

was a direct manifestation of the glory of God. Thus did organicism unite the earthly and the spiritual. In Conford's view, and he supports it with impressive evidence, there exists a direct continuity between the Christian principles of men like Philip Mairet and H. J. Massingham and those of Schumacher, Seymour and their followers. For the 'Seventies generation', many of them of an anti-capitalist, leftish persuasion and in thrall to the notion of eco-politics, the suggestion that organic husbandry and organicism are linked to the Christian tradition will probably be gall and wormwood. Then so be it. Let Conford's detractors combat his well argued conclusions with their own body of evidence.

It is quite impossible in a brief notice to do adequate justice to this substantial volume. It confirms Conford's position as the pre-eminent historian of the organic movement, at the same time providing a platform for tracing the rather rough passage of the movement over the past two decades. If it is essential reading for people involved in organicism and Green politics, the fact that it offers many fascinating glimpses of the doings of individuals on the fringes of social and cultural history suggests that it is deserving of a wide readership among all those interested in the changing pattern of the first five post-war decades.

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Richard W. Hoyle, ed., *The Farmer in England 1650–1980*, Farnham, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013. 358pp. £80. 9781409439615 hb.

The main purpose of this volume is to counter the fact that of the supposedly classic, albeit naïvely conceptualised, trio of landowner, tenant farmer and farm labourer, we know relatively little about the farmer, certainly not in comparison to the large amount of interest centred on the landowner. This is, of course, in large part due to the availability of source material which, for various reasons, has survived so much better for elite groups than for working families. And here we hit upon a central issue with this volume. In addressing 'the farmer' we not only have to counter the objection that this is such a heterogeneous group as to make it impossible to arrive at any valid overall conclusions, but also that in revealing the life and work of the farmers in this volume, the authors have relied upon documentary sources that actually mark their subjects out as exceptional. Most farmers did not keep accounts or write memoirs of their life and work, or if they did, the material has generally failed to survive. And so what we have here are the exceptions. The editor in his introduction fully acknowledges these issues: the book relies upon chance survivals from atypical individuals, but then this applies to so many other historical accounts.

It is almost a default stance in reviewing an edited volume to say that the chapters vary in some way. This book is no exception, but all the authors have done full credit to their subjects and we are treated to a depth of coverage and variety of analyses which make full use of the available sources: documents used for the first time or published sources re-interpreted. All chapters also attempt to situate their farmers within their context,

whether in time or space, well exemplified by Andy Gritt's treatment of the Lancashire smallholder Richard Latham, by Hilary Crowe's revisionist assessment of the problems of upland farmers in Westmorland during the First World War, or by Susanna Wade Martin's analysis of two farmers on the Norfolk Holkham estate. But not all have focussed on the farmer at the very centre of their work, and some chapters actually emphasise the context rather than the principal subject. The farmer is only an indirect presence in Joyce Burnette's chapter which deals more explicitly with the seasonality of agricultural employment for the farm labourer. Here the farmer only really appears as the keeper of farm accounts. And the editor's own intriguing chapter, exploring why there was no famine in England in the 1690s in contrast to neighbouring countries, uses the 'harvest books' of John Crakenthorp, a farming clergyman, but is primarily directed towards a substantial and analytical chapter on Malthusianism and price data for grains.

There are many interesting themes that emerge, trailed impressively by the editor in his introduction on 'Recovering the Farmer'. One that is perhaps underplayed is the extent to which many of the farmers we meet were innovators of one sort or another, and how any such innovations were encountered, implemented and further diffused. John Broad tackles this theme explicitly in his treatment of three farmers during the classic period of the agricultural revolution 1780 to 1840, and demonstrates similarities in personal traits such as inquisitiveness, an interest in circulating among fellow farmers and sometimes with country gentry, an interest in travel, and sufficient mathematical and literary abilities to watch the bottom line of their accounts. Peter Dewey shows how James Mason, a wealthy Portuguese mine owner, conducted experiments with fertilisers using his estate as a rich man's laboratory, after purchasing land to buy into the prestige associated with Victorian landownership. The many innovations of Rex Paterson, a true twentieth-century pioneer of grassland dairy farming, were spread through his publications but he also had to contend with an over-enthusiastic Hampshire War Agricultural Executive Committee, determined to have its own way in how his farms were run. Philip Conford shows how the organic ideas of Robert Stuart were spread through a network of like-minded producers in the postwar years.

Another theme which emerges from this volume is that of the 'lady farmer'. If the farmer as a class is elusive historically, how much more so were the women who came to farming, often as widows to take over their farms. Jennifer Holt skilfully uses the cashbook of Sarah Fell, daughter of Margaret Fell, wife of the Quaker George Fox, from Furness who supervised operations in a diversified and successful commercial enterprise. And Nicola Verdon examines the farming career of the widow Louise Cresswell on the Sandringham estate in Norfolk, using her written memoir of 1887, which illustrates, among much else, the conflicts that could arise between tenants and stewards on a shooting estate.

This is the first publication in a new History series from Ashgate, *Rural Worlds: Economic, Social and Cultural Histories of Agricultures and Rural Societies*, and is edited by the series editor, Richard Hoyle. The volume is well produced and promises much for the rest of the series. Illustrations are clear, and repetitive writing, and factual and proof-reading errors kept to a minimum. There is a great deal here for the reader to digest (apart from the somewhat indigestible price tag), and although by the very nature

of edited volumes most will focus on one or two chapters, the way in which overall themes can be traced through a reading of the full text is certainly worthwhile.

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Richard Jones, ed., *Manure Matters: Historical, Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives*, Farnham, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012. 249pp. £63.00 via website [regular price £70.00]. 9780754669883

In Walter de la Mare's short story 'The Wharf', a farmer reflects on the paradox of the muck-heap in his yard: 'A curious thing that what to some seems just filth and waste and nastiness should be the very secret of all that is most precious in the living things of the world . . . "We farmers couldn't do without it".' De la Mare's son Richard, as Faber and Faber's long-term agricultural editor, shared the farmer's belief in the necessity of obeying the Rule of Return of wastes to the soil, and promoted many classics of the organic movement's literary canon. Richard Jones's introduction to this collection of essays reinforces the message that:

Manure is one of only a handful of truly essential and universal substances . . . so important that it transcends national, political, ethnic, cultural and religious divides. And it articulates history too [providing] a constant thread which directly connects the present with the prehistoric past.

Jones's aim is to demonstrate the vitality of various lines of enquiry into manure's social and agricultural significance. Robert Shiel offers a wide-ranging account of 'the ecology of manure', stressing, like de la Mare's farmer, that manures must not be regarded as 'waste'. He reminds us that the art of manuring was a literally vital element of agriculture from Columella until the invention of chemical fertilisers in the nineteenth century.

Several chapters focus on archaeology, with Amy Bogaard looking at Neolithic Europe and Kate Waddington at southern Britain in the late Bronze Age, although Waddington's persistent use of 'may', 'suggests', 'appears', 'possibly' and 'perhaps' makes the reader wonder whether this indicates judicious academic caution or ambitious speculation. Bogaard and Waddington are concerned with the social conclusions which may be drawn from an archaeological study of manure, whereas Ian Bull and Richard Evershed are strongly technical and scientific, dealing with the application of the 'biomarker concept' to soil history. Ben Pears's chapter studies the impact of human cultivation on marginal landscapes, describing how the application of micromorphological techniques throws light on methods of enriching fertility. Other chapters are more broadly cultural. Daniel Varisco and Vanaja Ramprasad look respectively at Arab and Indian agriculture. We see the sophistication of Arab manuring techniques and are reminded of the religious dimension to Indian agriculture and of the success of its approach. Richard Jones, in an essay on medieval manure, similarly emphasises the spiritual/alchemical significance of turning apparently dead, base materials into new life. Hamish Forbes's study of the