

DAVID HEY. *The Grass Roots of English History: Local Societies in England before the Industrial Revolution*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. Pp. 229. \$112.00 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2016.104

David Hey died in February 2016, and this book is thus sadly published posthumously by Bloomsbury. It is a strange sensation to handle a book that its own author cannot feel, see, and be gratified by, yet it does him great credit that he was able to finish this work. It bears witness to his dedication, expertise, and wide knowledge. The book is extremely well written, strongly engaging, by an author whose work in regional history, on the Sheffield region (“Hallamshire”) and Yorkshire, on surnames, roads, and carriers, on Richard’s Gough’s Myddle, on family history and so many other topics is well known and highly respected. Hey’s personality and intellectual persona shine through everywhere, just as they did in his gregarious and companionable life. I expected to be much interested and informed by this book on the “grass roots” and basis of English society in the early modern period, and I was.

His work is highly readable, up-to-date on the historiography, wide-ranging in theme and chronology, and it provides an excellent survey and interpretation of the early modern period. One is reminded of the scope and purpose of earlier books by authors such as Charles Wilson, *England’s Apprenticeship* (1965), Keith Wrightson, W. G. Hoskins, D. C. Coleman, Richard McKinley, Christopher Dyer, or Barry Reay’s *Rural Englands* (2004)—the latter also stressing regional diversities in its plural “Englands” but covering a later period. One sees the influence of scholars such as Alan Everitt and Charles Phythian-Adams. Hey, as my colleague Andrew Hopper commented when he saw this book, was “a living legend really.” His books on family history in particular did more than any others to form a field, to inspire huge numbers of the public to engage in and research their family histories, to engross international members of the British diaspora, and to show the relevance of family history to wider historical studies. As one would expect from prior work by him, there is a welcome emphasis here on surnames, on aspects of material culture, and on place names, combined with a more general survey of key features of the period’s religious, political, and socioeconomic history. There is able discussion of such features as vernacular architecture, the organization and living structures of the countryside, ways of earning a living, historic towns and cities, parish churches and chapels, population and family life. The book is chronologically wide. The addition of University of Leicester-founded DNA fingerprinting and profiling analysis, and related issues of surname distribution, to his coverage is also highly interesting, with revealing case studies here of selected surnames and their local meanings.

Hey’s books and other publications on the widely defined Sheffield region have a high reputation as scholarly and pioneering works on this important industrializing area. I did wonder therefore whether there would be a strong emphasis here on Yorkshire and Derbyshire, but this book is very wide in its coverage: it is remarkable that Hey manages to discuss such a wide span of England in his evidence. It also has much to say about London, often rather neglected in provincial historical emphases. There is very good regional balance throughout, and examples are widely drawn from across England. This makes it compelling in its generalizations, as well as being very accessible and appealing to readers from many regions. I personally regret the omission of Wales, but then no author can be perfect, and there is interesting comment on other Celtic countries.

In particular, Hey argues that people thought in terms of regions as “countries.” “Countries” were geographic *pays*, known localized topographies, farming areas, market-town districts, cultural regions, dialectal zones. “Core” families pertained to these, and core families and such “countries” are concepts that supply the main structure for his book. This is a compelling line of interpretation that distinguishes his book from many others. It is a useful *leit-motif* that keeps the book well integrated as an argument. He may on occasion over-stress stability against turnover of populations, yet this is a promising emphasis for further research,

opening up many questions: How did people define a “country” thus seen? Was it, for example, cultural, a working area, a migration area, an ambit for labor-hiring fairs, a market-orientated area, a dialectal district, a locality of certain “core” families, a style-defined area of built, vernacular, or folk culture? How did these matters, criteria and evidential forms interact? How did this concept of “country” feature in public and subjective minds, and were there differences in concepts and criteria across regions, genders, and classes? How did kinship networks relate to this theme? There is little doubt that this book will promote and frame ongoing scholarly enquiries along such lines.

While the book is not really a monograph based on primary research, it is presented as a new, distinctive interpretation, with its own highlights and authorial priorities, with a wealth of new examples, with fresh interpretations of landscape history, family history and local history. It should be keenly read by academics and by a great diversity of students, from undergraduates to research students. Furthermore, and as with David Hey’s other books, this work is approachable as well as being erudite, and it will thus appeal widely to the public. It has eye-catching illustrations and is attractively published and priced by Bloomsbury Academic—this is a publisher that is very notable for producing appealing and fine-looking academic books. It will draw many readers further into the early modern period and open their eyes to new ways of looking at their histories, via David Hey’s bracing mud-on-boots and northern English vernacular conceptions of the practice of history. The book will contribute much to an appreciation of the underpinnings both of general society as well as of so many regional societies, landscapes, and cultures in the past—with all the resonance that such understanding has for understanding ourselves today and for a visual and immediate appreciation of the history everywhere around us.

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VICKY McALISTER and TERRY BARRY, eds. *Space and Settlement in Medieval Ireland*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015. Pp. 237. \$50.92 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2016.102

Edited by Vicky McAlister and Terry Barry, *Space and Settlement in Medieval Ireland* consists of some of the papers presented to the annual Space and Settlement conference in Trinity College Dublin from its founding, in 2010, to 2013. The conference had a primary focus on medieval Ireland, qualified, we are told in the foreword, through studies of its “buildings, settlements, hinterlands, and regions” (xiii).

In the first chapter, Benjamin Hudson argues that the brief appearance of the term *Lothlind* in Irish sources during the ninth century has been confused by scholars with the Irish term *Lochlann*, originally meaning “Norway” and later “all of Scandinavia.” He argues convincingly that *Lothlind* is not a place but a term of derision masquerading as a place. The word *Lothlind* has connotations of evil marshes and fetid dog-fouled bogs and has parallels in other languages.

Patrick Wadden discusses what evidence there is for relationships between the Irish, the Hiberno-Norse and the rulers of the duchy of Normandy in the period around the early eleventh century. While an impressive quantity of material is discussed, the conclusions markedly merit the description by Oliver Creighton, author of the volume’s foreword, that many of the book’s chapters “pose many more questions than they resolve” (xiv).

The same may be said of Rebecca Wall Forrester’s chapter on early medieval Irish urbanization, which seems somewhat dated. For example, she discusses “future excavations” of lordly