

Book reviews

Britain and Ireland

DAVID BUTCHER, *Medieval Lowestoft. The origins and growth of a Suffolk coastal community* (Boydell Press, 2016). 370 pp., 48 illus., maps and tables. £50.

Many a community has moved at some time in its history, leaving its parish church at a distance from its new centre, a phenomenon often erroneously attributed to the Black Death. In the case of the town of Lowestoft, David Butcher shows that the parish church of St Margaret's – originally the church of the adjoining settlement of Akethorpe – was already being rebuilt in its original position three-quarters of a mile outside the town at the time of the mid fourteenth-century calamity. As a result of the rebuilding, St Margaret's became one of Suffolk's great perpendicular glories on a par with Southwold, Blythburgh, Lavenham and Long Melford. It is doubly impressive, the author remarks, that the town's inhabitants felt able to embark upon the raising of such a large and imposing edifice at the same time that they were relocating their township and that, having recovered from the most disastrous epidemic ever to have hit the country, they were prepared to see the work through to its conclusion.

This is typical of the revelations with which David Butcher assaults his reader. Equally startling is his account of how the original agricultural village was uprooted and moved a mile or so to a new site. At the time of Domesday, Lowestoft was an agricultural settlement with the classic open-field system so widespread in much of lowland England. There were the usual three common fields set out in strips – named in the 1618 manorial roll as the North Field, the South Field and the South West Field – with the township itself sited near the meeting point of the South and South West fields, a situation occupied today by a traffic roundabout.

The 450 acres of cultivated land recorded in Domesday was 75 per cent of the 600 or more acres revealed in the 1617 manor roll, indicating that 150 acres had been put under the plough in the intervening years. It is likely that this increase was achieved by clearing some of the areas of heath that had played an

important part in the manorial economy, providing materials such as bracken for animal bedding, gorse and thorn for fuel and also rough grazing for livestock. As the author points out, use of the term 'waste' for some of these areas of heathland is misleading; it was anything but.

The relocation of the settlement in the early fourteenth century from a position on the south-facing slope south of the church to a cliff-top site that offered facilities for trading and fishing was well planned and efficiently carried out, apparently with the agreement and collaboration of the bailiff or steward of the lord of the manor. Among other things, the relocation involved the management of the cliff face by terracing, a considerable operation both in terms of scale and of the labour involved, and probably carried out before house plots were set out and the cliff-top dwellings erected. The result of that work can still be seen today, and is illustrated with a photograph of present-day work which has revealed how the original terracing was done.

The lord of the manor, John de Dreux, Earl of Richmond, whose prime interest lay in receiving the annual income yielded by his estate rather than in having any direct part in its administration, was an absentee at the time of the relocation, which allowed the inhabitants a good degree of self-determination in the conduct of local affairs. At the same time, it allowed local officials, particularly the bailiff, an opportunity to improve their own situation in ways that were not always entirely honest.

Making excellent use of the 1274 Hundred Roll – 'a second Domesday' – Butcher shows how Lowestoft gradually came to be as significant as the Domesday hub of the Lothingland manor, Gorleston, though the nine tenants of the Lowestoft glebe still had to take their hens and cockerels to Gorleston on St Stephen's Day (26 December) and were then provided with a meal.

On its new cliff-top site overlooking the sea, Lowestoft became a centre of maritime trade, a fact that led to many years of rivalry with its neighbour a dozen miles to the north, the borough of Great Yarmouth. As head-port Yarmouth claimed jurisdiction over Kirkley

Roads, the name given to the extensive anchorage off Lowestoft, and was responsible for collecting customs duties due to the Crown. In a chapter entitled 'Misdemeanour and mishap in Kirkley Roads', Butcher tells of the problems Yarmouth faced in its endeavour to maintain its legally granted authority and to collect customs within its jurisdiction. For more than three centuries the head-port viewed its upstart rival as 'a town of great smuggling' (p. 144), while the men of Lowestoft sought to bend the rules as far as they were able – or dared. The rivalry between the two towns went on until Lowestoft was granted port status in 1679, and in some respects it still continues.

Often enough, it seems, there was more than a hint of unlawful behaviour, if not outright piracy. As the author says, the government's encouragement of mariners and fishermen to undertake privateering activities in the national interest during the Hundred Years War surely led to all kinds of illicit activity at sea and schooled English seafarers in the unobvious arts of maritime plunder.

In adding this book to his earlier volume *Lowestoft, 1550–1750*, Butcher has performed no small service to the cause of local history. Besides showing how the foundations of the present-day community were laid in the Middle Ages, he provides a fascinating picture of human interaction in the pursuit of economic progress, with a postscript bringing the story up to date. This is supplemented by six appendices including a list of the manorial chief tenements, details of the sixteenth-century merchant fleet and a name analysis of the Lowestoft Hundred Roll tenants, a glossary of medieval terms and three indexes, of people, places and subjects.

ROBERT MALSTER

NIGEL GOOSE, HELEN CAFFREY and ANNE LANGLEY (eds) *The British Almshouse. New perspectives on philanthropy, ca 1400–1914* (Family and Community Historical Research Society, 2016). 420 pp., 134 illus., maps and tables. £12.

This volume represents an immense collaborative effort. While the book has three editors, it contains twenty chapters covering over four hundred pages on a huge variety of topics about the history of almshouses. How is such a project possible? The clues are in the front of the volume and the introduction, which details the research process. With one coordinator, Anne Langley, 54 researchers from the Family and Community Historical Research Society worked tirelessly in record offices across most counties in England and several London boroughs, with further exemplary material drawn from Scotland and Wales. The data collection took several years to complete, so that from its initial

meeting the project was ten years in the making. The result is the most significant collection of essays about the history of almshouses in recent decades, one which historians of welfare, charities, institutions, housing, older people and societal relationships will find useful.

Three solid introductory chapters set the context of the book well. The first provides a chronology and geography of British almshouses and demonstrates the high numbers of individuals who received accommodation in these houses. The second outlines the massive variation in almshouse buildings, whilst the third demonstrates the variety of types of community. The book is then divided into two further parts. Part two consists of eight chapters centred around individual case studies from different counties. Covered here are case studies from across many counties and regions of England, namely Hampshire, Berkshire, Warwickshire, Derbyshire, plus the north east and London. There is also a chapter which explores provision in Anglesey and another in Tayside and Sterling. Some chapters provide micro-studies of almshouses in one place, such as a town, road, city, county or region. Other chapters focus on using a locality to explore a particular time period (anywhere from 1100 to the eve of the First World War) or a theme, such as almshouse founders or occupants. These themes are expanded in part three of the book, consisting of nine chapters on a range of topics: rules and regulations, the almshouse masters, the social status and lives of residents, clothing and conditions of residents, as well as almshouse gardens and a chapter on five Catholic almshouses in London.

A number of themes develop across the chapters. Over the last twenty years or more, welfare historians have been seeking to understand the place of statutory provision, charitable aid, as well as self-help and kinship help, within the mixed economy of welfare. This theme features throughout the volume, especially when authors discuss the motivations of residents for applying for entry into the almshouse. Evidence is drawn upon to suggest why this could be more appealing than the available alternatives, and also why residents left. This links to another theme: the rules and conditions within almshouses. Some comparisons are made between almshouse residents and those in workhouses and asylums. The inhabitants of almshouses were usually deemed respectable and 'deserving' of assistance, but the pressures upon residents to behave and appear in certain ways was significant. It clearly impacted on their practical and emotional lives in a multitude of ways. In part, these rules and expectations created some degree of structure and harmony within the house, but there was a heavy mix of deference and patronage towards the benefactor, externally performed by residents to the

wider communities in which the accommodation was situated. To what extent almshouse residents wanted to, or had to (through necessity), perform their status is a subject of contention.

The volume would have benefited from a concluding chapter, or maybe several. These could have brought together more directly the themes I mention and many other themes could have been brought out from the detail, such as rural and urban comparisons and gender dynamics. The periodization within the book is only loosely followed, which is of great benefit as the origins of almshouses can be traced to 1100. There was no room in this volume to extend beyond 1914, but such a focus would make compelling research. In the context of a growing welfare state, how many almshouses were disbanded or established? The analysis of diaries, letters and oral history interviews from this period would also reveal more about people's hopes for living in the almshouses, how they conformed to or subverted the rules of their accommodation, and how they believed they were perceived by the wider community.

This is a very informative volume for local and family historians as well as academics. It also demonstrates the value of large collaborations and edited collections. The wide variety of places and topics covered will help those wanting a solid introduction to almshouses, case studies of why and how almshouses were established and managed, or about the lives, living conditions and motivations of almshouse residents. The book has an admirable number of images (79), in addition to 14 colour plates, and a substantial index, which will undoubtedly prove a valuable aid to navigation.

SAMANTHA A. SHAVE
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TERRY MCCORMICK, *Lake District Fell Farming. Historical and literary perspectives, 1750–2017* (Bookcase, 2018). 226 pp. Illustrated. £12.

Lake District farming has received a wide press in recent years, not all of it positive. On the one hand, World Heritage Site inscription recognizes the continuing role of traditional farming in creating and preserving the iconic landscape of the National Park, while public fascination with Lake District farming has been demonstrated by the runaway success of James Rebanks' memoir, *The Shepherd's Life* (2015). On the other, George Monbiot and the re-wilding lobby see the monoculture of sheep as having created an 'ecological desert' on the fells. Terry McCormick's book falls unashamedly in the first camp, celebrating hill farming life and Herdwick sheep by tracing their history and exploring how writers have viewed fell farming since the 'discovery' of the Lake District in the eighteenth

century. The author is uniquely placed for the task: he is a literary scholar who has worked closely with Lake District farmers and contributed to the World Heritage inscription process himself.

Part I provides an overview of the history of fell farming, presenting it as the story of an heroic struggle against a host of challenges, from manorial lords in the seventeenth century to the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in 2001 – all in the context of an unforgiving environment, severe weather, and recurrent bouts of harsh economic conditions. The findings of research into the socio-economic history of the Lake District since the 1960s are rehearsed: the independence afforded by customary tenantry; the decline of the traditional yeomen (or 'statesmen') farmers in the nineteenth century; the persistence of small family farms. McCormick places particular emphasis on the development of what may be termed 'fell farming culture', the communal aspects of a farming system which centred on sheep grazing on common land. Communal grazing had long required farmers to collaborate over the day-to-day management of the fells, while other parts of the traditional farming system – communal sheep shearings; shepherds' meets; the exchange of stray sheep – also brought farmers together. The growth of breed societies and their associated shows from 1844 led to the improvement of the Herdwick breed and increased a sense of communal endeavour amongst farmers. Meanwhile, as the author usefully shows, the publication of successive 'shepherds' guides', recording the ownership marks of each farm – the first of which appeared in 1817 – also fostered a sense of pride among hill farmers. The literature drawn on in these chapters is wide-ranging, with a focus on the important work of Charles Searle and John Beckett, but there are some surprising omissions, such as Jonathan Healey's case study of Grasmere and, notably, Eleanor Straughton's book on the history of common land in Cumbria, *Common grazing in the northern English uplands, 1800–1965* (2008).

Part II, 'Writers and Fell Farming: 1750–2017', is the heart of the book and is full of interest. From the earliest tourists, visitors to the Lakes commented on the character of the farming community, to the extent that by the 1790s Lake District farmers were seen as something of a breed apart, deeply traditional but exhibiting a striking moral integrity. William Wordsworth was convinced that this farming culture of 'statesmen' would soon be extinct. As McCormick puts it, he was 'mourning for what he perceived to be vanishing around him' (p. 107) and his backward-looking view of the inevitable decline of fell farming cast a long shadow. A sense that the heyday of traditional farming lay in the

past was heightened by negative perceptions by other nineteenth-century commentators. Edward Baines, the historian of Lancashire, was disparaging. For him Lake District farmers were 'dull-looking' (pp. 113–14) and intermarriage had produced a streak of insanity. Harriet Martineau saw the demon drink as the cause of decline. John Ruskin simply ignored the skilled, mutually supportive 'craft' farming of his neighbours at Coniston, even though their culture exemplified some of the ideals he championed.

This changed in the later nineteenth century, not least because of the flowering of interest in the Lake District's Scandinavian roots. The farming community came to be seen as the inheritors of a Viking past, preserved in their dialect and, for example, their system of sheep marking. Building on the work of W. G. Collingwood, H. D. Rawnsley, one of the co-founders of The National Trust, was influential in 'lionising' Lake District farmers, extolling their stockmanship and perceived integrity, which he linked back to their Scandinavian inheritance. In one of her lesser-known works, Beatrix Potter, famously a keen breeder of Herdwick sheep, wrote a 'hymn' to the sheep and, by extension, their shepherds. By the 1930s, the fell farmers had become a treasured part of the Lake District and active attempts were being made to preserve their way of life.

However, some of the best-known Lake District writing in the twentieth century glorified the fells but ignored the fell farmers. Both Arthur Ransome's adventure stories and Alfred Wainwright's celebrated pictorial guides rejoiced in the Lakes as a playground but paid little regard to those who maintained it. Natives make an appearance in Ransome's books, as charcoal burners or farmers providing holiday accommodation, but for Wainwright, exhibiting what McCormick calls a 'wilful blindness' (p. 160) to the farming community, the fells are largely devoid of people.

One of the charms of this book is the attention given to lesser writers and long-forgotten works. Examples range from Mary Ward's novel *Robert Elsmere* (1888), which centred on the clash between the heroine's traditional 'statesman' background and the metropolitan culture of her suitor, to the informative evocations of the realities of fell farming in books as diverse as Abraham Rumney's *The Dalesman* (1911) and Dudley Hoys' *Below Scafell* (1955). Meanwhile, a host of stories set on hill farms, such as Marjorie Lloyd's *Fell Farm* series in the 1950s and Joyce Gard's *Smudge of the Fells* (1965), celebrated hill-farming culture. These works, and others, receive deeply insightful commentary from McCormick in this rich and welcome book.

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SUSAN FLOOD (ed.), *The diary of John Carrington, farmer of Bramfield, 1798–1810, I, 1798–1804* (Hertfordshire Record Society, 26, 2015). xxiii + 361 pp., 21 illus. £22.

The diaries of John Carrington were originally deposited at the Hertfordshire Record Office in 1943 and a typed transcript was prepared in the 1950s. This resulted in two popular accounts, which were published by W. Branch Johnson in 1956 and 1970. In 1973, some three-quarters of the diary, along with extracts from his so-called Arithmetic Book, was also published. All of these works are now long out of print, although they are readily and cheaply available second-hand. In 2010, the Hertfordshire Record Society decided to republish the diaries in full: this book is hardly the new presentation of unknown archive material.

This first volume includes the diaries from 1798 to 1804 along with the Arithmetic Book; the second is due for publication in 2018. As well as being the farmer at Bacons Farm, Bramfield, John Carrington was Chief Constable, Tax Assessor, Surveyor of the Highways and Overseer of the Poor in his parish at various times throughout the period of the diaries. This is reflected in his diary entries such that the record of agriculture relates primarily to the world beyond his own farm. As a result of this, there is little detail of the work going on at the farm, although on p. 123 he records 'Shore my sheep 83', although his own name is not amongst the names of the shearers. The only evidence of the work of the farm interrupting his daily life is on p. 167 where he writes, 'Not market as being buisey at Oates' cart', having noted earlier on the same page that 'In generall, crops very great'.

Carrington was clearly a man who liked his food and drink, yet he was of a charitable disposition. The diaries have plentiful records of his expenditure at the various hostelrys he visited, as well as his gifts to the poor and others. Even in 1801, when he notes that the price of cattle and meat were 'so dear', his personal consumption continued: however, he did recognize and record his excesses as on p. 77: 'Got fuddled, fell of my poney. O for Shame'. In the entries in the latter part of the volume, the impact of the threat of invasion by the French on Carrington's public duties are noted – forms to complete, to deliver personally and to chase up late returns – many requiring visits to local inns.

The Arithmetic Book extracts presented in the first appendix comprise notes on events occurring mainly beyond the parish of Bramfield, both county-wide and nationally, including records of very high winds, great floods, large fires and army manoeuvres, although there is no chronological order to the entries. These notes are written amongst a series of mathematical

calculations which have not been reproduced in the volume. Appendix Two is titled Hertfordshire Inns, whilst Appendix Three presents selected biographies of some of those mentioned in the diaries. As would be expected of any Record Society publication, the book includes a glossary, bibliography and an index for each of names, places and subjects. Whilst a contemporary map of the county of Hertford dated 1794 is presented in the rear endpaper, which marks Bacons Farm and Bramfield, the introduction to the book would have benefited from a clearly drawn map of the key places around Bramfield that are mentioned in the diaries.

Whilst this volume represents the publication of the complete diary for seven years during the Napoleonic War period, there is little detail about the day-to-day workings at Bacons Farm to satisfy agricultural historians: indeed Flood has presented a comprehensive summary of Carrington's farming activities in her introduction using the limited material available. However, it does offer an account of rural life in Hertfordshire during this period, as well as describing the activities carried out by Carrington as an individual in fulfilling his various public duties.

ALAN WADSWORTH
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PAUL READMAN, *Storied ground. Landscape and the shaping of English national identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2018). 348 pp., 40 b&w illus. £24.99. Paul Readman's *Storied Ground* examines the place of landscape in narratives of English identity between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries. Readman provides a much-needed bridge between those works which have focused on landscape in the Georgian period, and those concerned with the late Victorian and Edwardian periods and beyond. *Storied Ground* will become the standard reference point for those concerned with English landscape and national identity in the long nineteenth century.

Readman argues that stories of landscape and national identity were as much urban as rural, and challenges assumptions of nostalgia and anti-modernity. National identity is shown to be interwoven with other scales, notably the local and regional, with these geographic scales mutually supportive rather antagonistic. Readman emphasizes the role of historical associations in shaping landscape narratives, and the ways in which landscape became the site for demotic rather than aristocratic narrative. After an introduction covering historiographic and theoretical debate, with works in cultural and historical geography given notable prominence, *Storied Ground* is structured by places of significance, with six chapters focusing on

specific landscapes: Dover, Northumberland, the Lake District, the New Forest, Manchester and the Thames. Maps would have helped readers unfamiliar with these regions to navigate the narrative, but each chapter provides rich, original and nuanced analysis.

In each chapter, physical landscape and historical association interweave. The cliffs of Dover present spectacular chalk and signs of island defence, while Northumberland as a border region with historical associations of conflict is presented in the nineteenth century as a region progressing to a unionist order. Dover and Northumberland in this period become border regions which cement rather than fragment Englishness and Britishness. The Lake District and the New Forest become, through the nineteenth century, landscapes which in tourist practice and patterns of landholding shape senses of popular national landscape, the National Trust's foundation in 1895 owing much to Lakes campaigns evincing a patriotism Liberal or Socialist rather than Conservative. Attention to Manchester allows Readman to argue that national landscape narratives could be as much urban as rural: 'The patriotic landscape imaginary of the long nineteenth century was a capacious one, encompassing both rural shires and city streets' (p. 249). Just as rich or poor residents of the industrial north west visited the Lakes as a national landscape warranting preservation, so Manchester could itself be appreciated for its modernity and history, guidebooks praising its civic and commercial architecture. The Thames Valley, with its combination of riverine and maritime wealth creation, and campaigns for landscape preservation producing the 1885 Thames Preservation Act, shows too for Readman that 'Englishness, as figured by the Thames, was in step with modernity' (p. 299). There may be some overstatement here though; even if a painter such as Helen Allingham, depicting the vernacular dwellings of the Thames Valley as the personification of a happy England, was undertaking work for a modern commercial art market, the images produced conveyed a sensibility at the very least in tension with the modern world. Modern things – cheap prints of cottage paintings, bicycles ridden to get out of town – are not always in step with modernity.

Readman's earlier, fine book, *Land and nation in England: Patriotism, national identity and the politics of land, 1880–1914* (2008), gave extensive coverage of agricultural debate in the decades before the First World War, and agriculture perhaps in consequence receives less detailed discussion here. Agricultural questions do, however, shape the regional narratives in *Storied Ground*; the role of agricultural improvement in progressive stories of Northumbrian identity, and the agrarian economy of common land in the New

Forest, where ideas of landscape preservation, public amenity, common rights and popular liberty came together in campaigns against state timber plantation, culminating in the 1877 New Forest Act: 'This was the New Forest as a national landscape, as the people's property, and its cultural valence owed much to the associations attaching to common land' (p. 191). Readman here traces the complexities of political and cultural debate, with resultant freedoms of common grazing criticized as denudation by those concerned with the management of timber resources.

For Readman the material covered in *Storied Ground* denotes a complex 'English cultural nationalism' (p. 309), often popular and demotic. In a hundred years someone might write a similar text on today, with some of the sites featured in *Storied Ground* still forming places of significance. Anxieties surrounding trade, migration and island identity gather over Dover, just as concerns for climate change spark renewed interest in just what formed the Dover Strait in the first place. Northumberland borders a possibly re-emergent political frontier. The Lake District is granted World Heritage Status for its cultural historical value, for being the region where landscape appreciation and preservation took shape. Manchester stands for common diversity in the face of terror. The plotlines continue. England remains storied ground.

DAVID MATLESS
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GREGORY A. BARTON, *The global history of organic farming* (Oxford University Press, 2018). 256 pp. £30. Gregory Barton's book is the fruit of arguably the most important piece of detective work yet carried out by researchers into the organic movement's origins and expansion. But its significance reaches well beyond the confines of organic farming. All historians of twentieth-century agriculture should welcome this study of one of the most influential agronomists and campaigners of that period, Sir Albert Howard (1873–1947), and of his second wife Louise, née Matthaei (1880–1969); particularly as it demonstrates that Howard was, earlier in his career, a more conventional practitioner of agricultural science than he became in the last twenty years or so of his life.

Barton first sets Howard within the context of his time, relating his work in India to the benefits which farming and forestry brought to the British economy in the days of the Raj. He then traces the stages by which Howard grew close to the English rural revivalists who praised the virtues of organic husbandry. After Howard's death, his widow Louise played a major role in propagating his ideas.

The whereabouts of Sir Albert Howard's papers – if indeed they had survived at all – were for many years a mystery. Just a few items were lodged at Wye College, where Howard had held a post before going to India in 1905. Gregory Barton, with the help of his mother, a skilled researcher on Ancestry.com, investigated the ancestors of Howard's wives, Gabrielle and Louise Matthaei; Howard having no issue from either marriage. The Bartons discovered a relative of the Matthaei sisters and traced descendants, eventually being contacted by Louise's niece Charlotte, who, astonishingly, had the Howard archives in her garage in Birmingham. It is little short of a miracle that the papers had never been disposed of. Barton's book is therefore based on a mass of completely fresh material.

The Howard papers are being lodged at St John's College, Cambridge, where Albert was a student, and so will become available to other scholars. Barton has by no means exhausted their material in his book, using only the parts he needed. Needed for what, in particular? The answer is, for two dominant purposes. One is to show that Louise Howard played a vital part in helping spread Albert's ideas, and that she should therefore be recognized as a major figure in the development of the international environmental movement. Barton sees her as having, during the 1950s and 1960s, connected past ideas of wholeness to twentieth-century scientific narratives. The second purpose is to uproot the misconception that Howard's humus-based philosophy of agriculture was arrived at primarily by observing methods of peasant cultivation. Barton identifies this reviewer as one of the myth's uncritical chief purveyors, though its origins lie in Howard's own summing-up of his career (see p. 17 of *Farming and gardening for health or disease*, 1945).

The question therefore arises of why Howard so explicitly misled his readers. The implications of Barton's argument seem to be that Howard wanted to present a simplified and combative picture of where he stood towards the end of his life. The material which Barton presents demonstrates beyond doubt that Howard's scientific pilgrimage towards uncompromising advocacy of humus farming was much more complex and ambivalent than he was prepared to reveal in his two last books. Indeed, it appears that Howard actually owed a considerable amount to work done at Rothamsted Research Station, a place of which in his later years he wrote scathingly, condemning it as 'the Mecca of the orthodox' (*Farming and gardening for health or disease*, p. 79).

In 1921, the Rothamsted scientists H. B. Hutchinson and E. H. Richards published an article which laid out the principles of organic farming: namely, 'that

composting vegetable matter such as straw into a fertilizer as potent as animal manure in an age of a decreasing supply of animal manure could change agriculture in a significant way' (pp. 77–8). Barton argues that Howard did not give full credit to Hutchinson and Richards, whose work provided the basis of his Indore Method of composting. Instead, he popularized his own work 'by pointing to the romantic notion that the origin of his own innovations were Indian and Chinese peasants' (p. 79). Perhaps future scholars will uncover material in the Howard archives which will challenge this contention. (Equally, perhaps they will not.) Nevertheless, Barton offers substantial evidence that Howard was, earlier in his career, a much more 'orthodox' scientist than he later became.

Barton himself perpetuates a myth by writing that Howard's ideas were ignored, rather than challenged, during the 1940s. Actually, the agricultural press was full of letters and articles about 'the great humus controversy' during the war years, a period which Barton largely ignores despite its importance for the growth of the organic movement. Rothamsted's centenary in 1943 provided an ideal opportunity for the advocates of humus, inspired by Howard, and the advocates of artificial fertilizers to clash with each other. The chemical fertilizer companies were sufficiently rattled by Howard's attacks on their 'devil's dust' to launch advertising campaigns mocking the supposedly primitive ideas of their critics.

Barton's research is impressively wide-ranging and detailed, full of new information and insights. Its summary – far from hagiographical – of E. F. Schumacher's life and thought may prove, for Schumacher's environmentalist admirers, one of its most unsettling sections. Although the book traces the stages by which the organic movement became 'globalised', it has necessarily to focus on certain areas of the globe, and there is an interesting section on Japan as 'a key player on the global organic scene' (p. 176) from 1945 onwards.

The global history of organic farming follows hard on the heels of Dan McKanan's *Eco-Alchemy* (reviewed in volume 66 part 1 of the *Review*), which suggested that there might have been no organic movement at all without the part played by Rudolf Steiner's disciples and their commitment to biodynamic methods. Anyone reading Barton's book will find it frankly impossible to accept such a contention. If McKanan had had the opportunity to read Barton before writing *Eco-Alchemy*, I doubt that he would have made such a claim.

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WILLIAM SITWELL, *Eggs or Anarchy? The remarkable story of the man tasked with the impossible: to feed the nation at war* (Simon and Schuster 2016). 368 pp. £20.

This wide-ranging account focuses on the contribution of the highly acclaimed Lord Woolton, a successful executive and later managing director of Lewis's department store in Liverpool who, between 1940 and 1943, became infamous as the Minister of Food. It explores the way Woolton set about coordinating the activities of the Ministry to ensure that the nation was adequately fed at a time when imports of food – which Britain depended heavily on – were under attack from the Axis powers. The text, based on a plethora of primary sources, including new access to Woolton's own diaries and those of his first wife Maud, makes a long overdue contribution towards filling a void in the literature.

It is somewhat of an exaggeration to claim, as the title implies, that the choice was between eggs and civil anarchy, social unrest, and in its wake, disillusionment with the war effort. The book makes a number of very pertinent points about the wartime shortage of eggs and the efforts made to ensure that this did not undermine support for the war effort. It provides a perceptive critique of the wartime egg collection policy and the opposition to the use of the ubiquitous, infamous and much reviled dried egg powder. Rather surprisingly, the author does not explore in more detail how the Ministry of Food misguidedly attempted to persuade the population that dried egg powder was the same as fresh eggs, and that their poor opinion of it was the result of the way they were mixing the powder prior to cooking it.

A sharper, more evaluative focus on the implications of the wartime strategy of expanding arable farming at the expense of livestock production – particularly commercial chicken production – would have provided a more convincing justification for the title. The precarious and often difficult relationship between the Ministry of Agriculture (which was responsible for coordinating production) and that of the Ministry of Food (responsible for coordinating distribution) is covered in a rather general way.

The text is particularly valuable in terms of its contribution to enhancing our understanding of Churchill's mercurial relationship with Woolton and the difficulties they both faced in maintaining public support for the way they ran the war effort. It also provides a detailed insight into Woolton's dealings with the press, explaining that he was the master of public relations and particularly astute in stressing the wartime achievements of the Ministry. The text reveals

how Woolton was aware enough to direct his appeals to women, who were the main food provider utilizing a wide range of media including posters and broadcasts to disseminate his practical advice, combined with patriotic appeal. Sitwell's analysis shows how Woolton was able to gloss over what were, on occasions, less salubrious aspects of his work and how he went to strenuous lengths to implement rather dubious plans to ensure that the nation was well fed.

As such, the book will be of considerable interest to a wide range of readers. It is written very much from the standpoint of a journalist rather than an academic, with footnotes or endnotes being absent. From the point of view of an academic who would like to be able to interrogate the sources for themselves, this is a matter of concern. The author provides many tantalizing insights into the nature of the wartime system of food control, the population's disillusionment with the way the war effort was proceeding and the personality of many of the leading politicians. The text is complemented by an impressive selection of pertinent photographs to support the analysis.

The book contains its fair share of factual mistakes, the most glaring being on p. 102, when it claims that wheat was being sold for \$85 a bushel. In a similar way, the wartime increases in the use of home-grown wheat for bread making, coupled with the increase in the extraction rate (the amount of flour produced from a fixed quantity of wheat), could have been more closely integrated with the development of the 'national loaf' which contained a much higher amount of bran.

In spite of these criticisms, which are relatively minor in nature, this is a text well worth reading for the insight it provides into the Woolton's career and his vitally important contribution to saving the country from malnutrition, if not actual starvation, during the greatest conflict in the history of the world. The reader would be advised to be slightly sceptical of some of the assertions the author makes, given the absence of footnoted references. Overall, the book's considerable merits significantly outweigh its shortcomings. It constitutes a valuable addition to not only enhancing our understanding of how to ensure that the nation is adequately fed in wartime but also raises many pertinent nutritional issues about ways of maintaining a healthy balanced diet in peacetime.

JOHN MARTIN
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Europe and elsewhere

GUIDO ALFANI and CORMAC Ó GRÁDA (eds), *Famine in European history* (Cambridge University Press, 2017). xi + 325 pp.

This collection of essays offers a comprehensive and systematic history of famine in Europe by eminent experts in this field of research. The introduction and nine regional chapters are followed by the final part, which examines the episodes of famines occurring due to disruptions of food supplies during World Wars I and II or in their immediate wake. The book ends with an extensive bibliography list and index.

Throughout the book, Cormac Ó Gráda's definition of famine is used: 'a shortage of food or purchasing power that leads directly to excess mortality from starvation or hunger-induced diseases' (p. 2). Secondly, a common methodology has been defined to be applied to regional reconstructions relying on time series of deaths/burials. There was crisis if the number of deaths exceeded the 'normal' (calculated by different methods) by 50 per cent or more. Chapters on England, France, the Low Countries, Italy, and to a lesser extent on Sweden, succeed in combining information on prices with that on deaths for centuries. If price fluctuations and/or mortality response to increases in the price of cereals could not be measured, authors have relied on qualitative data or available historiography (most notably in the chapters on Russia and Germany).

Contributors avoid entanglement with ideological controversies. The editors declare that 'the two common views of famine – either that they are man-made catastrophes or, instead, that they are the result of inadequate production – should not be seen as conflicting but as complementary' (p. 3). In a politically sensitive question – that is, whether there was intentional Soviet policy, beyond mere callousness and ruthlessness, behind the Ukrainian and Moldovan famines of the 1930s and 1940s – Stephen Wheatcroft points rather to ignorance and poor judgement that exacerbated the consequences of poor harvests.

The characteristics of European famines were very varied and different causal factors seem to have prevailed in different places and epochs. Severe subsistence crises were mostly triggered by inadequate production but the outcomes were always mediated by human agency and by institutions (pp. 3–4). Famines are 'extremely complex events' and the editors rightfully argue that explaining any single famine must take into account the specific context in which it occurred (p. 16).

The volume provides a valuable reconstruction of the chronology of the main events based on rigorous data collection and analysis. The spatial scale at

which famines occurred varied enormously between individual famines, and the book mostly focuses on the supra-regional or even 'continental' famines. The earlier conclusion about the exceptionality of widespread famines is largely confirmed. The worst famines on the continental as well as the national scale are identified. On the continental scale, the worst crises occurred in 1315–17 and in the last decades of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The eighteenth-century food crises were smaller in scale. In the nineteenth century, the famine of 1845–50 affected a relatively small part of Europe. In making the latter claim, however, the editors seem to jump to conclusions without having carefully studied central and eastern European circumstances.

Nine regional chapters mostly cover the period from the late Middle Ages to when famine ended in each area. Each chapter analyses the scope and the severity of the famines, points out the most important ones, and discusses the characteristics, the consequences and the causes of famine but the latter to different extent. The comprehensiveness varies largely according to the availability of earlier studies as well as of good documentation, a circumstance that places England, France, the Low Countries, Italy, and Spain in a clearly favoured position.

The book presents several general trends, common features and supra-national developments: the links between the occurrence of famine and natural disasters, ecological shocks and changes in climatic trends; changes in the international grain trade; improvements in market integration and transport systems; population dynamics; introduction and spread of new crops, and extensive warfare. Some important aspects like urban/rural and social disparities are, however, largely overlooked. The role played by public institutions in food provisioning is examined but not systematically analysed in all of the individual chapters. Religion and ideology also influenced the stance on relief in various ways and are discussed in some of the individual case-study chapters.

Differences in living standards, the role of rising incomes in reducing vulnerability to famine, and disparity between West and East need more thorough discussion. The editors are aware that the apparent scarcity of famines in eastern Europe does not reflect a condition of better food security but refer to the relative scarcity of information. As a result, countries with higher living standards are relatively better covered. It seems that sudden external shocks are more likely to draw scholarly attention than structural and chronic problems in the under-developed periphery. Wheatcroft points to the question about the comparability of western and eastern European (or Russian) magnitudes

of crises where in the latter normal mortality was high and high levels of hunger were normal. In scholarly literature on Tsarist Russia, it remains unclear whether there was an association between the changes in mortality (on the local scale, at least, crisis years, when the number of deaths exceeded the moving average by more than 50 per cent, occurred often in the nineteenth century) and fluctuations in prices or not, and if not, which factors and coping strategies account for that. Wheatcroft argues that the nature of food difficulties was determined by specific geographic conditions.

Finally, a methodological question arises about the scale on which we can evaluate mortality figures in order to talk about famine in a country. Regional differences are a key feature of famines, and for example, Chapter 9 on Sweden analyses county-level data as well. Given the size and ecological and socio-economic diversity of several countries, disaggregating the data to at least provincial or preferably even county level would reveal several episodes of severe crises in these regions. Focusing on magnitude leads to underrating or ignoring famine suffering and mortality effects in regions that were parts of large states (Ireland, however, seems to enjoy a special status in this regard as it has a separate chapter devoted to it), although regionally limited famines could be of very severe intensity or even devastating.

To conclude, this book is a highly ambitious attempt to offer a broad and quantitatively rich picture of famines in many parts of Europe from Late Middle Ages to when they ended, by exploring their scale, characteristics, causes and effects. It is a formidable task and not all contributors have accomplished it with the same degree of completeness. The volume summarizes earlier studies as well as pointing to as yet unexplored areas awaiting further research.

KERSTI LUST

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JANE WHITTLE (ed.), *Servants in Rural Europe, 1400–1900* (Boydell, 2017). 284 pp. £19.99.

The institution of service was an important, and sometimes dominant, form of wage labour in many rural early modern European societies, and one that persisted in some areas well into the modern era. Servants were workers who lived in the home of their employer, were paid a cash wage plus board and lodging (and sometimes other payments in kind) and were hired on a long-term contract. Their presence had many implications for demographic, social and economic structures but, as Jane Whittle points out in her introduction to this volume, there has yet to be a

book that compares the European experience of service across time and space. This book is therefore a very welcome contribution to our understanding of service and servants in rural Europe.

Whittle's lucid and accessible introduction is followed by twelve chapters, which span the early fifteenth to the early twentieth centuries and cover eight areas: Flanders, England, Sweden, Westphalia, Italy, France, Groningen and Norway. The range of primary sources on which these chapters are based is impressive, from the accounts of landowners, householders and farmers, to taxation and census listings, parish registers, and court records. Taking the subject forward in different ways, many of the chapters also acknowledge the influence of Ann Kussmaul's *Servants in husbandry in early modern England* (1981), whilst casting a critical eye over this landmark publication.

The volume is wide-ranging and is a constant reminder of the significance of local and regional contrasts; service was a changing and adaptable institution that differed from country to country, region to region and sometimes farm to farm. There are many themes that emerge. The number and type of servant hired depended on farm size, patterns of landownership and methods of production and was segregated by gender. In coastal Flanders in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, male servants were always in the majority but in the sixteenth century, female service thrived where large farms were absent. Similarly in seventeenth-century Sweden, a male workforce was more dominant where grain production was widespread but women were hired where livestock farming predominated. On the small-scale farms of parts of Norway, if the household could afford a servant, it was most likely to be a woman. But in areas of eastern France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, pastoral farmers had a preference for male servants rather than female. Here rural service gradually became more masculine as urban service became more feminine. Hiring arrangements changed over time; in sixteenth-century England, hiring relied on local, family and business connections, with entry and exit points across the year, whilst in nineteenth-century West Yorkshire, the hiring or statute fair was dominant. The wages that servants received varied according to age, experience and gender, but a male-female wage-gap was almost universal, with adult female wages showing little progression.

Whilst the life-cycle pattern of service was dominant, with servants overwhelmingly young, unmarried and mobile, there were some exceptions to this. In an effort to control movement and restrict the freedoms of young men and women, in many areas service was heavily regulated by law, but we are also shown

that service could be elastic. In the case of sixteenth-century England, Charmian Mansell's chapters show that service was a flexible form of work for young women, with periods of casual labour and service not necessarily mutually exclusive. Hanne Østhus points out that the term 'servant' could be porous and in seventeenth-century Norway, many men were both soldiers and servants.

Finally although servant voices are difficult to access, their motives, demands and networks emerge. In early modern Flanders, Thijs Lambrecht shows how servants maintained close connections to their kin through home visits, and the transfer of money and goods. Similarly in Italy, Raffaella Sarti demonstrates that service did not necessarily weaken family ties. The hiring fairs in nineteenth-century England are shown by Sarah Holland to be contested ground, servants defending their rights to a holiday and face-to-face bargaining whilst local elites launched a concerted, if unsuccessful, effort to suppress them.

This is a really coherent and accessible volume of essays, which has been expertly edited. Available in paperback, for a modest sum the reader will be treated to a range of methodological approaches that serve as models for future research. Service took many forms across Europe and beyond; the continuities and changes can be brought out by careful comparative work, as this volume proves.

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CHRIS BRIGGS and JACO ZUIJDERDIJN (eds),
Land and credit. Mortgages in the medieval and early modern European countryside (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). xviii + 339 pp., 23 b&w illus. £123.

This book emerged out of a lively, exciting and stimulating international symposium on land and credit in the medieval and early modern countryside, held at Selwyn College, Cambridge, in 2015. Not all the authors here gave papers: the collection has benefited from a number of additional contributions, and an afterword by Craig Muldrew. The result is an engaging and illuminating set of comparisons of land-based credit and its development across Europe during the periods under review.

The introduction by Briggs and Zijderdijn provides an excellent overview of the main threads running through the collection, including a discussion of the contract types that were available in pre-modern Europe, all of which were derived from Roman law. The *fiducia*, where the creditor had ownership but the debtor retained possession (the more attractive contract for lenders), and the *hypotheca*, in which the creditor had

a possessory interest only (the preferred contract for borrowers), were the most common, although there was regional variation. Moreover, the use of the *hypotheca* expanded from the late Middle Ages to become the most usual type of contract across north-west mainland Europe by the early modern period.

Credit could be extended on the security of goods, livestock and people, but land offered the strongest form of protection for creditors; as a result, it could support larger amounts of borrowing. The instruments varied however. The annuity was envisaged at the outset as a long-term arrangement. In the Low Countries, *renten* could be sold for the life of the buyer or as perpetual annuities, in which the duty to pay passed to the heir; the latter increased in popularity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The mortgage on the other hand, at least in England, often began its life as a short-term instrument of between one and five years that was then rolled over for as long as the arrangement was mutually acceptable. This may in part have been a function of the fact that the mortgage market was essentially localized, apart from a few of the largest loans.

The collection reveals the impact of a number of factors that affected the development of land-based credit in the medieval and early modern countryside. On the one hand, the use of land as collateral increased as mortgage instruments and law became more debtor-friendly, including the right to redeem. In Gayton's study of copyhold mortgages on Hampshire manors in the seventeenth century evolving attitudes to usury played an important part, despite little correlation between the statutory interest rate and borrowing, while Wedd's study of the middling yeoman and gentry in Kent ties changes in the use of the mortgage to the growing availability of the right to redeem during the seventeenth century. In De Luca and Lorenzini's study of mortgage credit in central northern Italy, the interest of the church in regulating and reinforcing the use of the *census consignativus*, through which it was possible to circumvent usury restrictions by using a 'sale and lease' transaction, led to the instrument becoming widely used to support infrastructure projects in rural municipalities, as well as for the expansion of manufacturing and trade.

But shifts in the use of the land-based credit were affected by economic and social factors as well as legal changes, and were not always linear. The growth in the annuity market in rural Brabant in the sixteenth century, for example, was more closely correlated with the exceptional growth of Antwerp, and urban demand for land from commercial buyers. On the other hand, in Alsace in north-eastern France, new groups of creditors from the liberal professions, who were interested in neither the payment of interest in produce, nor the

acquisition of land, preferred additional guarantors from the 1760s; as a result, the use of land as security fell away.

The collection provides a welcome reassessment of a number of key themes in the historiography of land and credit. In line with recent revisions of small farm productivity, the mortgage takes on a more positive role in the economy. Although there were always cases of default, the mortgage does not appear in to have been used primarily as a crisis instrument, nor as a method of land grabbing (but see Schraer's chapter on the Jews of late medieval Aragon). Few debtors in southern Holland lost their property through foreclosure, for example, because decisions on default had to be made by local judges, who saw it as a measure of last resort. Stripping insolvent debtors of their land was neither automatic nor inevitable in central northern Italy either, although retaining debtors on mortgaged land had its benefits for creditors. The collection also offers some welcome nuancing of the New Institutional Economics' position on property rights. Despite a lively credit market, the use of mortgages was less common in late medieval England than in Flanders, where the system of property rights was strong. But in Onacker's study of the Campine area of the Low Countries it was the influence of community structures as much as the strength of property rights that affected the take-up of credit. Rather than operating as a motor of growth, mortgaging appears instead as a means to stabilize community life. The mortgaging of land also formed part of wider household strategies to secure landholding for the future.

This collection is a must-read volume for anyone interested in land-based credit, and not just because of its wide-ranging contents. It suggests that to understand fully the development of the mortgage we have to consider the perspective of the debtor as well as the creditor, for whom the increased flexibility of land-based credit was a real boon. This means we have to examine land-based credit through the lens of the family as much as the economy: mortgages allowed landholders to negotiate current liabilities and preserve their patrimony. In addition, it seems that the key to economic growth is not to be found in land-based credit alone; for that we have to look to the wider availability of a variety of credit forms.

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ANGELA THOMPSELL, *Hunting Africa. British sport, African knowledge and the nature of empire* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), xiii + 229 pp. 3 b&w illus. £63.

Thirty years ago, little or no scholarly attention had been directed towards hunting and its role in imperialism, particularly in Africa. There were, of

course, literally dozens of books by hunters themselves, proudly describing their exploits, as well as widespread products of their hunting in museums and country houses. Since then, a number of scholars have turned their attention to this important environmental topic and it has now reached that mature stage where it is necessary to consider what each new book adds to an already rich historiography.

Thompson herself is quite clear: she is dealing with sports hunting through a sequence of phases from the pre-colonial period through the intermediate stage of the establishment of European power and into the early decades of the colonial period. More particularly, Thompson is concerned to demonstrate that through big game hunting, Africans were able to control the movements and access of hunters to the game they required. Africans, particularly chiefs but also those who provided essential services in leading 'caravans', held the levers of power for a number of decades, including the knowledge of the location of game, the characteristics of various animals, and the capacity to supply trackers and other auxiliaries of the hunt. Indeed, she goes further and suggests that it was precisely these controls over one of the most significant of all activities in the European approach to Africa that enabled some chiefs to maintain traditional authority systems when colonial power was being established. Moreover, she sets out to demonstrate that hunting was not always the supremely masculine activity it has frequently been portrayed as being, but that a fair number of women (obviously, elite women with the money to indulge this passion) were involved and were accepted into the magic hunting circle in Africa, even if their access to institutions in Britain – such as the Royal Geographical Society and the conservation associations – was severely limited into the twentieth century. Yet these women avoided becoming honorary men, bringing instead a distinctive set of characteristics and attributes to the sporting hunt and its significant result in trophy collection. Thompson considers whether these enterprising women hunters could be considered as 'new women' in the freedoms that they pursued. Yet, it is surely the case that those women in Britain who were considered to be 'new' in terms of gender freedoms, politics, employment, and intellectual ideas would have deprecated the kind of elite and inevitably well-heeled women who chose to use Africa as their field for exploratory and shooting experiences.

Such sports hunting was distinguished from commercial hunting for the saleable products of the hunt (not just ivory, but also skins, horns and trophies), which Thompson suggests was an activity much looked

down upon by those pursuing hunting for sport. This also eliminates from her consideration hunting as a subsidy (both in terms of its products and in the form of meat for workers) for the establishment of colonial power, for missionary expansion, and for the provision of infrastructure as in railway building, or again as a means of subsidising initial white settlement and the clearing of land for agriculture. Indeed, while the book adds some interesting new material to the literature of hunting, its limitations lie in the fact that it fails to pull together so many other aspects of the relationship among Europeans, Africans, the fauna of Africa, and the environment generally. In the case of Africans, the great game of Africa presented both an immense danger and an opportunity. Animals posed a threat to crops and sometimes to human life, such that all kinds of devices and human endeavour had to be used to keep wild animals off both cultivated land and domestic stock. In some cases that helps to explain why Africans were so often relatively eager to help European hunters. However, most African areas were regions of periodic drought, consequent crop failure and sometimes famine. At such a time, the great faunal resources of the continent could become vital to survival and Africans had long developed many hunting techniques for the supply of meat – and also perhaps for commercial products suitable for sale. Moreover, once Europeans arrived to create capitalist agriculture, the effects upon animal populations were manifold. Settlers would asset-strip the beasts upon their extensive lands (that is, throughout southern Africa up to the Zambezi and beyond as well as in East Africa) in order to kick-start both the economics and the physical clearance of the land in its conversion into commercially productive farms. In an oral history project I conducted in Zimbabwe in the 1970s, almost all my African informants noted the retreat of animals from the land, the disappearance of their opportunities to hunt them, and of the inter-relationship of faunal populations and agriculture, traditional and colonial.

While it is true that Thompson asserts that her focus on sport precludes such a wider consideration of the role of hunting, it does still seem like a major omission from the book, perhaps influenced by her apparent concentration upon publications and archives available in the United States and in Britain, with apparently little experience of Africa itself or understanding of environmental issues upon the ground. Moreover, if the focus is on sport, it would have been good to have had some consideration of the remarkable number of safari companies which grew up, notably in East Africa, to service the shooting passions of the hunting fraternity once colonial rule had been established. While some

work has been done here, we still await a fully comprehensive economic evaluation of these developments. Nevertheless, the book has many acute observations and makes a very real and original contribution to the literature of hunting. While it points to the ways in which Africans maintained power and turned the hunt into an inter-racial joint operation, as well as offering a fresh analysis of the gendered sphere of hunting, nevertheless it would have been interesting if it had taken the longer view – however briefly – of the role of Africans in modern game preservation and sports hunting, and in the manner in which so many of the farms and plantations created in the colonial period have now been turned over to the lucrative tourist activity of game viewing.

JOHN M. MACKENZIE
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RACHEL HERBERT, *Ranching women in southern Alberta* (University of Calgary Press, 2017). 212 pp., 40 b&w illus. \$29.93 CAD/USD.

This book stems from the author's sense of a discrepancy between her own family's lived experience of the Canadian ranching frontier and how its history is portrayed in books and popular culture. Throughout the book, the myth of a landscape dominated by male cowboys is proven to be highly misleading and only kept alive in historical works through a selective use of sources. In this way, the author positions herself within the revisionist historiographical camp that aims to correct gender-biased narratives and more accurately recognize women's role in history.

This study of the southern Alberta ranch-lands covers the period between the first introduction of cattle herds in the 1880s to about 1930. Drawing from published and unpublished memoirs, diaries and letters, the focus is placed on the 'lived experience' of the pioneer generations of women on the Alberta frontier. Other sources include photographs, interviews with descendants and material artefacts (just consider the significance of saddles!)

Family farms developed into the most successful ranch model in this period and increasingly replaced the initially widespread, but often failing, large-scale open-range ranches. The family ranches' pre-eminence has previously been explained in terms of their ability to easily adapt to the environment and in their combination of mixed farming with extensive livestock grazing. In addition, the author argues that a crucial aspect in the making of family ranches' success was the efficient integration of women into the production and management of the ranch. Reflections on the economic aspects of ranching do not constitute the core of the

analysis, however: instead the focus remains on the women themselves and their lived experiences.

The three first chapters respectively discuss the role of women in the emerging cattle ranching industry, the place of the family ranch within this context, and the gendered division of labour on the ranch. Throughout these chapters, the argument that women played a significantly more active and varied role in ranching than has previously been acknowledged is much repeated. Moreover, the author does not content herself with simply refuting the masculine cowboy myth, but she further argues that the encounter with the 'frontier existence' reformed gender roles and created opportunities for female emancipation. This is possibly the book's strongest contribution. The analysis of how Victorian women turned themselves into labouring cowgirls on the frontier is a revealing example of how gender roles can be negotiated, dismantled and reconstructed by the historical conditions in an agrarian milieu.

In the initial settling phase, the author argues, the labour of all family members was required to be able to establish the ranch. In addition, husbands often had to be absent for temporary wage employments and many wives got used to running their ranches independently. Furthermore, family ranches often relied on supplementary sources of income such as eggs and dairy products and women were often responsible for this production. Ideally, in the author's view, the ranch was based on a companionate marriage where both labour and love were shared. In such a constellation, the division of labour was a matter of pragmatics and it was not uncommon for husbands to do the dishes, wash clothes, or perform other domestic tasks in order to set their wives free to do urgent outdoor ranch work.

Expanding the analysis of the women's productivity, the fourth chapter explores their reproductive labour. Human reproduction was, of course, essential in securing the ranches' future on the isolated frontier. However, childbirth was also in all likelihood the greatest and most fatal risk women were exposed to, isolated as they were from both reproductive knowledge and skilled care. In this context, material inequality seems to this reviewer to have been a more crucial issue than Herbert acknowledges in her claims that 'class was a factor that mattered little in the daily realities of sustaining a home and family on the frontier' (p. 49) and that 'women were equalized by their birthing experiences' (p. 87). On the contrary, several examples in the book suggest that there was a considerable difference between those who were forced to work until shortly before giving birth and immediately afterwards

and those who could instead afford rest and hired caretakers. This inequality is neglected in the author's general conclusions.

In the fifth chapter, the female condition is examined in relation to material artefacts such as saddles and clothing. This chapter explores how women navigated between fashion and function and often successfully managed to be both Victorian ladies and riding ranch labourers. The final chapter emphasizes the importance of women's relationships to horses for their frontier emancipation. On the back of a horse, a woman rancher was just as able to work as her male equivalent. The horses also allowed women to break free from their isolated location and to find recreation, pleasure and interspecies affection and love. These two chapters effectively expand the general argument that women's gender roles were transformed through their frontier existence.

An appendix comprising the unpublished memoir, 'My sunset childhood', by the ranching woman, Constance Ings Loree, is included. Although the memoir would have benefited from being accompanied by an introduction or comment by the author, it synthesizes most themes covered throughout the book's six chapters and enriches the author's ambition to bring women's lived experiences to the forefront. The generous number of photographs from archives and private collections reproduced in the book similarly animates the story and strengthens the argument.

Rachel Herbert hopes that her publication will become a catalyst for further study and the reviewer can only agree that this would be much appreciated. This is not least the case with regard to the role of indigenous women who – even though they were the area's first female ranchers – are excluded from Herbert's study. Nevertheless, *Ranching women* provides a strong, personal and thoughtful account of the historical importance of 'cowgirls' and of how gender was reconstructed in people's mundane encounters with the ranching frontier's environment, everyday challenges, material artefacts and horses.

JENS AMBORG
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ZOE LAIDLAW and ALAN LESTER (eds), *Indigenous communities and settler colonialism: land holding, loss and survival in an interconnected world* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). xii + 270 pp., 8 maps, 4 illustrations. £74.99 hbk, £64.99 pbk.

Zoe Laidlaw and Alan Lester have compiled an impressive and international collection of case studies on a neglected aspect of one of the most significant spatial shifts in agricultural production, namely the expansion

of settler colonialism to large expanses of the Americas, Australasia and Africa. As was the case with Henry Reynolds' classic *The other side of the frontier* (2006) the authors' focus is on the 'other side', namely the impacts on and the responses by the indigenous inhabitants of these lands, rather than on the experiences of the settler colonists.

In their insightful introduction, the editors consider how the spaces of settler colonialism were 'co-created by uneven indigenous and settler capacities' (p. 7) and how this imbalance of power characteristically obliged the indigenous inhabitants to adopt a 'Christian, agricultural indigeneity' (p. 4) as a survival strategy. Both in the introduction and in the case study chapters, therefore, this volume is a study of 'indigenous dispossession and resilience' (p. 5) at, collectively, a global scale. Although the spatial coverage is restricted to the Anglosphere, with four chapters on Australia, three on Canada, two on South Africa and one each on New Zealand and the USA, the case study chapters cover a diverse range of environments and issues and the contributions by historians are complemented by those of political scientists, lawyers and criminologists and of two indigenous authors.

One of the strengths of this collection is its provision of overlapping perspectives on the processes of dispossession and resistance. In the Canadian case, this is achieved in scalar terms. Adele Perry considers how vast expanses of the Hudson's Bay Company's territory were made available for agricultural settlement, while Sarah Carter describes how, within this area, a single Indian Reserve in Manitoba was increasingly threatened before being finally opened up for agricultural settlement. In the Australian case, the Aboriginal reserve and mission of Coranderrk in Victoria is considered in Julie Evan and Giordano Nanni's chapter through the lens of indigenous submissions to an 1881 parliamentary inquiry and, in Joanna Cruikshank and Patricia Grimshaw's contribution, through that of the life and writings of the settler woman and Aboriginal advocate, Ann Bon. The development of the Spanish Benedictine community at New Norcia in Western Australia is described by Tiffany Shellam.

The role of sympathetic, and generally religious, sections of the settler communities is an almost ubiquitous component of these case studies. Most describe the fates of indigenous reserves that were also missions for a range of Christian denominations. Equally ubiquitous is the related theme of the 'coming together of white humanitarian and indigenous agency' (p.12) with, in most cases, negative longer-term results for the original inhabitants. By adding Christian and agricultural components to their indigenous identities,

the subjects of the case studies frequently came to be seen as less 'pure' by the settlers and therefore they and their lands were deemed to be less deserving of special protection by the colonial and state authorities. Carter aptly cites Homi Bhabha's observation in his *The location of culture* (1990, p. 190) that 'colonized subjects who mimicked the colonizer were the most menacing' and the examples from Canada, Australia and South Africa all demonstrate how settler authorities could use 'divide and rule' tactics to distinguish and discriminate between those indigenous inhabitants who sought to assimilate (doctrinally, agriculturally and/or sexually) and those who did not. These issues are developed in the chapter by Mark McMillan and Cosima McRae on the 1886 Half Caste Act in Victoria and the wider implications of the many legal definitions of Aboriginality.

Nevertheless, the collection also acknowledges local complexities. Both of the South African case studies, by Robert Ross and Kate Vernal, address the extra layer of difficulty provided by the ethnic diversities of the native and settler populations. The chapters by Cecilia Morgan, on the Haudenosaunee in Ontario, and Kelli Mosteller, on the Potawatomi in Kansas, consider the difficulties experienced by indigenous groups seeking to retain both land and identity following forced removals from their original territories. Angela Wanhalla traces the sequence of Maori dispossession of their wetland reserve, not for direct settler agricultural purposes, but for the wider ends of river management and flood control.

Overall, this collection offers a thought-provoking and – at least to this reviewer – a depressing account of a process of largely successful indigenous dispossession and of often determined, but ultimately unequal, indigenous resistance. Much of the material in this volume relates to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the impacts of the events described therein endure. On the one hand, the Peguis First Nation received \$C126 million in 2008 in compensation for the illegal transfer of St Peters Reserve from the ownership of their ancestors. On the other, disparaging settler testimony from the 1881 inquiry on Coranderrk was used by an Australian court to dismiss a Native Title claim in 2002. This book contains very occasional editorial errors (an inconsistent reference date between the text and the bibliography; a chapter cross-reference to the wrong map), but it thoroughly and carefully addresses important and complex issues that are relevant not only to agricultural but also to imperial, colonial and indigenous histories.

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SARAH THOMAS KARLE and DAVID KARLE, *Conserving the Dust Bowl. The New Deal's Prairie States Forestry Project* (Louisiana State University Press, 2017). 170 pp. US \$35.

Conserving the Dust Bowl explains how and why a few people with a combination of relevant knowledge, experience and political skill initiated and managed a huge but focused tree-planting programme intended to ameliorate the horrors of the 1930s Dust Bowl in six states of the USA. It is a welcome and well-researched account of the ethos, policy and practice by which 18,000 miles of wide shelterbelts were planted on 33,000 farms, using 220 million trees, in only seven years. This book emphasizes how fulfilment also depended on practical but astute 'grass-roots' foresters, ecologists and soil experts who not only surveyed the land, but were influential in persuading farmers and local politicians of the necessity of the proposed work. The groups which carried out the actual tree-planting are included in the account. Contemporaries recognized the Dust Bowl as an environmental, economic and social disaster caused by loss of the soil-binding prairie grasses through intensive ploughing, cropping and overgrazing by cattle, by tree removal to make railway sleepers, a long drought and the collapse of world wheat markets.

The book starts with a useful description of the six Dust Bowl Prairie States – Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota – their low rainfall, soil infertility, hot, dry summers and lack of trees (except on their eastern margin). Europeans settled this inhospitable region when governments encouraged families to buy inexpensive farm lots whilst at the same time persuading railroad companies to extend their lines ever westward.

The words 'Dust Bowl' evoke a flat landscape to a distant horizon, black clouds of soil blowing as far as the Atlantic Ocean, and starving or dead stock animals lying out in the vicinity of small, isolated farmhouses. Into this scenario came President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, the forestry advisor for Roosevelt's private estate and director of the USA Forest Service, as well as Raphael Zon, director of a forest research station. Planning the *Prairie States Forestry Project* took them from 1933 to 1935, while from 1935 to 1942 they oversaw its fulfilment.

The idea of large-scale shelterbelt planting across six Dust Bowl states, forming a wide north-south corridor was probably Gifford Pinchot's. The importance of tree-planting, particularly in treeless regions, had been recognized in the USA since the mid-nineteenth century.

Franklin D. Roosevelt (President, 1933–45) was a knowledgeable amateur forester with experience from his own estates. The 'Forester President' had strong

feelings for the outdoors and took a pivotal role in the organization and fulfilment of the Project. He understood that fulfilling environmental, economic and social needs (with all three equally important) was critical to moving from the uncertainty of the Great Depression towards nationwide stability. President Roosevelt's forceful personality raised enough money to start the Project, while professional forester colleagues worked to obtain political respect and support, which were initially lacking.

Conserving the Dust Bowl explains that the two years of planning included a detailed environmental survey of the six states, setting up tree nurseries, and spending time working with farmers and local politicians to convince them that their involvement would be beneficial. I was interested to learn that Forest Service staff carried out surveys of climates, soils, native vegetation and the results of previous tree planting. They recognized that knowledge of climate, soils and the tree species suited to each locality were vital preliminary data. They devised and advised on the length, breadth, shape and tree-spacing of shelterbelts.

The resulting 200-page scientific and technical report was in great demand by practitioners when farmers, unemployed people and Conservation Corps started to plant the shelterbelts. Planting was organized on a landscape grid, based on the meridians used for national survey of new states; then a local survey assessed prevailing winds, shelter and amenity for buildings, position of railroads and existing infrastructure.

There is a useful discussion of the ethos on which the so-called Shelterbelt Project was based: on the American realization of the importance of trees, of the equality of environmental matters with other national interests, and the acceptance of farmers' duty as stewards of the land to conserve the landscape. The US Forest Service had been set up with resource conservation as one of its aims, which ensured that its staff recognized the ecological and social role of trees to the nation.

The authors discuss the practicalities of the Project: how local people carried out preparatory clearance and fencing on the planting sites before Conservation Corps or other groups started work. Having chosen fast-growing trees suitable for each locality, the benefits of the shelterbelts were visible as soon as 1940. The obvious effects of shelter – for people, buildings, and stock – were accepted. Long-term benefits to soils, to amenity, wildlife and game also accrued; the authors mention disadvantages too.

The text contains helpful black-and-white photographs and maps. There are sixteen colour photographs taken in Antelope County, Nebraska at the

end of the book, which give a picture of the fragmented shelterbelt landscapes of today. Modern infrastructure such as wind turbines and pivotal watering systems have been imposed on the rectilinear shelterbelts, such that they have lost their 1930s/1940s integrity. This book finishes by suggesting how similar big ideas and good organization (based on suitable principles, policies and practice) could be relevant to solving or abating modern environmental crises.

There are detailed notes and references for each chapter. The book is a reasonable price. I found it stimulating and readable and I recommend it as an account of an historic approach to ameliorating human-made ecological, economic and social disasters.

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TOM BRISTOW and THOMAS H. FORD, *A cultural history of climate change* (Routledge, 2016). 244 pp., 8 b&w illus. £110.

Climate change figures prominently in historical studies nowadays. However, most historical climate studies have adopted a natural science approach or use scientific data rather than historical records. The role of historians is often reduced to coming up with useful historical weather or climate data, or explaining how the environment affected human societies.

Tom Bristow and Thomas H. Ford here present a different approach. In *A cultural history of climate change*, the physical climate itself is not the protagonist. No climate reconstruction, temperature series or precipitation estimate will be found in this book. Bristow and Ford have attempted to move beyond the empirical study of climate and provide us a more philosophical investigation into the historical climate. What is climate change in a cultural context? What do we understand by climate change? How have we constructed, mediated and processed this environmental crisis? These questions are as vital as a natural science approach because the climate is all around us. Not only have humans influenced the climate since the Anthropocene, climate is always perceived and experienced through a human lens. Regardless of the exact temperature rise, climate change and variability have become a social fact. Both climate-change believers and deniers have to deal with the issue of climate change. This endeavour to move beyond the physical climate in both present and past is praiseworthy. Unfortunately, this edited volume cannot live up to the coherent introduction because of the rather disparate collection of individual chapters.

Bristow and Ford have divided the individual chapters in three subsections, titled: 'climates of

history', 'climates of writing' and 'climates of politics'. In the first part 'climates of history', the historical origins of our modern concepts and ideas regarding climate change and weather are traced and analysed. This is by far the most interesting and thought provoking part of the book. The neutral character of the way we measure and label weather events or respond to climate variability is deconstructed here. For example, Chris O'Brien shows us that our Western ideas about time, seasons and weather influence the way we interpret weather variability. Western societies have constructed a sense of regularity and linearity to explain weather patterns. Seasons start and stop on fixed days and average levels of precipitation and sunshine can be predicted per month. This culturally constructed concept of time and seasons does not correspond to actual weather patterns however. Variability is more common than our western statistics and predictions allow us to foresee. O'Brien offers several options to move beyond our regular models. This is useful in a time of climate change, when we are trying to distinguish between normal and extraordinary variability. Deb Anderson shows how historical attitudes and visions regarding climate still shape the way we respond to climate change. In the Australian Mallee, farmers have always cultivated a sense of endurance to cope with extreme weather events, such as drought, which persists to the present even when challenged by even more extreme droughts and climate variability. Jerome Whittington, shows that our twenty-first-century positivism and attempts to develop climate models on a global scale are indebted to the first scientific and hypothetical analyses of Joseph Fourier. In his quest to discover the average temperature of the entire globe in the hypothetical situation of an absent atmosphere, Fourier developed probabilistic reasoning and imagined different possible futures, which we still apply today for our future climate reconstructions. Finally, Linda Williams shows that the roots of both our conservation movements as well as our degrading approach to nature can be found in seventeenth-century ideas and ideologies.

The other two sections lack the coherence and relevance of the first section. The stated goal of the book is to show that there are limits to a short-sighted approach to climate and that a cultural history is necessary to think about 'the limits of the present' (p. 31). Most chapters in the last two sections do little to spark a debate, nor do they show the ability of cultural history to challenge current policies or paradigms.

Section 2 analyses how climate change has figured in our modern literature and how prominent writers have thought about climate and weather. In contrast to the title, none of the authors in this section actually discuss climate change *per se*. The authors hunt for ideas about the natural environment, the globe, nature or climate in the works of Wittgenstein, Kant or Zola. Most illustrative are the chapters of Karen Pinkus and Roslyn Jolly. In the chapter 'Fuels and humans', Pinkus links Zola's ideas of the interconnectedness of humans and their environment with our present day Anthropocene, arguing that the descriptions of the fusing of coal mines and coal miners in *Germinal* anticipate bio-engineering. Jolly on her part imagines a link between climate change and the change of climate – or rather medical tourism – that was prescribed to nineteenth-century patients. Yet the authors have missed the opportunity to trace ideas and perceptions of climate and climate variability in historical writings. Climate variability is not a modern phenomenon and human society has been writing about this for centuries, but unfortunately an analysis of pre-modern sentiments regarding weather extremes and climate is missing here.

In section 3 the authors propose a reflexive position, investigating ways in which climate has figured historically in the construction of policies. Nevertheless, a common thread is lacking in this section. Nick Mansfield warns us that a focus on climate mitigation and the idea to return to a fixed point in history – namely 1990 – is a radical political choice rather than a neutral scientific endeavour. S. Romi Mukherjee shows us that the Anthropocene has given rise to a new set of religions, such as eco paganism, humanitarian religion and especially anthropocentric apocalypticism. Nicole Rogers analyses the pros and cons of judicial actions versus activism to counter climate change and develop a new paradigm as opposed to capitalism. Finally, Timothy Morton philosophizes about the concepts of nature and environment in the era of the Anthropocene. The focus lies almost entirely on the last decades and the promised historical approach or attempt to look beyond the twentieth century is largely missing.

As a result, this edited volume provides some interesting individual chapters in the first section, but fails to provide an innovative and relevant cultural history of climate change. The quest to answer what climate change means, and has meant in the past, therefore has to be continued.

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