

## Book Reviews

PHILIP SLAVIN, *Bread and ale for the Brethren: the provisioning of Norwich Cathedral Priory, 1260–1536* (Studies in Regional and Local History 11, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2012). xvii + 220 pp., 18 figs., 45 illus. £35.

There is nothing that demonstrates the forces that shaped the late medieval economy quite so clearly as the provision of food. *En route* from production to market and consumption, the persistent pressures – labour supply, wages, prices, and repeated troughs in climatic and disease cycles – are sharply exposed; yet it is often here that we also have first sight of the sources of constructive change, such as shifting patterns of land use, developing transport infrastructure, the rise of lively extra-urban markets, and seigniorial and – increasingly – civic measures to manage their communities' needs. The records of England's monasteries are simply unrivalled for the completeness of the data they offer. No other domestic setting matched the scale or scope of their consumption, nor their remarkable resilience; indeed, given the peculiarities of England's Reformation, uniquely, the cathedral monasteries – and Westminster Abbey, a cathedral for a time – can provide perspectives on production and consumption that reach across the conventional medieval and early modern divide.

For the Canadian author, Philip Slavin, they – naturally – represent a 'Klondike' (p. 191) crying out to be panned. Of course, he is by no means the first to open a claim in this territory: the pioneers – R. A. L. Smith, F. R. H. Du Boulay, Barbara Harvey – were followed into the archives (particularly the cathedral archives) by their own generation and the following one, and the interdependence of tenantry, demesne and *domus* has now been drawn out across southern and south-eastern England (Bath, Winchester and especially Canterbury), the east and west midlands (Peterborough, Worcester) as well as through the very different territory of the Durham palatinate. Slavin's mining of the Norwich Cathedral Priory estate records benefits from these now well-defined points of comparison and, to a degree, the enduring value of his researches lies in its complement to the existing corpus.

Yet the distinctive character of this conventual *domus*, and the agricultural and commercial environment mapped in its *compotus* rolls should not be overlooked. Above all, perhaps, the breadth and depth of the surviving accounts allow us to follow the response of whole enterprise from before the Famine to long after the Plague and from the sloping desk of the cellarer's clerk to the common table of the brethren, which, by the turn of the fifteenth century, could support fewer than half the intended number with limited quantities of the unusually weak ale.

The early orthodoxy held that in the later Middle Ages the great estates were commercialized both in the management of their estates and in meeting their subsistence needs. Recent studies – notably Miranda Threlfall-Holmes's reading of the Durham records – have enhanced their reputation for market nous, but also counselled against any simple polarity, still less a sustained trend that led every estate all the way from the Black Death to the break with Rome. In the same way, Slavin discovers at Norwich an approach to estate management that was notably undogmatic, marked by the determination to respond to the challenges, and, when they arose, the opportunities, of the prevailing conditions. If there was a principle maintained in such an unpredictable climate, it was the pragmatic benefits of self-sufficiency. When conditions dictated the letting of estates, they were locked into the provisioning of the convent with grain rents. In the 250 years of Slavin's survey, Norwich achieved 80 per cent self-sufficiency, treating the increasingly vigorous food markets of the immediate environs only as a supplement; even as the house entered its final half-century their typical rents were still in cash and kind. Such determined avoidance of market-dependency might be seen as self-defeating, given the recurrence of catastrophic harvests and conditions close to famine, but Slavin finds the responsive recasting of tenurial terms during the deepest troughs in arable production in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, when the usual grain rents were turned to cash.

Not only did the priory managers evince a nuanced understanding of the market but also, Slavin suggests,

they also demonstrated a profound knowledge of the productive capacity and topography of the diverse portfolio of estates. More than two thirds were assigned to spring crops, a choice which Slavin considers shows an awareness both of local climate and commercial limitations of the Norfolk market, whose cash-poor consumers were more likely to be secured for the long term with cheaper barley bread. Meanwhile, wheat, for the convent, certainly, but, it would seem, with little market scope, was confined to the far distant estates.

Slavin presents the priory as equally proactive in the development of transport and storage, again not as a marker of a growing commercial ambition but as a determination to assure a food supply sufficient to always meet the needs of the *domus*. Early investment in barns bequeathed only maintenance costs (which were remarkably stable) to the convent in the century before 1540. By contrast, transport placed rising demands on their annual expenditure. Such is the scope of the *compotus* rolls that Slavin can conjure for us the 'great boat' (*magna batella*), comprising 219 planks, constructed in 1320–21. While still tied to rents in kind, the tenantry sought commercial opportunity in the carriage of their produce, and the rolls record rising expenditure for the priory, which was compelled to engage carters across its domain.

For Slavin, the profits of the policy of self-sufficiency were to be found not in agricultural innovations, annual yields or any demonstrable commercial advantage, but in the riches of the priory's common table. Here, apparently, there was not just sufficiency but abundance: 'the brethren ate and drank in truly heroic quantities' (p. 190), he suggests, with 50 per cent of their daily diet being bread, and 2 per cent, ale (which was notably weak), generated from the sustained, and sometimes hoarded, supply of demesne grains. A significant fall in the size of the professed community (from 60 to 38) between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries gives some credence to Slavin's claims for prodigality and the impression he draws from the rolls is not out of step with dietary trends documented at houses of varying size, wealth and market position, such as Durham, Ely and Westminster. However, his calculations of numbers of consumers within the purview of the convent at times appear hasty, if not unsafe, and he does seem to accept the fallacy that qualitative judgments can be drawn from quantitative data. There is a taste for raw totals and rough means that are not nearly as meaningful as Slavin believes.

Perhaps of greater interest to those currently working in this field are the fresh insights offered into the convent's provision of food for those subsisting outside the gilded world of its own enclosure, some 6000 or

so annually, including as much as 20 per cent of the inhabitants of the city. The quantity and variety of relief available in the precinct of the priory – including what Slavin archly calls the almoner's 'soup kitchen' – is especially striking; old obligations in the city itself, such as a donation of grain to the prisoners of the castle also continued to be observed.

Given the significance of such social commitments to representations of pre-Reformation monasticism, it is disappointing that Slavin, despite his stated chronological boundaries, devotes such scant attention to the last decades before the Dissolution. In fact there is a general detachment from recent discussions of later monasticism, which may explain, if not excuse some of his lazier assertions, such as 'monks ... led a passive and contemplative life' (p. 172). The primary interest is the patterns of economic management in the years either side of the Black Death. Still, his ready enthusiasm should remind students in this field of the empirical riches of the rolls.

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DOMINIC JOHNSON, KENNETH HILLIER and LESLEY BOATWRIGHT (eds), *Grace Dieu Priory, Leicestershire: the draft account book of the treasurers, 1414–1418* (Grace Dieu Priory Trust, 2013). xxxv + 279 pp. £35 + £4 p. & p. from Mrs Ann Petty, 174 Leicester Road, Whitwick, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 5GJ.

Records for small nunneries are not thick on the ground, and so this volume represents a valuable addition to the canon of printed original sources. The volume is especially valuable as it is a parallel Latin transcription/English translation. The erudite notes on editorial conventions and the Latin by Lesley Boatwright (to whose memory the volume is dedicated) are a testament to the care that has gone into the production of this book. The seven-page glossary of both English and Latin terms is very useful and will save readers the trouble of searching through their own reference works! The list of dates for saints' days and festivals is also a handy quick guide to the dates that appear in the text. The indices of persons and places appear to be comprehensive, but the subject index is a little simple in its composition.

The introduction (by Kenneth Hillier) to the volume provides a short history of the priory up to the period of the account book and a description of the priory and its buildings. Given the depth of material about the buildings, a plan of the site might have been of benefit to this section. Although the volume has a photograph and historic drawing of the priory on its front and back

covers, a site plan would have provided further context for the reader.

The introductory section about the nuns of Grace Dieu Priory brings the personalities of these religious women to life and is an excellent illustration of the way in which financial records can paint a picture of the lives of those who are recorded in them. Excellent use is made of supplementary sources to further fill in the details of the nuns and their (not always harmonious) relationships. The contributions to priory life of the chaplains, boarders and secular personnel of the priory are also examined in the introduction – a reminder of the diversity of people, both internal and external, who made up the day-to-day life of a religious house. The final section of the introduction provides an overview of the priory's economy that emerges from the account book. As Chris Dyer writes in his preface, 'The account book is of course about money', and the discussion of the priory's economy offers many pointers to the interesting and detailed information contained in the text.

Much of the material in the text is spatial in nature. The text describes the work done on the nunnery's estate, and again it would have been helpful for those without a detailed knowledge of the local area to have had a map of the estate and its surrounding area. Even if it is not possible to identify the field names mentioned in the text, a map would have helped to put the priory, its activities and economy into a geographical context.

The wealth of information contained in the account book is indeed impressive and includes details of rent receipts, nuns' salaries and clothing allowances, and the cost of building works and repairs. The costs of gathering in the harvest are listed in detail along with the names of those employed; long lists of female and male workers employed in weeding, reaping, threshing of crops and mowing of hay testify to the frantic activity of harvest-time. The payments to the men and women are also interesting. In the third week of harvest in 1314, Adam Baxter and the (unnamed) wife of John Standwyche were paid the same amount (1s. 8d.) for 5 days work. Helen Herthyll and the villein (unnamed) of Henry Foster were also paid the same rate for their work on the harvest that year. Also of interest are the debts owed by the nuns to various people. Great efforts have been taken by the editors to identify the wide range of materials bought for the nunnery; these include a variety of building supplies and the minute but necessary bits of iron, leather and wood required to keep a cart or plough in good repair. The range of foodstuffs bought for the house is also impressive; such foodstuffs are dominated by pork and, unsurprisingly, fish (from herring to mussels). The cost of entertaining

visitors is evident on 16 January 1415 when cheeses for visitors are purchased especially. All in all there is plenty of information both for those interested in the local area of the nunnery and for those interested in the economic and social circumstances of such religious houses. The editors have provided not only a useful resource for historians to mine, but the quality of the transcription and the parallel translation will be helpful as a guide for those who want to use similar sources. As the editor says, the account book is a 'valuable snapshot of the economic standing of a small nunnery'.

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MICHAEL HICKS (ed.), *The fifteenth-century inquisitions post mortem: a companion* (The Boydell Press, 2012). xviii + 253 pp., 3 figs., 25 tabs., 1 map. £50.

Covering the period 1235–1660, the inquisitions *post mortem* constitute a series of returns (numbering in their thousands) made by royal escheators based on the investigations carried out by local juries at the instigation of the English Crown on the death of one of its feudal tenants. These provide details of who held the land and what it comprised, together with an assessment of its value. Often ignored or taken for granted and much maligned by generations of historians as inaccurate, incomplete or erroneous, the IPMs represent a fascinating and detailed archive of property holding and offer an almost unparalleled resource for examining the landed society of medieval England.

This book, sub-titled 'A companion', is more than a friendly introduction to these documents: it is intended both to complement study of the IPM Calendars and spark off fresh avenues of research. The guide, Michael Hicks, adopts a reassuring tone as he glides through the legal technicalities and administrative process that underlay the Inquisitions. He also contributes an erudite examination of property transmission across generations, concluding that dower, jointure and courtesy are far more complex than historians have hitherto acknowledged and that there is much more research needed into provision for widows and widowers. Other contributors make similar claims for exploring the potential of the sources. Indeed, Lawrence Poos, James Oeppen and Richard Smith, examining the use of the IPMs for measuring life expectancy and seasonal mortality, make an urgent plea for the remaining years of the fifteenth century to be completed. Christine Carpenter, who extols the virtue of the new calendars of IPMs for assessing lesser landowners' estates and enabling comparisons

to be drawn between gentry and nobility, outlines the opportunities for longitudinal studies of individual families and the structure and exploitation of estates in particular locations as well as the strategies and legal procedures favoured for land settlements.

Analysis of landholding patterns and estate values on a broad scale using statistical methods also emerges as a distinct possibility with the new digitized resource. Although the reliability of the data across the centuries still has to be borne in mind, Margaret Yates, on the strength of her Berkshire case study, is confident about the validity of employing quantitative techniques to land use and developments in agriculture. Similarly, Matthew Holford in his reassessment of the reliability of valuations and extents adopts a positive tone since the results so far have been shown to be 'credible and illuminating'. And, as Holford demonstrates in a second chapter in the volume, it is not just the landholders themselves who can be studied. Since the IPMs contain the names of local jurors, their status, method of selection and deliberations can now be evaluated, revealing the importance of locality in the choice of jurors and the fact that while they were respectable members of their communities, the burden of informing the Crown generally fell upon relatively humble, minor local officeholders. Kate Parkin's chapter, 'Tales of idiots', is equally revealing in its examination of the priorities and strategies for the protection of families and individuals involved in the concealment of idiocy, contrasting the theoretical rigidity of procedure with the flexibility of process that is observable from the 'lived historical experience'.

For those interested in what goes on behind the scenes, a series of papers highlight the problems entailed in calendaring the IPMs. Sean Cunningham assesses the 'Great Historical Enterprise' that the calendaring process represents, examining the different approaches adopted, from the largely antiquarian concerns followed from its beginnings in the early nineteenth century, through differences of opinion on indexing during the post-war period, to the scholarly, more research-informed AHRC calendaring projects of the early twenty-first century. This is matched by Claire Noble's lucid explanation of the development of the various writs used by the Crown which were encountered in the editing/calendaring process and their idiosyncracies; and Oliver Padel's consideration of the pros and cons of the late Roy Hunnisett's longstanding guidelines on calendaring and indexing place-names, at the conclusion of which he offers recommendations of his own to overcome difficulties in the identification of places and uncertainties in manorial affiliations fit for both printed versions and the new age of electronic

calendars. The value of the IPMs for economic and social history is rightly brought out by Christopher Dyer's informative essay, though it would have perhaps been more effective to have this at the close of the book, providing a sense that it was more than just a collection of interesting essays. The volume has a useful glossary and a good index, though predominantly of persons and places. If publishing costs had permitted, it could have done with a few plates of the original manuscripts, illustrating the sheer size of some of the returns and the damaged and dilapidated state of some of them, if only to show the immense dedication and enthusiasm of those who have compiled the calendars which this volume celebrates.

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JANE WHITTLE (ed.), *Landlords and Tenants in Britain, 1440–1660. Tawney's Agrarian Problem Revisited* (People, Markets, Goods: Economies and Societies in History, 1, Boydell Press, 2013). xv + 240 pp., 7 figs., 4 tabs., £17.99.

Like Shakespeare leaving his second-best bed to his wife, the great R. H. Tawney left to his closest academic companions, agrarian historians, his second-most famous book. But his *Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century* (1912), whose centenary this volume marks, has probably aged rather better than the more well-known *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926). The issues it raised: the relationship between landlords and tenants, the impact of inflation, the importance of enclosure, and the rise of the market economy, are ones which rural and agrarian historians are still picking over, and despite over a century of scholarship since, we still have more questions than answers, hence the success of this volume.

Centenaries do not always make for good scholarly publications since the issues they cover have often become rather stale. Not here, however, for there is still so much we do not know about the changes that swept over the countryside in the period we still sometimes call 'Tawney's Century'. As a result, the studies here manage to be uniformly interesting, and in some cases present some genuinely important findings.

There are, broadly, two types of chapter. Firstly, there is the overarching survey of knowledge in a particular area of Tawney's interest. In this mould, Whittle's interesting opening chapter looks at the preparation and reception of the book, from its initial plaudits to the stinging rebukes by Geoffrey Elton and Eric Kerridge after Tawney's death, and to the rekindling of interest in the wake of arguments by Robert Brenner. Christopher Dyer follows by summarizing research

into the rural history of the later fifteenth century, reminding us of the economic dynamism of the period, and pointing out how much Tawney got right about it. Julian Goodare then searches for a Scottish 'agrarian problem' and suggests that similar issues were at play north of the Border. Landlords were becoming more assertive, customary inheritances being attacked, and small tenant farmers were suffering. David Ormrod, meanwhile, in the book's final chapter, describes theoretical models of economic change and the development of capitalism from Tawney through to the twenty-first century.

Two of the most useful broad contributions deal with legal aspects of land tenure, a subject not always especially accessible to agrarian historians. Harold Garrett-Goodyear's article is particularly interesting, looking at it does to the process by which common-law courts started to regulate copyhold in the early sixteenth century. He makes the point that, however advantageous the protection of common law might have turned out to copyholders, the initial suits were launched by manorial lords. Christopher Brooks, meanwhile, highlights the considerable security enjoyed by copyholders by the time of the Civil War.

The other type of chapter comes in the form of the detailed local study, a genre of agrarian history that has developed immeasurably since Tawney's day. These cover issues – essentially enclosure and tenurial change – that were dear to Tawney's heart, but through the microscopic approach of scientific local history. Taking those which deal with commons and enclosure first, Briony McDonagh describes an enclosure dispute from Henrician south Yorkshire which pitted a manorial lessor against his tenants, and which was fought out in the common-law, equity, and prerogative courts as well as on the ground. The level of organization and skill deployed by the tenantry was impressive: they managed to bring 18 or 19 ploughs to an organized mass-ploughing, and were careful in the legal complaints to use the language of depopulation – smart politics indeed. Heather Falvey's chapter then dissects an intriguing dispute over a piece of herbage in Derbyshire, showing that those farmers involved in disorder were not necessarily the 'rude multitude', as the government insinuated, but came from many levels of society, and included some of high status. Andy Wood, meanwhile, dips into an intriguing dispute over common rights in Malmesbury, arguing that the possession of common rights was not merely an economic convenience, but represented 'shared entitlements' and 'a kind of social contract'. Grazing a cow, as such, 'combined material need, common interest, memory, community, meaning and agency'.

William Shannon, finally, discusses wasteland enclosure in lowland Lancashire, showing that the benefits to landlords from larger schemes were significant and risk-free; those to the tenants could be considerable, but they were not quite as certain. The surprisingly slow pace of wasteland enclosure in the region – given the benefits to lords in particular – is put down to a lack of willing tenants.

As with the chapters on law, the local studies of land tenure place emphasis on the strength of customary tenures, in almost total contrast to Tawney's view. Jean Morrin's study of the estates of the Dean and Chapter of Durham, however, does show tenant-right holdings gradually being converted to leaseholds, though it also tracks the eventual emergence of mutually beneficial relationships between estate and tenantry. Jennifer Holt's chapter on the Hornby Castle estate in the North West, meanwhile, shows clearly that rising land values from the sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries benefited customary tenants vastly more than the estate itself. Tenants held by tenant-right, which gave the lord the opportunity to exploit two irregular fines: one on the death or alienation of the tenant (like copyhold) and one on any change of lord. But even given this advantage they were only able to retain about 11 per cent of the market value of the land in rents: the rest was accrued to the tenants. Indeed, says Elizabeth Griffiths, it is in the context of these difficult economic circumstances – not the 'anti-landlordism' of Tawney's day – that we should understand the position of his 'villains', the landlords themselves. And her study of estate improvement in Norfolk has them as behaving in a manner we should see as 'reasonably fair' and 'perfectly sensible'.

This, then, is an impressive collection: it is learned, detailed, and based on deep archival research. It will be useful to students, and essential reading for rural historians. Perhaps the most salient conclusion is that, though we still find ourselves interested in many of the same things Tawney was, our view of the politics of the period, of the winners and losers, and of the social roots of entrepreneurialism, has shifted down the social scale. We no longer accept that this was necessarily the great age of the capitalist landlord. Instead, we emphasize the political, legal, and economic strength of the yeomanry: largely, of course, the self-same copyholders that Tawney saw being squeezed and exploited. Many landlords themselves were suffering an 'agrarian problem', in that – where their tenants held the lands on secure copyholds – they struggled to keep their income up with inflation. Importantly, the question that is starting to be asked is whether the real victims of exploitation were not, rather, the *subtenants*

on copyhold land, holding by insecure, annual leases at market rates. Should we, then, be looking for political strife not so much between landlords and copyholders, but between copyholders and their own poor, exploited tenants?

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JOHN LOUIS CRUICKSHANK, *Headingley-cum-Burley, c.1540–c.1784* (Thoresby Society, sec. ser. 22, 2012). xiv+ 323 pp., 3 figs., 7 maps. £15 available from Publications, The Thoresby Society, Claremont, 23 Clarendon Road, Leeds, LS2 9NZ.

There have been relatively few studies of the interface between towns and their adjacent townships, whether in terms of identifying networks of supply and demand as modelled by Von Thünen, or through examining spheres of urban political influence. This book therefore provides an important new case study, charting the changing pattern of landownership and landholding, improvements in transport and communications, and developments in agriculture and industry within Headingley-cum-Burley, one of 11 townships wholly within the ancient parish of Leeds. Tracing developments from the dissolution of the Cistercian abbey of Kirkstall to the end of the eighteenth century, Cruickshank finds a 'progressively greater involvement of the town in the township'.

The book begins with a detailed examination of the property structure of the township from the ministers' accounts produced at the dissolution of Kirkstall Abbey. Many of the abbey's demesne lands had already been transferred to men from adjacent townships within the abbey's estates, prior to the dissolution. Following the dissolution, the Kirkstall monks, while living separately, maintained a network of links, retained much of the abbey's demesne, kept possession of goods from the abbey, and bequeathed the abbey's property from one to another for a generation. In the 1560s, when the original Crown leases of the abbey demesne expired, the security of the remaining manorial tenures was destroyed. During the course of the seventeenth century, power in the township shifted from its manorial lord, a member of the county gentry, to a small group of minor gentry landowners who were also influential in Leeds.

Although the area of enclosed agricultural land grew substantially between 1540 and the end of the eighteenth century, mainly at the expense of woodland, the number of farmsteads and houses in Headingley and Burley increased only slowly. Throughout the period, the author considers the township to have been similar to a nineteenth-century 'close parish' in

which landholding and residence were tightly restricted and very stable. Family members and resident farm servants, rather than landless labourers, provided the labour for tenant farmers, supported when necessary by casual labour from Leeds. Arable farming predominated, and livestock holdings were relatively small, but some farmers seem to have supplied liquid milk to Leeds from the 1680s. The township provided grazing land for butchers' stock and animals in transit to the town, and formed a link in the trade that supplied cattle, which were driven from Scotland, fattened in Craven, and brought to the urban market. While not forming part of the well-known cloth manufacturing area around Leeds, the township accommodated some industry, including iron-making, tanning, milling and fulling.

The conclusion notes that those townships adjoining Leeds which lay to the north of the River Aire, including Headingley-cum-Burley, enjoyed good arable land, while those to the south and west, which were steeply sloping and poorly suited to grain production, became cloth manufacturing areas. The town of Leeds, at the river crossing, acted as the principal interface between these two zones. For those unfamiliar with the area, it would have helped to set out this wider geographical context in the introduction to the book, which is rather brief. A little more detail on the physical and economic development of Leeds in this period would also have assisted the reader. Nonetheless, this book, based on the author's Ph.D. thesis, provides a valuable case study for those with agricultural, urban, or industrial interests in the early modern period.

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L. JESSOP, M. WHITFIELD and A. DAVISON, *Alston Moor, Cumbria. Buildings in a North Pennines landscape* (English Heritage, 2013). 140 pp., 140 figs. £14.95.

Although the research behind this book was undertaken for one purpose, the results have been reworked for a different audience and the outcome is something of a *tour de force*. English Heritage's remit includes giving advice and, in order to be able to do that, a considerable amount of research may be required to underpin a consistent approach to the varied environments to be found across England. *Alston Moor* is one in a series of booklets published under the general heading of 'Informed Conservation', which examine the 'impact from climate change and new social and economic trends'. As the owner of two earlier publications in the series I think *Alston Moor* raises its game to a

remarkable extent, for this is an outstanding book especially when its size and price are taken into account.

For those unfamiliar with the extreme North West of England, it must be explained that, for a number of reasons, Alston has iconic status. Firstly, it has a geology which (amongst other things) was to generate huge wealth. Secondly, that wealth (and its subsequent rapid decline) resulted in an unusual demographic profile. Thirdly, Alston's situation high up in the Pennines results in a dramatic location with stunning views and skylscapes of breath-taking beauty. Each of these elements is discussed and thoroughly illustrated here.

Alston Moor is part of a relatively isolated upland area lying in the far north of England between Penrith and Durham and forms part of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is well known in geological circles for giving its name to the 'Alston Block' and for its silver-rich lead deposits, which have been exploited for at least the last 3000 years. (Those who would like to know more about Alston's geology should go to [www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk) and enter 'Alston Block' in the search engine). The modern town has many idiosyncratic features, not least the way its main street appears to climb vertically when approached along the A686 from the direction of Hartside Fell. But this ancient market town is only one component of the wider area under discussion here. This is primarily a landscape and buildings book and the authors do a fine job in both the quality and depths of those discussions and in the wealth of maps and illustrations that serve to complement them. Not least is the very effective use of LIDAR images so that the reader can truly follow the features across the landscape.

The text draws useful comparisons with surrounding areas and puts Alston in its context in a number of remarkable ways. In particular, by using the history of the built-environment and the industrial archaeology they deliver a narrative of Alston's population, its dramatic rise and fall and the activities of the varied social groups who lived there at different times.

Although it may seem overly critical (given the value for money represented by this booklet) there are nits to pick. In a text of this quality and depth, an index and glossary would have been appropriate. Furthermore, although there is a 'reference and further reading' list, it appears to only give the former, with little of the latter to take an interested reader onward. But, enough carping: this is a first-rate book and could well be a model of how to use thorough research to generate a readable and illuminating text.

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STEVE HINDLE, ALEXANDRA SHEPARD and JOHN WALTER (eds), *Remaking English society. Social relations and social change in early modern England* (The Boydell Press, 2013). xviii + 374 pp., 9 figs., 1 illus., 10 tabs., 6 maps. £60.

Keith Wrightson has been a formative influence in the development of early modern social history over the last forty years, and this *festschrift* provides both a fitting tribute and interesting insights into the current state of the discipline. It begins with a long and weighty introduction in which the three editors contextualize Wrightson's achievement and trace changes in social history over the course of his career. It highlights the enduring themes, and the subtly nuanced shades of understanding deployed at the interface of the traditional social order and the forces of social and economic change. Wrightson's initial achievement was to focus on people and community politics in social and economic history. How this has fared as history was submerged by the linguistic turn in the humanities is a second and important theme of the chapter.

In the remainder of the book the contributors demonstrate the wide range of themes Wrightson's students have addressed. Many made use of the micro-study technique, a case study, often from a single community looked at from several positions. Alexandra Shepard examines how communities treated the fathers of illegitimate children. They were often expected to take responsibility, physically as well as financially once the child had survived the first few years, but by the later seventeenth century the parish was more frequently directly involved with the placing of the child. Helen Berry uses the intriguing case of Italian *castrati* opera stars in London to explore perceptions of their gender (and sexuality) during the eighteenth century. Naomi Tadmor deploys a gendered approach to the eighteenth-century Sussex diaries of Thomas Turner, showing how Turner's wife was excluded from parish affairs while her husband often did parish business over a hearty meal on the rates. Paul Griffiths looks at written record keeping by townships and cities, and the new information culture partly spawned central government's enactments. It created information networks between towns, as well as providing London with data and turning oral custom into written record, but may also perversely have made local government more secretive. Phil Withington's chapter on intoxicants in early modern York looks at the ale house and the 'moralists and magistrates' who regulated it, central Wrightsonian territory. The early seventeenth century surge in wine and tobacco consumption in inns and taverns changed

the focus of York's intoxication, but it was the small alehouse keepers who were most scrutinized and purged. Food and drink are the focus of Adam Fox's contribution, considered as badges of social status. Using a combination of contemporary writings, and a rather uncritical take on Gregory King's calculations on food expenditure by social group, he considers variation in diet as an indicator of social status. Tim Stretton considers early modern neighbourliness and indebtedness, pointing to the wider use of written bonds, and contrasts England's readiness to imprison debtors, with Massachusetts' ban. England's increasing litigiousness went with an un-neighbourly willingness to enforce the letter of the instrument, and a growing culture of vexatious litigation. Malcolm Gaskell considers neighbourliness in the context of witchcraft accusations, demonstrating the 'capricious and contested' range of neighbourly situations which engendered court cases – the political, the isolated old woman accusing her neighbours of trying to bewitch her, but above all pointing up the gulf between richer and poorer sorts in much more nuanced ways than in Macfarlane's classic scenario. Andy Wood's chapter on deference and paternalism successfully deploys sociological ideas to clarify this contested area and argues that deferential pleas for a return to past harmonious social relations in early modern England gave way in the nineteenth century to a sense that the golden age was irrecoverable. Steve Hindle's fertile research on the Newdigate papers and Chilvers Cotton here considers the estate workforce and their patterns of recruitment and work. Servants in husbandry came from outside the parish, and changed frequently, while local day labourers were vital for peak season, and 25 per cent of their work was at piece rates. Wage rates appear low, but whether this was the result of paternalist relationships is unclear, and complicated by the burgeoning local coal industry which has left few records. Henry French's chapter on the old poor law in Terling illustrates a well-documented topic only lightly explored by Wrightson and Levine in their study. His massive database of poor law payments up to 1800 used in combination with a very full 1801 census return shows the dominance of short-term help to a wide range of families, the scale of the crisis of the 1790s and enriches rural historians' understanding of the reality of poor law provision. In the final chapter Craig Muldrew charts the relationship between economic and political governance from Sir Thomas to Adam Smith, looking at the change in vocabulary from Commonwealth to Nation and Society. He stresses how labour and labour discipline have long been seen as the key to public opulence, and the importance to Adam

Smith's thought of government's role in controlling vested interests of every kind.

These varied essays match the breadth of Wrightson's interests and the high research standards he engendered. Wrightson's approach ensured that social and economic history broke out from the structures and categories of its initial phase to ensure that individuals and communities could be given full voice. It is no criticism to reflect that his territory (and that of the contributors) is almost exclusively England. Wrightson's contemporaries in early modern political history widened perspectives to stress Scotland and Ireland and the British question. Economic and social historians have increasingly made global comparisons, while the COST and CORN initiatives have triggered transnational rural approaches. Will Wrightson's successors subtly shift his very English focus without losing the rigorous and nuanced approach he instilled?

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IAN MITCHELL, *Tradition and innovation in English retailing, 1700 to 1850. Narratives of consumption* (Ashgate, 2014). xiv + 223., 11 figs, 2 tabs. £70.

Retailing and especially consumption have attracted an enormous amount of interest in recent years, with the long eighteenth century being accorded particular emphasis in narratives of transformation. This book promises a reassessment of the standard view, firstly by focusing on aspects of retailing too often overlooked (markets and itinerants, for instance) and secondly by placing these alongside both more familiar retail formats (fixed shops and polite shopping) and key motivations for consumption. Mitchell is wary of grand narratives; indeed, he seeks to debunk them. He does this by grounding his book in a rich and detailed picture of the everyday practices and experiences of retailing. The analysis is structured into three broad sections.

The first centres on continuity and change in traditional retail formats. Central to this is a familiar story of the rise of fixed shops, although there is welcome detail that adds granularity and coherence to a picture too often left patchy and impressionistic. More importantly, the picture is broadened to include the operation and experience of markets, and the attempts to improve these whilst retaining ideals of morality and fairness, especially for the poor. Alongside this, Mitchell explores the margins of retailing: itinerants, back street shops and second-hand dealers. Importantly, these are presented as part of the same retail system: practices and customers being shared with more formal types of retailing. It is here that village shops make their

only appearance, which is unfortunate as they too were growing in number and sophistication during this period, and deserve greater attention.

The second section focuses on consumption; what Mitchell sees as 'disturbing influences'. He begins by revisiting the familiar debate over luxury, but adds a fresh touch by including an explicitly religious dimension to these 'moral' debates. The discussion is then extended into ideas of dissatisfaction and contentment, although the latter is rather brushed over as attention centres on the so-called Diderot effect. Next, we move to fashion, conceived here largely in terms of novelty and leisurely sociability, although comfort is also discussed, mostly as a counterpoint to the apparent strictures of gentility and elegance. In many ways, this chapter lies at the heart of the book. It is here that Mitchell really gets to grips with shopping as an activity that brings together retailing and consumption. In doing so, he seeks to address the thorny issue of the role of shopkeepers in constructing and communicating taste. Despite excellent primary material and a nuanced discussion of shopping practices (which emphasizes the importance of fashion to consumers) we never really get an answer to this question. Instead, attention moves on to collecting (and obsession) as another motivation to consume. These are explored largely in terms of books and again we are treated to some wonderful insights into the varied practices of bibliophiles, each carefully gleaned from the archives and meticulously presented. It is perhaps a little surprising, then, that the analysis leaves largely unexplored the ways in which these passions were fed by or shaped the provincial book trade.

In the final section, Mitchell turns to 'modern' forms of retailing, which emerged in the early nineteenth century. Following a canter through some figures on the growing number of shops, attention focuses more firmly on proto-department stores and bazaars. The former are reasonably familiar and a series of well-known businesses are discussed, mostly to ascertain commonalities in their success. Perhaps some 'failed' initiatives would have added to our understanding of this important retail innovation, but we nonetheless get a much clearer picture of the contingent nature of retail development: there was nothing automatic about the success of shops such as Browns or Kendals. Less familiar is the rise (and fall) of bazaars – an essentially London phenomenon that briefly flourished in a number of provincial towns before being subsumed or overtaken by department stores. In the end, we return to our starting point: the retail market, discussed here in terms of the emergence of market halls. Rather than dwell on their

physical form, Mitchell focuses on their construction as a contested process with uncertain outcomes – one that depended on the firm guiding hand of a wealthy landowner or determined local government.

Overall, this is an impressive book; the product of considerable scholarly effort. Does it succeed in offering the promised reassessment? To an extent, it does. Mitchell argues convincingly that modernity was a fragmented and fractured process, and successfully anchors grand narratives in the complexity of everyday experience. He focuses at least some of our attention onto traditional and humble forms of retailing and invites us – quite rightly – to think closely about the link between retailer and consumer. However, his wariness of large explanatory frameworks means that he ultimately shies away offering an alternative framework for analysis that might reform how we approach retailing and consumption in this vital period of change. Nonetheless, this is an impressive and very readable book; one that provides rich insights into a dynamic and diverse set of economic and social practices.

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JOHN M. VIRGOE, *Thomas Eccleston (1752–1809): A progressive Lancashire agriculturalist* (Chetham Society third ser. 49, 2012). xiv + 242 pp., 1 tab., 1 illus., 2 maps. £20.

A full assessment of the contribution made by the gentry to the economic performance of Lancashire in the late eighteenth century is long overdue. This volume provides a contribution towards such an evaluation, from which future historians will derive considerable benefit.

Thomas Eccleston was an ambitious agricultural improver, based in Scarisbrick, Lancashire, who gained widespread fame during his own lifetime, not least because of his work draining Martin Mere. Eccleston was an extremely able self-publicist, from which much of his fame derives, and he was a correspondent of many of the leading lights of late eighteenth-century agricultural improvement, both at home and overseas. Virgoe rightly selects Eccleston for close scrutiny, and highlights south-west Lancashire as a place of significant agricultural developments during the industrial revolution. Eccleston stands out as an individual who enjoyed a prominent local reputation with active membership of agricultural societies, large-scale success with drainage, a champion of Elkington's method of drainage, and sponsor of Lancastrian William Moorcroft, the first Englishman to obtain a formal veterinary qualification, and an

experimenter with crops, rotations and implements. He is an important figure in English agricultural history, hitherto neglected by agricultural historians, much like his native south-west Lancashire.

Eccleston was a member of the ancient Scarisbrick family and his descendants were to become possessed of one of the largest, and richest, non-aristocratic estates in England in the nineteenth century. The Scarisbrick archive held at Lancashire Archives is substantial and significant, with the estate being particularly well documented for the century after 1750. This book is based on an impressive array of letters, diaries, accounts, surveys and memoranda of various types, as well as a range of contemporary published sources. The scale and diversity of the archive is made very apparent by this book, and Virgoe has clearly developed an unrivalled knowledge of the manuscript collection.

However, I do have some concerns with the book. The context is, for the most part, very poor with barely any acknowledgement of a great deal of academic work on agricultural history in recent years. As an example, only six articles and one review from the *Review* are cited, with only two of these being published in the last 20 years. Of the 150 or so items in the bibliography of secondary sources, only 11 were published in the last ten years. This failure to contextualize mars the whole book, significantly undermining Virgoe's argument. That the book is written in praise of the gentry contribution is established early on in a phrase that could easily have come from the text of an eighteenth-century critic of Lancashire farming: 'Farms were small and the farmers were conservative' (p. 21). He goes on to argue that '[f]ew ordinary farmers could be pioneers since they did not have the financial resources to offset the risks of failure, particularly on the small farms of south-west Lancashire, and it was up to the landlords to be the innovators' (pp. 152–3). But Virgoe simply does not address any of the literature that has challenged the role of the landlord-improver nor those works that have argued a case for the role of the small farmer in the agricultural revolution.

Readers of this journal may fill in some of these omissions for themselves, and those able to do so will find this book rewarding. Virgoe has established a case for Eccleston as an active writer, host, agricultural tourist, experimenter, adopter and promoter of innovations, and has thus achieved his first aim: 'to put the case for Thomas Eccleston as an important agricultural improver' (p. 1), although lack of reference to the full body of work on south-west Lancashire and a general lack of analysis prevent him from achieving his second, 'to reappraise the position of Lancashire from that of an agriculturally backward part of England' to

one that could be regarded as 'progressive' (pp. 1–2). Parts of this book will be very familiar to those who are aware of Virgoe's previous work, and those familiar with the historiography will be aware of numerous significant omissions. However, much of the text itself reads like an extended annotated catalogue with extremely long summaries of letters that ought to have been edited down. This archival coverage is impressive, with sometimes forensic accuracy regarding personnel, but with sometimes excessive detail that detracts from the two stated aims. There is a distinct lack of analysis, and, ultimately, contradiction and confusion in the argument.

Virgoe cannot really maintain his argument. In the concluding pages he confesses that 'Eccleston was less of a true innovator' (p. 192) and, in contrast to other contemporary practical 'improving' farmers, he was not motivated by profit – but by 'personal ambition' (p. 199). Eccleston had produced agricultural goods for urban markets, although his experiments with Galloway cattle, for instance, did not go down well with Liverpool butchers. Yet, in Virgoe's eyes, such experiments remained valuable as 'many ordinary farmers were illiterate' (p. 192) and therefore unable to benefit directly from the activities of organizations such as Agricultural Societies. However, Virgoe does not demonstrate how much of an impact Eccleston had on the farmers of south-west Lancashire; undoubtedly he had some influence, but how is this to be measured and set against the innovations of 'ordinary' farmers, many of whom were literate, and were in a better financial position than Virgoe and many eighteenth-century commentators assumed? Ultimately Virgoe characterizes south-west Lancashire as a place which 'made the best use of its own resources and farming traditions by producing mainly dairy products, potatoes and vegetables based on small family farms and small, ancient enclosures' (p. 195). I remain perplexed, in such an environment, about the role of an 'improving agriculturalist'.

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HANNAH VELTEN, *Beastly London. A history of animals in the city* (Reaktion Books, 2013). 288 pp., 121 illus. £29.

Hannah Velten's book is a beautifully illustrated, well researched, accessible and evocative history of animals in London. This is a narrative account, and Velten draws on a wonderfully wide range of sources – literature and popular commentary, prints, illustrations and photographs, the work of diarists and satirists, as well as official material – which, along with a sensitive yet direct written style, bring the story to life. By

addressing the history of animal-human relations in one place, she is also able to capture and extraordinarily wide range of animals and the ways that our treatment of them has changed dramatically over time. In part this has been about animal welfare, but it has also been about changing notions of 'civilization', and about technology: by 1947, when the Ministry of Transport banned horse-drawn vehicles from major London thoroughfares at peak times, there was less need for them. *Beastly London* captures the complexity of the ways in which humanity has historically shared its urban space – be that space roads, homes, circuses, railway stations, markets, slaughterhouses, dairies or parks – and by doing so makes us pause.

This is not a book written solely from a human point of view, however. As an experienced journalist who has worked for *Farmers Weekly* and someone who has worked with dairy cattle, Velten has managed to take on board the 'animal turn' and put it to very good and steady use. For example, we see the animal 'voice' in the form of vignettes, or moments of animal biography. Through these, the animal characters come alive, so that we can know them better. But, demonstrating a very subtle understanding of recent academic discussions about animal welfare in its various guises, Velten never writes of the animals sentimentally. In fact, many stories are very likely to disturb, and she underlines the awful conditions in which many thousands of animals were housed and slaughtered, or under which they were handled and worked daily. These vignettes engage the reader, while Velten moves the narrative forward on the larger scale and traces each element of animal history to its close. At the same time, and strikingly for a popular history, Velten manages to avoid what could be a simple story of progress. Her writing is superbly nuanced.

The book covers pets of all kinds; the vermin that Londoners housed accidentally; animals in the Royal Menagerie, the Tower of London and, later, London Zoo; animals used for entertainment – including dancing bears and fighting cocks – in circuses, theatres and other venues; animals used for draft and power; animals farmed, marketed, driven and slaughtered; animals vivisected; and animals celebrated. It demonstrates that humanity, as environmental historians as well as animal ecologists have argued, has lived within an enormously rich set of networks with other animals for a very long time. Though the book ends a little too soon, it also serves to remind us that we still live in those networks, if in altered form. We accommodate other animals in more ways than we might at first think.

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PHILIP CONFORD, *The development of the Organic Network. Linking people and themes, 1945–95* (Floris Books, 2011). 477 pp. £25.

Slavoj Žižek, in his analysis of the structure of contemporary ideology, famously draws upon the example of the organic apple. It is not, he argues, simply that we purchase organic apples for the positive qualities they embody of being 'pure' or 'healthy', we also choose to buy organic because we desire the 'excess' that the term organic signifies. When we buy organic, we also buy our own absolution from the negative qualities of the capitalist market: pollution, degradation of the soil, the use of pesticides, and so on. In the organic movement one sees the operation of modern ideology; the way in which modern consumerism allows us to simultaneously inhabit capitalist society and purchase an indulgence against it.

Philip Conford's book does not take Žižek's critique of the organic movement as its starting-point, but it might. The book is a detailed study of the overlapping influences upon the organic movement since the Second World War. It is in some respects a difficult work; there is no over-arching thesis or argument and the book does not have a neat concluding chapter or summary. There is a great deal of detail about the characters and publications of the movement, which is largely descriptive in character.

However, in other respects Conford's book shares much with Žižek's remark on apples, in that it is both flawed and brilliantly suggestive. Most remarkable is the way in which Conford demonstrates the rich interactions between the organic movement and wide range of other tendencies in intellectual endeavour, social and economic change, and political struggle. As such, the book implicitly raises a number of important questions and possible routes for further research.

For example, the transformation of the organic movement in the 1970s and 1980s, with the emergence of a greater consumer orientation (embodied in 'wholefoods', and the popularization of the Soil Association Standard as a propaganda tool in promoting organic eating) marks what is clearly an important moment in the generalization of organic culture. The full implications of this social and economic shift are rather underplayed, and it is clear that there is a great deal more to be said. Nonetheless Conford's narrative is a starting point for further work.

Similarly, there are wonderful impressionistic chapters on the organic movement's relationship to ecology, environmentalism, and wider political life. The complex, and sometimes strained, relationship between the organic movement and environmentalism is apparent. Nor was there a straight translation of the

organic movement into the political terms of socialism or conservatism; although Conford demonstrates significant and important connections to the tradition of radical land reform and British utopian socialism.

Conford is, however, far from certain about how to address these ambiguities. It is worth considering why the 'politics' of something like the organic movement do not simply map onto existing political formations. Arguably, this has less to do with the concrete content of the organic idea than with the attraction of the 'excessive' attributes that Žižek has identified. An essential quality of any ideological object is precisely that it is able to convey more than its own particular content. Diverse political movements may seek to capture it precisely to determine how this excess is deployed. If anything, Conford's account of the politics of the organic movement reflects the interpretive potential of viewing the movement as an ideological formation.

This, however, also marks an unfortunate limit of a book that is driven by an explicit empiricism, which Conford adopts in the introduction with somewhat perverse pride. This empiricist positioning is adopted in antipathy towards Social Movement Theory, though we never discover precisely what it is that Conford objects to in this theoretical orientation except that it is posited 'a priori'. Yet, the author is quite happy to accept the a priori theoretical parameters of his own self-proclaimed 'inductive process'. Ultimately, the absence of theoretical discussion limits the capacity of this work to draw wider conclusions about the nature of environmental movements or the historical significance of the organic movement itself.

Yet, one thing is clear from the detailed research that Conford had undertaken, and the rich intellectual and social world that his empirical work has uncovered: there are all sorts of possibilities for further analysis in the world of the organic movement. From the role of emerging consumption, to the influence of esotericism, or questions of class, gender and race, the application of the analytical categories, which historians have elsewhere successfully deployed, will doubtless reveal a great deal. The organic movement has much to thank Conford for in making available an accessible starting-point for this endeavour.

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## Europe and Elsewhere

ERIK THOEN, GUUS J. BORGER, ADRIAAN M. J. DE KRAKER, TIM SOENS, DRIES TYS, LIES VERVAET and HENK J. T. WEERTS (eds), *Landscapes or seascapes? The history of the coastal environment in the North Sea area reconsidered* (CORN Publication Series 13, Brepols, 2013). 428 pp., 114 figs., 7 tabs. €70.

The 18 papers collected here were presented at the third conference examining the historical evolution of the coastal lands of regions bordering the North Sea. Each of these conferences has redefined our understanding of the changes which have taken place in the continental coast of the North Sea and has sought to integrate insights from geomorphology on the one hand, and history and archaeology on the other. The reality is that there are considerable problems in combining the two approaches, and this volume is divided into separate sections for those papers that deal with the 'natural context' and those that address the 'social organization'. The first generally looks at change on a grand scale of thousands of years, while many of the papers dealing with the history consider the later middle ages alone. The tension between natural and anthropogenic factors runs throughout the volume. The historical papers in particular are deeply ambivalent about the cause of changes and whether the 'aggressive' reclamation of wetlands precipitated the subsequent crises.

The term 'aggressive', employed in a number of papers by the Continental contributors, implies a certain type of relationship between human intervention and the environment. It seems to be used here to mean reclamation activities which created unstable environmental conditions. Stability in a dynamic coastal environment is, however, a relative concept. The conditions in these regions were unpredictable and the pursuit of long-term stability was generally illusory. Increasing storminess from the later thirteenth century and strong winds at any period, which could reactivate coastal dune systems, were important factors in changing the environment. But equally as important was the decline in land values in the fifteenth century, which reduced investment in drainage and maintenance of the flood defences. It remains difficult even with the benefit of hindsight to understand the contribution of the various factors. The introduction of rabbits into the coastal dunes of the south-west Netherlands is identified in one chapter as an important part of a stable eco-system lasting until the eighteenth century, but in the nearby Scheldt estuary rabbits are said to have been the cause of the destruction of the coastal dune barrier. Equally, coastal flooding could be regarded as a disaster,

or the means by which fertile alluvium was deposited, raising land levels and providing opportunities for new, profitable reclamation.

The particular value for English-speaking readers is that this book brings together an enormous volume of scholarship, particularly from continental Europe. Much of that work is otherwise available only in Dutch or Flemish, and the individual papers here provide a guide to the current state of knowledge on the coastal environment of the North Sea coast. These are set alongside a small number of papers from Britain and, rather oddly, a study of water management in the Po valley in Italy. What emerges more strongly than anything else is that most of the papers are local case studies. No grand synthesis emerges and even common factors are difficult to identify. As a result the concluding chapter by Eric Thoen lays stress upon regional 'social-agro systems' as the critical factor in the history of these coastal lands. Diversity rather than uniformity along the coast seems to be the main conclusion to draw from this volume.

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JORDI PLANAS, *Viticultura i cooperativisme. La comarca d'Igualada, 1890-1939* (Publicacions de d'Abadia de Montserrat, 2013). 411 pp., 12 figs. €21.

Agricultural cooperation has been an important subject for European agricultural history. Cooperatives arose principally in response to the challenges posed by agricultural modernization and the difficulties farmers had in facing them individually. Numerous books and academic articles have been published in Spain on this topic, many of them concentrating on explaining the relative failure or scanty development of this model prior to the Civil War (1936-39).

Against this background, the principal objective of this book is to analyse the development of agricultural cooperation in the field of grape and wine production in the first third of the twentieth century in Catalonia, the Spanish region where cooperation was most highly developed. To this end the district of Igualada, in the province of Barcelona – which clearly specialized in wine production – has been chosen as a case study; at the end of the nineteenth century over two thirds of the agricultural land area was dedicated to vines. It was a district in which the replanting of vines, following the arrival of the *phylloxera* blight, was of great importance, with the area under vines eventually reaching almost the same land area as before the coming of the disease.

The study is principally based on documentary sources that in many cases were generated by the cooperatives studied, which on occasion have even

maintained a historical archive to conserve them. The methodology of the research is, therefore, to analyse local cases, using them in an attempt to extract conclusions that can be of more general application. On the other hand, the author, who has published a wide body of work in the field of agricultural history, has conducted this research with a deep knowledge of the Spanish literature on agricultural cooperation. This makes it far easier for the study of local cases to be correctly inserted into more general debates.

The historical context in which the subject is studied has two principal features. First, following the golden age of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as a consequence of problems of overproduction, there were successive crises for grape and wine producers, which generated sharp price fluctuations and fairly low price levels that had a tendency to decrease. Second, social conflict was also intense in the agricultural areas that specialized in vines, as the result of the opposition between landowners and the farmers who cultivated the land under long-term contracts (*rabassaires*).

Although the book analyses all the agricultural experiences of association, and most particularly those of cooperation, which took place in the district of Igualada, attention is focused on the two of greatest importance and impact: the Cambra Agrícola d'Igualada (Igualada Chamber of Agriculture), founded in 1908 and having over 2,000 members, and the Sindicat de Vinyaters d'Igualada (Igualada Wine Producers' Trade Union); the latter, founded in 1921, only reached a membership of 200 members, yet possessed greater assets than the former and displayed greater continuity in the post-war period.

The two experiences represent two completely different models of agricultural cooperation that coexisted in harmony in Catalonia. The Cambra Agrícola d'Igualada is a perfect example of cooperatives created by well-off proprietors, in many cases encouraged by the Church within the framework of Catholic agricultural associations. Its objectives were dual. On the one hand, it sought to diffuse new agricultural technologies and facilitate farmers' access to them. Thus, it supplied chemical fertilizers, fungicides and other inputs to farmers, and distilled surplus wine to obtain alcohol and spirits. On the other hand, it also attempted to reduce social conflict by avoiding the need for tenant farmers to have their own organizations: the important owners occupied a social position that would permit them to channel tensions and maintain their hegemony. The affiliation of small owners or tenants to this cooperative can be understood by the advantages they obtained from having access to new inputs, techniques or means of

transforming production. By contrast, the *Sindicat de Vinyaters d'Igualada* was an initiative of small farmers and tenants which, thanks to the financial support of the municipal savings bank, controlled by left-wing republican politicians, was successful where the *Cambra Agrícola* was not, since it created a cooperative winery.

This is a valuable book, one that performs a meticulous analysis of the actors participating in these experiences, the methods of organization and working of the cooperatives, their principal results and their links to the social conflicts that existed in the rural environment in those years. It is an important study

in local history, undertaken by a researcher well versed in the principal debates of agricultural history in that period, but who should perhaps have used his excellent knowledge of the contexts outside the district analysed to explain the problems tackled. This would have given non-specialist readers a better understanding of the importance of these experiences. Similarly, somewhat broader conclusions, explaining the contribution of this study to wider knowledge of cooperation in European agricultural history would have been interesting.

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