

Book Reviews

G. LAWTON (ed.), 'Church Lawton Manor Court Rolls, 1631–1860', *The Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, CXLVII (2013), 297 pp., 9 figs, 15 tabs. As the era of 'open access' approaches, it is worth pausing for a moment to consider the old saying 'that you can get what you want but lose what you have'. Guy Lawton's painstaking edition of the Church Lawton manorial court rolls is a perfect example of the benefits of subscription publication of a scholarly edition of a historical text by a long-established learned society. Life has been proceeding in this vein for 170 years in most British counties. Scholars undertake such monumental editorial tasks as a labour of love, the societies undertake to publish them for their subscribers, and in this way documents see the light of day that would never be produced by commercial publishers. While the embargo periods built into initial 'open access' agreements appear to safeguard this ancient craft, fears remain that such things might disappear as the collateral damage created by the changing whims of an internet giant.

If so, let us appreciate what we have, while we still have it. In this instance, one could argue that the value of editorial work on these court rolls outweighs the intrinsic interest of the documents themselves. Church Lawton was a small manor of 1366 statute acres on the Cheshire–Staffordshire border. Its court rolls do not survive as a consecutive series through the period covered in this volume, because there were large gaps: 1643–57, 1701–34, 1740–70, and 1779–1840. While many of these gaps reflect genuine losses, the final hiatus might reflect a genuine lack of business, or more properly the steward's genuine lack of interest in keeping the court, when the manorial lord held 92 per cent of the land in hand. So, it is fair to say that there are probably more exciting historical documents available in print.

However, there are few more painstaking editions of them. The rolls themselves detail patterns found elsewhere. Relatively vibrant Leet business in the 1630s halved in volume in the Restoration period, and halved again by the 1730s. The greatest casualty was the court's regulation of petty affrays, which probably fell increasingly under the summary jurisdiction of the local

magistrate. These court rolls are buttressed by extensive indices of persons and places, as they occur in every single surviving roll. In addition, the editor has done sterling work in setting the rolls in a much broader documentary context, by transcribing supporting material such as the 1660 Poll Tax, Hearth Taxes of 1664, 1669 and 1673, Land Taxes of 1781 and 1800, and the 1841 Census. In addition, he has also included a fascinating probate inventory of Church Lawton Hall in 1693, and a document designed to make the early modernist's head swim, a 1741 itemised inventory valuation of a Newcomen Engine used to drain the Lawtons' salt pan in the manor.

The editorial introduction is also well worth reading, not just because of its description of the composition of the rolls, the conduct of the court, or their value in pushing back the history of the Cheshire salt trade into the early eighteenth century, but because of the story of the Lawton family itself. Again, this is both idiosyncratic and very familiar – accumulation of wealth and status in the century following the Reformation, reaching a peak with John Lawton (d. 1736), his 21 children, his £100 income, his house, his salt pans, and his political career. The next century was one of decline, mismanagement and misalliance, as the estate fell into the hands of an exploitative steward, was turned around by an indefatigable widow, and was then eventually inherited by the uncouth husband of the lover of the diarist Anne Lister. Church Lawton Hall followed a similar trajectory, tracing its own slow decline from the 1880s, as it was first rented out, then used as a hospital and as a private school, then left to become derelict and vandalised, and then redeveloped as apartments in the late twentieth century.

While this edition is likely to be of most interest to its subscribers in Lancashire and Cheshire, it is a useful reference work, a handy source of examples of the post-medieval court roll, and an illustration of the workings of the regional economy explored in some depth by Charles Foster a decade ago. In this sense (and hopefully only in this sense), it provides another valuable illustration of the 'world we have lost'.

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IAN WAITES, *Common land in English painting, 1700–1850*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2012. 181 pp., 42 figs., 30 illus. £50.

Our shared vision of the English countryside has been hewn and gently shaped by centuries of engagement, from regional farming practices to radical transformations and maturing plantations. Art and experience have undoubtedly played a key role in this and Ian Waites' work offers a new perspective on how that landscape has been represented in art over the key period of transformation 1700–1850. Whilst the landscape history of that period has its champions – one being Tom Williamson the general editor of this relatively new series from Boydell – its representation in art has perhaps been less well explored beyond the popular canon. Waites seeks to reveal lesser known artistic representations of common land: open fields, meadows heaths and woodland. The first chapter deals with the works of Tillemann, whose sketches and washes of pre-enclosure Northamptonshire show the baulks, furlongs and strips so ably studied by generations of historians and archaeologists, and of course John Clare. Consideration of George Lambert, Thomas Gainsborough's woodland scenes and Richard Wilson's heathlands lead into a chapter on Sandby, Cotman, Constable and William Turner of Oxford bringing a regional consideration to the representation of landscape.

Across all of these landscapes blow the winds of change. Waites draws on the historiography of landscape and agricultural change as well as art history to try and understand why these landscapes were so rarely depicted. It is a complex answer and one that must involve the relationship between art and private property as well as the more familiar territory of picturesque aesthetics and the progress of enclosure. There is also considerable complexity – in terms of tenure, use, access, and form – within the types of landscape that Waites considers. There is early on in the book a discussion of terms which arguably does not resolve itself with clarity. 'Common field' is preferred to 'open field' but this becomes confusing at times when commons themselves are being discussed. A quick flick through the well-produced illustrations, including some excellent colour plates, suggests that many of the unenclosed landscapes depicted were not actually common or open fields, but heaths, meadows and woodlands; images which drew heavily on classical models. Tellingly perhaps, it was the artists of Dutch heritage – Tillemann and DeWint – who are drawn to the open prospects of the unenclosed fields. It is perhaps significant that whilst most forms of open landscape are given excellent coverage the moorlands are peculiar

by their absence. Perhaps covered under common land their ecosystems were and are distinctive, and they included a complex mix of enclosed (privately owned) and common or waste land, but were also home to industrial processes.

Waites' book draws landscape art together with an appreciation of the landscape before the impact of parliamentary enclosure and it raises interesting questions about preconceptions of the relationship between art and the landscape and the choices made in each subject or view point. As an art historian the artistic element is naturally the stronger of the two themes, but the book reminds us that common land – land to which we all have access – is both fundamental to our picture of England and our imaginary country, and constantly under threat.

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PETER ROEBUCK, 'Cattle droving, cotton and landownership: a Cumbrian family saga', *Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society Extra Series*, XLIII, 2014. xii + 169 pp., 19 illus., 2 maps. £20 post-free from Hon. Librarian and Stockholder, I. D. Caruana, 10 Peter Street, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA3 8QP.

This is a book with an unusual structure. The first 22 pages describe the Parker family who lived in north Cumberland from at least the first half of the seventeenth century; holding farms (*inter alia*) in Wreay and High Hesket along the main road (now A6) from Penrith to Carlisle. One part of the family turned up in the Stockport area in 1791 and proceeded to generate substantial fortunes from the textile trade; the bulk of the narrative relates to these activities. From about 1820, the men increasingly invested in commercial property in Manchester and country houses in Cumberland. So far, so normal.

The author (formerly of the University of Ulster) was drawn to the story by the chance purchase of one of the former Parker homes together with the discovery of a family history put together by a member of the Parker family. The first section therefore is largely based upon this family story and so is not necessarily Roebuck's own narrative. To my mind this is a limitation, because half-way through this family depiction we discover that the Mary Nicholson who, in 1696, married Thomas Parker (1678–1760) was the niece of Dr William Nicholson, Bishop of Carlisle, later Archbishop of Cashel, whilst her brother was the Joseph Nicholson, who in 1777 (together with Richard Burn) published the enduring *History and antiquities of the counties of Westmorland and Cumberland*. We might

well wonder about the other women who married into this family; who their antecedents might have been; to what networks the Parker men consequently had access. As with most family histories, we get almost no information about the families into which sisters and daughters married.

The bulk of the narrative concerns the commercial activities of various grandsons and great-grandsons of Thomas and Mary Parker who became involved in textiles and for which, it appears, there is a substantial archive held at Carlisle. As with the first part of the book, we are given an overview against which to set the Parkers' activities although this necessarily limits the space available to discuss those complex and varied businesses. Consequently, the reader can be left uncertain as to whether the Parkers were actually manufacturing or acting as middlemen. (The discussion of calico printing gives the impression that the work was done on behalf of the Parkers, for they lament that they cannot control the quality of the products.) Indeed, it is difficult to envisage how these men might have gained sufficient expertise in all the branches of manufacturing to which reference is made. However, whether as manufacturers or middlemen, the Parkers were to move onto the international stage with goods being shipped to both South and North America as well as around the Mediterranean, and here there is some very interesting detail. In fact, there is a lot of material here to interest us: the men depicted lived complex lives. As so often appears to have been the case, many of them were so busy making money they never got round to marriage, so that the second generation generally died without direct heirs. And make money is what the Parkers certainly did, with the result that by 1820 they were building large houses in the textile areas; subsequently moving onto country houses in Cumberland where they are linked with Warwick Bridge, Skirwith Castle and Petteril Green. Thomas Parker (1784–1828) was particularly active, with substantial homes at Ardwick Green (then a pleasant suburb of Manchester) and Warwick Hall (to the east of Carlisle), although a more lasting legacy were his entrepreneurial efforts in rebuilding what is now known as the Northern Quarter in Manchester. The story of the Parkers is worth telling. In many respects it is typical of the north west of England in the century from about 1780 but, it is only if enough such narratives are written that we know what the norm actually was. In so far as it leaves us wanting to know more, this is a good book and good value for the money.

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CAIN HEGARTY with ROB WILSON-NORTH,
The archaeology of hill farming on Exmoor (English Heritage, 2014). 137 pp., 114 illus. £20.

After some historical and archaeological neglect, in the last decade there have been a number of valuable studies of the Exmoor, notably Mary Siraut's 2009 volume in the 'England's Past for Everyone' series. Hegarty and Wilson-North's study adds considerably to this research, and ought to be of considerable interest to agrarian historians, particularly those concerned with upland agriculture.

Based on detailed analysis of vertical aerial photography, the study is organized into three sections. The first details the evolution of the landscape within the royal forest, and the effects of (legal) disafforestation in 1818, some of which is also covered in Siraut's study. The second deals with exploitation and enclosure of the substantial area of commons that existed within and outside the royal forest, particularly after its bounds contracted to approximately half the geographical area of Exmoor from c.1300. The third provides a fascinating analysis, based on archaeology and analysis of aerial photography, of the importance of catch-meadow irrigation in upland pastoral farming.

While this volume includes information on Exmoor's development over 8000 years, it is particularly concerned with investigating the changes wrought by the sale of the royal forest to the midland iron founder, John Knight, in 1819. Knight epitomized the optimism, but also the over-ambition, of early industrialization and the era of 'high farming'. He schemed wholesale reclamation, enclosure and arable improvement, large-scale sheep ranching (rather like the demesne of a medieval lord), and planned roads, railways and even a canal to open up Exmoor's agriculture to distant markets. His spending alarmed his family sufficiently that the bulk of the family fortune was willed away from him, leaving his son to make more modest, but still significant enclosures and irrigation improvements. The history of this industrial-scale exploitation and cultivation provides an interesting alternative to the current emphasis on promoting Exmoor's 'natural beauty' as a National Park.

The Commons within and surrounding the old royal forest were also subject to substantial encroachment and enclosure, as well as providing a substantial resource for peat fuel. Indeed the authors suggest that Exmoor would probably not have harboured year-round settlement without the availability of peat. Aerial photography demonstrates that peat extraction was extensive but small scale, compared to the Somerset Levels or Norfolk Broads. The volume contains an interesting discussion of the different extraction

methods of pit turf (which dried into coal-like lumps) and skin-turf (which was fibrous and quick-burning). Similarly, the discussion of the effects of Parliamentary enclosure (in the Knight era) makes very clear and effective comparisons between the mapped and physical landscapes. This produced two kinds of outcomes. In many places, open tracts were carved up into the classic rectangular fields, which often incorporated (but also diminished) existing landmarks, like barrows and hill forts. At Holdstone Down (seen on the book's front cover), though, a different situation occurred. Here an extremely intricate grid of allotments was marked on the ground by boundary stones, but the land continued to be thrown together into an apparently undivided landscape (apart from the remnants of a failed late Victorian attempt to build a row of holiday villas!). This is a fascinating example of behaviour that probably happened elsewhere, particularly in earlier eras of 'enclosure by agreement'.

The final section on farmland is, in many respects, the most valuable for agricultural historians. Its discussion of the intricate drainage systems necessary to irrigate upland 'catch meadows' is a worthy corrective to the historical emphasis on the 'floating' of water meadows in chalk downlands. The authors illustrate powerfully that these upland drainage schemes could be as complex as (and were often much larger in scale than) their lowland peers, and that they made dramatic improvements to the timing and volume of spring grass growth. Aerial photography comes into its own in this section to illustrate the extensive nature of these drainage channels on steeply sloping hillsides. By the time that these systems featured in the mid-Victorian agricultural literature, it was claimed that they resulted in earlier lambing, and better survival rates than had previously been the case in the unforgiving Exmoor climate.

While this research concentrates closely on its subject area, it will be worth reading as part of a contextual analysis of many upland regions in Britain. Its extensive use of aerial photography provides a template for future studies, particularly now that it can be enhanced relatively cheaply by large-scale LIDAR surveys as well. Such research breaks free of the limitations facing the earth-bound documentary historian, who stands to be frustrated by the scanty records surviving from the royal forest and its nineteenth-century purchasers. It provides a perspective that combines an important narrative of the 'big picture', with nuanced, detailed and effective local case studies, and is worth reading to enrich any trip to this much-visited location.

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N. F. BEARD, R. A. FRAZIER, D. J. JUKES, O. B. KENNEDY, A. SWINBANK and R. B. TRANTER, *Feeding the public: a centenary review of food and drink manufacturing*, CAS Report 20, October 2014 (Centre for Agricultural Strategy, School of Agriculture, Policy and Development, University of Reading, PO Box 237, Earley Gate, Reading RG6 6AR). £16.

In 1913 the Board of Trade was thinking about making the confectionery, jam, pickle and sauce-making trades subject to the minimum wage provisions established by the 1909 Trade Boards Act. In response, several of the firms likely to be affected, some of them still familiar household names, came together to form the Confectionery and Preserved Food Manufacturers' Federation. By October 1913 over 200 firms had joined. Four years later it became the Food Manufacturers' Federation, and was one of the principal industry pressure groups. In the mid-1980s it merged with the Food and Drink Industries Council to represent the whole food and drink processing industry as the Food and Drink Federation, which commissioned this short account of the major changes in the industry from a group of food scientists and economists at Reading University to commemorate its centenary.

Summarizing a century's changes at this length requires some selectivity, and it is perhaps revealing of the industry's sensitivities that three specialist chapters concentrate on nutrition, science, and food quality and safety. The nutrition chapter highlights the discovery of vitamins and micronutrients in the first half of the twentieth century, the establishment of the National Food Survey in 1940, and the more recent attention to cardio-vascular disease and obesity in nutrition policy. The scientific and technical developments discussed include not only freezing, packaging, and other processing methods, but also the impact of analytical methods, such as spectrophotometry and chromatography, in the detection of fraud and in identifying the food components responsible for flavours and aromas. The chapter on quality and safety deals with both the legal framework and factors affecting consumer confidence. For many historians, however, chapter 2, which provides a narrative summary of the main changes and continuities in food processing over the century, will be the most interesting. The 1907 Census of Production, for example, revealed an industry in which well over half of the labour force was employed in just three sectors: grain milling, baking, and the manufacture of alcoholic drinks. Nevertheless, there was by then a well-developed export trade ensuring a supply of British 'native foods', from suet to plum puddings, across the world. The

subsequent history of the industry is about its response to demand influences, such as income, household size, and retailing developments, to the rise of branded products, and to technology changes such as the development of refrigerators and freezers, all of which combine to increase the level of services incorporated into food products.

While this is a useful summary of the main changes in food processing over the last century, it has little to say on some of its more significant and controversial aspects, such as changes in the size and ownership structure of the industry. And while pointing out that productivity in food processing lagged behind that of the manufacturing average for most of the twentieth century, it fails to explain why this was so. Finally, and paradoxically, given that it commissioned the work, the book has virtually nothing to say about the history of the Food and Drink Federation, and makes no attempt to investigate its political effectiveness in representing the interests of the industry.

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Europe and Elsewhere:

FREDERIC APARISI and VICENT ROYO (eds),
Beyond lords and peasants: rural elites and economic differentiation in pre-modern Europe (Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2014). 256 pp., 49 figs., 27 tabs. €20.

While English economic history remains in the doldrums, falling into a gap between the fashion for social and cultural history on the one hand and the application of economic models to historical examples on the other, classic economic history continues to thrive in continental Europe. This volume brings together promising young scholars from Spain and Belgium working on the rural economies of late medieval Valencia and Flanders, with additional contributions from two more experienced historians of England. The 'rural elites' with which these studies are concerned are peasant elites; and the 'economic differentiation' is that which can be observed within particular village communities. A strength of the volume is the range of perspectives and approaches represented. With regard to Valencia, Vicent Baydal and Ferran Esquilache look at the extent of differentiation within corporate Muslim villages; Vicent Royo examines a region dominated by livestock farming; and Frederic Aparisi considers the links between notaries and the peasant elite. For Flanders Lies Vervaeke examines different forms of leaseholding; Kristof Dombrecht studies funeral arrangements as a measure of social inequality; Eline

van Onacker identifies the Campine area with its extensive tracts of common land as a region where social differentiation was limited, while Maïka de Keyser looks at how the commons were regulated in the same region. Miriam Müller contributes a study comparing landholding structures in various English manors, while Chris Dyer provides a conclusion.

The volume is not without its problems. Little editing appears to have been undertaken. The text is littered with mistakes of spelling and grammar. Figures are misnumbered and in one case duplicated. Names are misspelt and mistaken. The bibliographical format is inconsistent. Punctuation is missing. There are long quotations in French and Latin with no translation provided. Perhaps more significantly, there seems to have been little editorial control of the contents, and the chapters are variable in quality. The introduction starts with the misleading premise that social differentiation within peasant communities has received little attention, before moving on to acknowledge that it is a long-standing theme in the English-language literature. However, this still ignores the significant international debates within Peasant Studies from Marx and Chayanov onwards, despite the fact this is mentioned in at least one of the chapters. This is a shame, as these shortcomings make the volume unsuitable for recommending to undergraduates. Nonetheless, specialists conducting their own studies of social differentiation in village communities and those interested in comparative approaches to pre-modern rural society will find much of value. The strongest chapters, such as those by Aparisi, Vervaeke, van Onacker and de Keyser contain substantial new research, soundly anchored in existing debates, but offering unique perspectives. Aparisi uses an extensive set of early fifteenth-century notarial notebooks kept by Antoni Ferrando, a notary of peasant stock, to illuminate the social and economic networks of rural society. This is a world of commercial transactions, money-lending and frequent movement between country and town, where social links were maintained over relatively long distances. Vervaeke offers a corrective to the accepted view of leaseholders as the forefront of agrarian capitalism, showing that large leaseholders in coastal Flanders often paid rents in kind to provide institutional landlords with a food supply, while landlords tolerated sub-economic rents to secure the stability and loyalty of reliable large tenants. The work of van Onacker and de Keyser overlaps to an extent, both concentrating on the Campine region, an area of sandy soils dominated by extensive tracts of common land. The Campine, despite its location surrounded by some of the most densely populated and highly commercialised regions

of sixteenth century Europe, retained its open and lightly regulated commons up until the eighteenth century. The relative lack of social differentiation, and of landlord interference, in these communities provide an interesting counter-example against the dominant story of increased social polarisation and privatization of property in this period elsewhere in early modern Europe. Dyer's conclusion, which in fact makes a useful introduction to the volume, helpfully pulls together themes raised by the volume: how can the village elite be defined, when and why do they emerge, what is the role of commercialisation, and how did such elites move beyond the confines of village society? Thus, if you are willing to tolerate its idiosyncrasies, there are plenty of new insights into late medieval society to be gained from this volume.

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PAUL HALSTEAD, *Two oxen ahead: Pre-mechanized farming in the Mediterranean* (Wiley Blackwell, 2014). 372 pp., 19 illus., 2 maps. £60.

'What does "farmer" mean?' Alexis answered his own question: 'two oxen ahead and one ox behind'; in Greek, *vódhi* (ox) symbolizes stupidity rather than strength (p. 11).

'Two oxen ahead and one behind'. No other phrase could better summarize the condition of Greek agriculture during the period dealt with in this outstanding, in all respects, book by the eminent archaeologist-anthropologist-ethnologist and historian Paul Halstead. Simultaneously, the very same phrase he chooses as a title for his book epitomizes/condenses, and signifies the profound interest and affection the writer deals with his subject.

But, let us take things from the beginning. This book is the result of the long-time acquaintance, and better still, involvement of the writer with the rural society or, more precisely, with the remote, poor and disadvantaged rural communities of the Mediterranean south, especially Greece. This fact is itself particularly interesting for all those studying the evolution of rural society and its history.

The book is an ideal recording of rural occupations, of cultivation methods, as well as of the underlying ideas and attitudes inherent in the farming practice, all of which the author conveys in a direct and vivid manner. Halstead does not talk with his informants simply to record their views, but he also communicates with them in a directly experiential, almost bodily, way. This fact is revealed apart from anything else, by his familiarity with and interest in his interlocutors,

referring to them by their first names or even by their nicknames.

Simultaneously, the book declares the writer's wider interest in the humble and despised, insular, mountainous and disadvantaged areas of Greece and the Mediterranean at a turning point: on the borderline between primitive or traditional and modern or latently modernized agriculture, through the introduction of mechanization and innovation, which has been slow and tortuous process both in Greece and in the other regions on which the writer focuses. Equally slow and laborious has been the transition from the state of a peasant to that of a farmer – to recall Stathis Damianakos, another researcher of the Mediterranean rural space *La paysan grec. Défis et adaptations face à la société moderne* (Paris, L' Harmattan, 1996).

This transition – in the case of Greece at least – was never accomplished. It remained incomplete or in abeyance, particularly in the semi-mountainous and disadvantaged areas – which are the writer's field of analysis – thus rendering agricultural production 'something between subsistence husbandry [...] and micro-commodity "capitalist" agriculture', while for a large number of farmers, farming remained 'a given social state of being, to which they submit due to lack of other reliable options', as Damianakos points out. In this respect, rural areas and rural society form an ideal field for ethnographical-anthropological observation.

The book is divided in seven chapters in which all phases of agricultural work and practice are analyzed thoroughly: from cultivation, sowing and harvesting, to the management and planning of rural means and resources. The writer provides sufficient information on the broader intellectual and cultural background, carefully setting people and their stories (or their destinies, I would dare say) in a solid historical and cultural context. The information and details he gives on cultivation practices, sowing methods and farming systems are so exhaustive that only a specialist agriculturist could appreciate their width and wealth. Furthermore, the writer's citations are literally a parade of numerous –and definitely the most significant– folklorists, ethnologists and scientists specializing in the rural world, therefore offering an extremely useful bibliographical guide.

On the other hand, I have to stress the fact that the writer's chosen view provides us with a specific picture of rural Greece and Mediterranean. It is a rural iconography, almost frozen in time and space, which remains primitive in the late twentieth century. However, it is significant (and worthy of further investigation) that this particular region – rural Greece and the Mediterranean – does not seem to

communicate in any way, cross with or be affected by, the scientific and/or practical knowledge produced in university departments and several agricultural research institutes and foundations, which had already developed to a great extent during the inter-war period and the first post-war decades with the precise purpose of promoting and disseminating scientific (primarily, but not only, agronomic) knowledge in the rural world.

Nevertheless, this does not diminish, but on the contrary it increases, the charm and uniqueness of the

book. Through this unique conjunction of archaeology, anthropology, ethnography and oral history, Paul Halstead reminds us that this rural civilization emerging alive from the lines of his book was so material, handmade, made of stone, sun and earth, so *theoctistos*. He offers us the essence of a lifetime of research and experience, together with his love and admiration for a civilization which gradually perishes with its people, if it has not disappeared already.

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