

Nottinghamshire man as 'unhealthy, flat, low, damp, agueish, unpopulated' (p. 15). The editor has taken great pains to identify the persons involved, and has added to the value of the book by including a list of the places covered in the whole of the Lincolnshire correspondence. This is a model record society volume that deserves to be widely used outside its county.

D. W. Bebbington
University of Stirling

doi:10.1017/S0956793309990173

Daniel C. Beaver, *Hunting and the Politics of Violence before the English Civil War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008. xii + 173 pp. £48.00. 9780521878531.

Rather than a conventional monograph, this book comprises a series of four 'micro-history' case studies of hunting in early seventeenth-century England. It builds on two of Beaver's previously published essays to analyse violence and deer killing in Stowe Park in Buckinghamshire, Waltham Forest in Essex, Windsor Forest in Berkshire and Surrey, and Corse Lawn Chase in Gloucestershire. While the author admits this approach leads to a loss of breadth, these detailed case studies do much to illuminate the cultural meaning of attacks on deer in forests, chases and parks, going beyond analysis of them as disputes over land use. Beaver is unconvinced by Roger Manning's hypothesis that hunting was a symbolic substitute for war. Instead he develops a more cultural explanation, interpreting the ritualised killing and meticulous code of practice for the hunt as a means to convey gentility and honour, the essential prerequisites for those exercising magisterial authority in early modern England.

Despite the attempt by the Jacobean Game Laws to make the right to hunt more exclusive, Beaver shows how the lower orders sought to participate, forging reputations for themselves as poachers or as the servants and henchmen of gentlemen hunters. In particular, the Long Parliament's attack on Charles I's expansion of the royal forests during the 1630s endowed non-gentry poachers with a sense of legitimacy for their actions. When John Browne was challenged by a keeper in Waltham Forest on 25th April 1642, he replied 'there was no law settled at this time'. However, the deer hunting that resulted in court cases in the 1630s was not the action of poor men desperate to feed their families. Illegal deer-killing might entail a defence of customary rights, but it was also intended to be confrontational and to diminish the honour of the deer's owner. It was accompanied by ritual display, violence against a park's enclosures and scandalous words against the owner to maximise the insult. Beaver draws upon Corse Lawn as the bloodiest example of this, where six hundred deer were butchered by crowds in October 1642 to affront Lionel Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex, an avaricious, confrontational landlord, supposedly tainted with popery.

This book succeeds in offering a new interpretation of hunting and its role in the outbreak of civil war, but its price, brevity, and disinclination to explain technical terms militate against accessibility for all but the specialist reader. This is unfortunate because Beaver's impressive research lends weight to the recent interpretations of historians like

David Cressy and John Walter, who have emphasised the importance of the pre-war crisis of 1640 to 1642. It also supports the post-revisionist stress on the depth and importance of politics beyond parliaments in early modern England.

Andrew Hopper
University of Leicester

doi:10.1017/S0956793309990185

Chris Briggs, *Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth-Century England*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. xiv + 254; 10 figs; 2 maps; 23 tabs. £45. 9780197264416.

If English early modernists have recently challenged the view that rural credit was oppressive before the nineteenth century, their medieval counterparts, it seems, remain more or less tied to an older view of such credit as 'a relatively intermittent feature of the rural economy which, in so far as it had any lasting impact, served largely to exacerbate pre-existing economic difficulties' (pp. 7–8). It is in order to test this view that Briggs took the debt litigation of five different court rolls, providing evidence on seven manorial villages, from the late thirteenth to the end of the fourteenth century. The villages, lying in the counties of Cambridgeshire and Buckinghamshire, are Balsam, Littleport, Willingham, Oakington, Great Horwood, Cottenham and Dry Drayton. He makes no attempt to claim them as representative of English villages more broadly. The 'midland' manors in his study were all in the hands of ecclesiastical landlords and were dominated by large customary tenancies, often large enough to require additional labour. The study, as Briggs notes, is therefore 'most revealing about the credit activities of relatively wealthy villeins in possession of holdings measuring 10 acres or more' (p. 24).

Briggs' findings are instructive. Although cash loans did exist, in contrast to the situation in contemporary Europe where they were as common or more common than credit sales, such loans were relatively infrequent in medieval England, where deferred payments for goods and livestock were the most common form of credit, with delayed remuneration for work or other services next in line. There is also some evidence of the use of the 'purchase price advance', in which the debtor agreed to supply goods to the creditor at a time in the future in exchange for a cash payment (p. 38). Nor did land constitute the usual form of security; personal securities as the preferred form of pledge enjoyed a much higher profile than either land or written instruments. Most credit was between villagers, and not from institutions, lords, or even the beneficed clergy, and few creditors were non-resident. More significantly, there is little evidence for the emergence of the serial creditor or debtor. Certainly, those involved in the credit market did not belong to the ranks of the poor; the lending tended to be horizontal among villagers in relatively wealthy positions. That the credit supply contracted in dearth years is clearly indicated, although some villagers fared better than others, suggesting that the market for credit was localised, dependent upon mortality and highly segmented.

Briggs must be congratulated for this carefully argued and painstakingly researched monograph. His deft and thorough questioning of his source material reveals in full the