

of the market (again in Russia). In line with recent archaeological theory, a number of papers express doubts about the importance of economic factors. Farms in Flanders and the Netherlands in the sixteenth century were provided with towers with the sole purpose of adding to the prestige of the owners. An exquisite silver and gold brooch found in an ordinary small house in an early medieval Danish village suggests to the excavators that wealth and status cannot be easily deduced from material evidence.

This is a well-conceived and coherent volume, containing essays of varying quality, but together they reflect usefully the state of archaeological research into medieval rural settlements.

Christopher Dyer  
University of Leicester

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R. A. Houston, *Peasant Petitions: Social Relations and Economic Life on Landed Estates, 1600–1850*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2014. v + 313 pp. 9781137394088.

This volume examines social relationships within the landed estate through peasant petitions from different regions. The archives used are clearly defined. Houston stresses that, for the purpose of the research undertaken, all the documents and sources originated from large estates with a particular form of delegated administrative structure. Unusually and importantly, rather than concentrating on the large midland and southern estates the main emphasis is on those in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the north of England. Houston advocates that these letter petitions offer intimate details of the lives of the people in their own words and provide the ‘authentic voice of [a] downtrodden and desperate, yet dignified people’. It is suggested that the petitions surveyed are different in tone and nature to the pauper letters which have been investigated predominantly by Steven King. There is no doubt that some of the petitions were pleas for help due to poor agricultural prices or periods of financial depression. However rather than the appeals coming from single individuals, many appear to concentrate on a family or community effort and are thus works of considerable collaboration.

At the core of this book is an investigation into why petitioners in the differing regions sought help. They frequently represent the balancing act between family advantage and the need to appear part of a community. In many cases they demonstrate the solidarities of rural communities which were built around agriculture but at the same time reveal the limits of cohesion. The petitions work on two levels, firstly revealing the dynamics of the interaction between landlord, estate management and tenant and secondly they indirectly reveal the relationships which existed between the other inhabitants. Petitioning formed a method of confirming the inherent subtleties of estate management. As correspondence tended to be greater during times of economic downturn, this work is a significant contribution to discussions of the crisis management that estates were forced to take to ensure the survival of their tenants and labourers.

Unfortunately Houston has not always been able to determine the success rate of the petitions presented. He acknowledges that measuring the numbers that succeeded is

difficult without undertaking time-consuming work looking at other estate documents. At times the volume does appear a little disjointed and might have been rectified by an examination of, for example, the petitions from the Marquis of Anglesey's Welsh and English estates. This continuity would have further highlighted the regionalist aspects of these stylised requests. Overall the research outlined within this volume provides a new and pioneering approach to social relationships within a variety of estates. It will be of interest and much use to agricultural historians, as well as to those interested in the rural community and estate management and it adds significantly to our scant knowledge of the tenant farmer. Consequently this research is a valuable contribution to the historiography of the estate and its management structures and frameworks particularly in the Celtic world.

Carol Beardmore  
Centre for Medical Humanities,  
University of Leicester

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Iain J. M. Robertson, *Landscapes of Protest in the Scottish Highlands after 1914: The Later Highland Land Wars*, Farnham, Ashgate Publishing, 2013. x + 256 pp. £65 hb. 9781472411372.

For generations, the modern history of Gaelic Scotland and its people impinged little on Scottish or British historiography. From the 1970s, Jim Hunter's E. P. Thompson-inspired 'history from below', Eric Richards' detailed accounts of the Highland Clearances and, later, the historic-geographical approach of Charles Withers, helped to raise the region's profile to the extent that in 1994 R. H. Campbell published an article entitled 'Too Much on the Highlands: A Plea for Change'. Despite this plea, local and thematic studies, and works that place the Highlands in a comparative political, social or cultural context, have continued to refine our understanding of *Gáidhealtachd* history. Iain Robertson's new contribution, however, helps to fill a notable lacuna. A well theorised and cogently argued contribution to Scottish social history and more general protest studies, Robertson notes that (227) the book was born 'out of the realisation that we have not paid sufficient attention to land disturbances in the Highlands of Scotland after 1914 when compared to that given to earlier events'.

In many respects, *Landscapes of Protest* is testament to an increasingly sophisticated interdisciplinary turn that interrogates traditional historical narratives. Employing methods from historical geography, memory studies and sociology, Robertson scrutinises various elements of the early twentieth-century land wars in the Hebrides. He uses a voluminous amount of manuscript sources, but supplements these with oral testimony based on interviews which in themselves will become source material for subsequent generations. The first section of the book, presented as 'background' to the main thesis, doubles as an extremely useful historiographical synthesis of existing scholarship on the events surrounding the Highland Land Question, particularly in terms of constructing models of tenant resistance to landlord authority.