So, the author explains, there has been, and indeed continues to be, a quiet revolution in landownership, which has seen approximately two million hectares of public land taken into private ownership since 1979, or, astonishingly, about 10 per cent of Britain. Perhaps 50 or 60 per cent of the original total of public land, especially that belonging to local authorities, has been privatised under the ideological remit of (mainly) Conservative central government from Whitehall. Christophers examines in a clear and nuanced analysis, in part guided by writers such as Doreen Massey, David Harvey and Karl Polanyi, the problematic definition of public land 'surplus' and the consequent 'logic of disposal', including its rationale, processes and outcomes. The rationale, effectively dismantled by Christophers, is that public land has been used wastefully in many cases, that there is land waiting to be used, especially for much needed housing, and that housing can most efficiently be produced by private companies. It is the case anyway that local authority council housing has almost ceased following Thatcher's 'right to buy' legislation that sold off much local authority housing at knock-down prices. Since then everything has been done by Whitehall to assist the transfer of public land, including benefiting from the impact of austerity on benighted local authorities whose undertakings have shrunk, requiring less land. Much has also come from the NHS, the Ministry of Defence, Forestry Commission and the water and railway undertakings. Even more insidious has been the selling-off of thousands of school playing fields, quite contrary to recent anxieties about children's lack of exercise, obesity, etc.

The historic intertwining of land and power, so familiar to the historian, continues apace today. But the sheer extent of this ongoing land grab has now been exposed in this important addition to the critical literature on neoliberalism.

# Anglo-Saxon Farms and Farming

## Debby Banham and Rosamond Faith, The Medieval Archaeology Series, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, xv + 336 pp., £65, 9780199207947

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The results of Banham and Faith's extensive studies provide the first comprehensive review of farming in the Anglo-Saxon period. It is, quite literally, a book of two halves. Part one, written by Debby Banham, assesses the products of farming, alongside the processes, tools and techniques that were employed in both arable agriculture and animal husbandry. Part two, by Rosamond Faith, considers how farming was actually practised across different regions of England. The work is drawn from a wide range of source material, including written texts comprising law codes, the few contemporary estate management records, charters, literature, medical texts and chronicles. However, as might be expected from a study encompassing the fifth to eleventh centuries, from which relatively few written sources survive, supplementary evidence is selected from archaeology, linguistics and later medieval art. This material is widely drawn upon, and this is an interdisciplinary study *par excellence*.

The first part of the book is ordered in a systematic way, dealing initially with detailed evidence for the cereals and legumes produced, followed by a comprehensive breakdown of the processes involved in their production. Significantly more space is devoted to animal husbandry, and this is perhaps because both authors argue that the Anglo-Saxons' agrarian focus was more firmly on their livestock than the arable. There follows a careful assessment of each animal in turn,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956793319000177 Published online by Cambridge University Press

considering their relative importance and value, their appearance and some idea of their number. The last chapter of part one offers a detailed look at livestock as working units, as well as a means of producing food, textiles and other by-products such as manure.

The second part of the book assesses the practicalities of farming in diverse terrain, and each chapter generally looks at different landscape regions, including coastal and riverine, wooded, downland, moorland and wold. Again, the key premise is that livestock were more important, and so much of the focus of the following chapters is on pastoral rather than arable farming. Throughout, there is a wide range of examples selected from right across the country, resulting in what is generally a thorough treatment of a large quantity of data. The final chapter of this section focuses exclusively on arable agriculture, largely focusing on bounded strip fields that Faith suggests represent farming regimes characterised by small enclosures – an early example of cooperative farming that pre-dates open-field agriculture.

Overall, this is a very impressive, richly detailed book, which certainly meets its aim of filling a gap in the historiography of medieval agriculture. There are, however, one or two very slight criticisms. The health of livestock in part one is considered too fleetingly. Just one brief paragraph is devoted to animal wellbeing and the treatments outlined in medical texts (p. 127). On the great quantity of young sheep in bone assemblages, this is attributed to a desire for young meat, when it is equally possible that the animals may have died from murrain – disease in livestock is not really considered, despite the fact that chroniclers record it as being a widespread and frequent problem. Again, the supernatural, and in particular field remedies are lacking, although Banham recognises their importance and notes that this is a gap. In the second half of the book, the structure is not quite as tightly defined. This is partly due to a lack of evidence, for example relating to the essentials of the woodland economy. Notwithstanding both authors' arguments that livestock were more important than plants, it also feels at times as though there is an imbalance between the space devoted to the pastoral and the arable. As both authors assert in the opening chapter, the Anglo-Saxons predominantly lived on what they grew, and in the second part of the book, arable farming is treated fleetingly within the regional studies. Despite these very minor points, this book is an important contribution to the body of work on medieval farming, and should be welcomed by anyone with an interest in the development of English agriculture.

## Hillbilly Hellraisers: Federal Power and Populist Defiance in the Ozarks

### Blake J. Perkins, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2017, 277 pp., $95 (cloth), ISBN 9780252041372

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In *Hillbilly Hellraisers: Federal Power and Populist Defiance in the Ozarks*, J. Blake Perkins examines the long, winding history of rural resistance to various efforts of the federal government in the Arkansas Ozarks. His findings challenge representations of rural Americans as being politically conservative because of an exceptional, age-old rural heritage. Using microhistories of small communities and individuals involved in pivotal events, Perkins finds that, from over a century beginning in the late 1800s, the politics of working people in the region changed significantly and paralleled national trends. Often, they did not resist government itself but the local elite that wielded federal power for their own benefit.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0956793319000177 Published online by Cambridge University Press