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P. J. Fisher, ed., *The Victoria History of the County of Leicestershire: Buckminster and Sewstern*. University of London Press, 2017. £11.95. 9781909646698 pbk.

This informative account of the history of two villages encompassed within a single parish provides a comprehensive history of their transformation over more than a thousand years. Located in the north-east part of Leicestershire, both villages were initially freeholder villages until the 1790s, when William Manners moved to Buckminster and constructed a mansion, along with cottages for estate workers. His descendants secured all the land, including the residential and commercial properties in the village, which still remain in the same family today. In contrast, properties in Sewstern were more individual in character, with a more pronounced spirit of independence, coupled with employment in a wide range of trades, which persisted until the development of the railways. The author should be warmly congratulated for selecting a parish encompassing two villages with such interesting similarities and differences.

Published as part of the Leicestershire Victoria County History series, it constitutes the second book since 1964, the first being of Castle Donington in 2017. The strength of this book is indicative of the meticulous way the research has been undertaken, with virtually no record unread or line of enquiry neglected in the author's efforts to produce such a detailed account. The book contains an exhaustive collection of pertinent footnotes to support the analysis. These are ably supported by an impressive selection of photographs, together with maps and diagrams to illustrate the analysis.

It would be easy to imply that the account would benefit from a more detailed emphasis on contextualisation, particularly in terms of exploring how the history of this parish fits in with that of other parishes in Leicestershire and other counties. Criticisms of this, however, are disingenuous, given that the overriding aim of the VCH is to promote local research. In this respect it succeeds, as it provides an outstanding case study that showcases the multitude of sources that are possible to consult and significantly enhances our understanding of a very interesting parish.

The book will be of considerable relevance not only to historians of Leicestershire, but also to those interested in local history, as well as the many who are in the process of researching their own village. More importantly it will, I am sure, succeed in inspiring more people to engage with VCH initiatives in their own areas, and one hopes that many other studies of this type will follow.

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A. Antoine, ed., *Agricultural Specialization and Rural Patterns of Development*, Rural History in Europe 12. Brepols, Turnhout, 2016. 304 pp. Pb €62. 9782503532288.

Specialisation has been a major explanation of economic growth, the idea set out clearly by William Petty in the seventeenth century and most famously purveyed by Adam