relations and property devolution over time is one of the great strengths of his work. Demographic behaviour was no different among wealth groups, but the children of the wealthy had better access to land, and were more likely to stay. This led to an eighteenth-century paradox: lessening availability of land as population grew, but cheap rents. Increasingly, family ties became more important as a route to landholding, especially through marriage. Patrilineal descent was rare but land usually stayed within wider family, with an increasing but by no means overwhelming share of transfers to close kin. Lindström finds, as others in Europe have, a strongly segmented land market with some holdings being highly stable, with family members succeeding each other, while others had a high turnover of short-term residents. But over time the family-land bond became greater. In 1713 less than third of poorest quartile of landholders inherited their land, but by 1810 some 80 per cent did.

Comprehension of these dynamics also uncovers a notable issue in how we view the peasant community

and attachment to the land. Looking retrospectively, these ties seem very strong. Eighty-three per cent of those holding land in 1810 descended from people who held land in 1713, and 80 per cent of peasants had at least one ancestor from among a sample of 25 peasants present in 1641! But if we look 'forward', disappearance rates are high: only 56 per cent of landholders in 1713 had descendants in 1810. This sheds important light on the nature of village communities. Because of the greater propensity of the poor to leave, those with ancestors in the village were increasingly likely to be descended from the rich, whatever their own social position, leaving a dense network of ties to wealthy peasants. Given this, the poor unsurprisingly came from both rich and poor backgrounds. High turnover was thus quite compatible with dense kin networks and long-standing community ties.

Lindstrom's thesis is structured around tests of some of the traditional narratives of agrarian society. It is always easier to reject old hypotheses than to secure new ones, and the Björskog case does not fit these analyses well: he provides no new magic bullet to explain agricultural progress or stagnation. But in their wake, he leaves much to intrigue the reader and promising lines of inquiry for others to pursue.

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SUSANNE FREIDBERG, *Fresh. A perishable history* (Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2009). 408 pp., 28 figs. £20.95.

The human victory over enzymes, miasmas, and bacteria was preceded by a protracted and extremely rocky road. All the highlights, extremities, disillusion, and blind alleys, which characterize the pursuit of freshness, warrant a breathtaking story – and even more so if the author (as in this instance) is well-equipped to write it.

The basic premise of Susanne Freidberg's monograph is that freshness is a qualitative rather than a quantitative category. In other words, freshness is not a quality that can be *grasped* or *caught* by measurement or exact labelling, it is – to put it in the words of a food lobbyist – 'a state of being' (p. 2). By revealing the deeper layers of this notion, Freidberg – professor of Geography at Dartmouth College – manages to analyse the very cultural sediments of a classification which (during our daily food shopping expeditions) is usually taken for granted. But readers of this book are likely to come away with their attitudes to freshness and shelf-life revolutionized. The obsession of consumers and marketers with freshness is symptomatic of the pathological way in which modern societies deal with food, especially in

the United States. In particular, Friedberg illustrates the systematic denial of the alienation of consumers by food producers that has continued since industrialization. This growing rift between the origin and presentation of food ensures that modern appetites sometimes look like exercises in mental acrobatics, as they attempt to reconcile extremities such as novelty and nostalgia, convenience and authenticity, high-tech and unprocessed products (such as milk or dairy items) that represent *real* freshness in the original sense of the word.

Friedberg shows that freshness became a manipulated category relatively recently, as consumers began to seek labels to distinguish fresh from cold-stored foods. This paradise of 'real' freshness is no more, because in most cases so-called 'fresh' foods also turn out to have been processed and stored. It is an unmistakable merit of this book to have unearthed this original sense of freshness and its gradual erosion. After an introductory chapter on the history of refrigeration, Freidberg retraces the different fronts on which this silent revolution took place, by presenting case studies of a wide and well-chosen variety of perishables, namely beef, eggs, fruit, vegetables, milk, and fish.

Although the book focuses on the United States, it also offers detailed discussions of other countries and continents, and the bibliography incorporates European sources and research literature. Nearly all chapters are enlivened with personal impressions and telling anecdotes. Usefully, each case study not only contains technical-chemical information on the specific spoilage characteristics of the particular perishable item, but also highly instructive inside information about industry practices, gained from fieldwork or from interviews with lobbyists and other representatives of the respective food sector. This firm grip on the practical dimensions enables the author to offer more than a mere historical analysis, by providing critical reflections on the moral, social, economic, and ecological implications of the daily pursuit of freshness in the Western world. The shiny patina of freshness commonly obscures the systemic disruption of natural and human resources, but Freidberg mercilessly unveils the collateral repercussions of purchasing, say, for example, 'fresh' haricots from Burkina Faso. It is this wide scope, and the critical (but not moralistic) tenor, that indicate the strength of a book in which great scholarship is combined with a remarkable gift for observation and a superb writing style. In this sense, Freidberg's study presents an excellent example of what humanities and social sciences are, and should be able to do: to offer sound, enjoyable, and thought-provoking analyses of omnipresent cultural phenomena that are

usually received unquestioned, and therefore deserve a critical examination.

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ROBERT BEVAN-JONES, *Poisonous plants. A cultural and social history* (Windgather, 2009). xv + 200 pp., 108 figs. £25.

It is hard to imagine the trials and errors experienced by our ancestors as the safe plants were distinguished from the unsafe. We benefit from such 'inherited knowledge', as Bevan-Jones describes it, but until written documents were available it could only be transmitted orally. It is to the writings of such giants of medical history as Hippocrates and Dioscorides, and to the authors of the herbals that followed, that we owe so much. This book forms a bridge between these old works, in which 'Quite sensible views could be followed by utter nonsense', and the latest advances in the biochemistry of plant toxins. The toxicological aspect of ethnobotany is covered in an eminently readable manner, the emphasis throughout being on the use (and abuse) of plants for medicine rather than for food.

In part one (pp. 5–27), 'Concise History...', there are tantalizing glimpses of the use of poisonous plants, such as a Palaeolithic spear tipped with yew; poisons being tested on criminals in the third and second centuries BC; the 'bespoke' poisons of Roman times; the practices of the Saxon leeches ('If a man's hair fall off, work him a salve...'); manuscripts on herbal medicine from religious institutions in medieval Europe; the four humours; the astrological approach of Culpeper; the seventeenth-century London grocers who stocked 'roots, herbs, gum, oils, confectionery, ointments and plaisters' as well as food; the chemists and druggists who replaced the apothecaries; and finally the carefully prepared, plant-based pharmaceutical medicines of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In part two (pp. 28–157), there are entries on 36 plants and the medicaments of which they are ingredients. The plants are listed alphabetically by an English common name, but this gives rise to occasional confusions, such as the entry on cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), which is not in the index and is found with spurge

laurel (*Daphne laureola*) to which it is not related either botanically or by its toxins.

Almost all of the text applies to herbal remedies for human diseases, but there are a few references to animals, an example being the treatment of cattle diseases 'by boring a hole in the ear and inserting hellebore', after which, 'whiles the part which is circled aboute dyeth and falleth awaye yt hole beast is saved with the lose of a very small part'.

Plant toxins have been described as intoxicating, stupefying, mind-altering, medicinal, dangerous or even lethal, and the case reports that cover these aspects make fascinating reading. Some reports are presented as quotations that retain all the quaintness of style, word use, and spelling of the original, while others are translated or cited. A good balance is maintained between the useful and the dangerous, the authentic and the magic, and the therapeutic and the toxic.

Part three (pp. 158–72) is on fungi, and begins with a consideration of the types of poisoning they can cause. There is a general absence of fungi from old texts, but an exception is shown by a quotation from the *Grete Herball*: 'Fungi ben musherons. There be two maners of them, one maner is deadly and sleeth them that eateth of them and the other dooth not.' There are details on the death cap (*Amanita phalloides*), probably the most deadly poisonous fungus known, and on three others that have psycho-active properties.

Superb illustrations are supplied profusely throughout the book, and some have useful extended captions. Many of the plates are colour photographs taken by the author, and there are reproductions from old literature. The three appendices include a list of poisonous plants mentioned in European texts, and notes on a further 17 plants, eight relevant websites, and three UK gardens. There is a glossary, a list of 387 references – which is a tribute to the extensive research carried out by the author – and a bibliography with 93 entries.

Bevan-Jones's stated aim of writing a 'celebration' of poisonous plants and exploring 'their diverse and powerful properties' has been amply achieved, and there is a wealth of information in every paragraph. The book will be of interest to historians and agriculturists, as well as botanists and toxicologists.

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