

aspect of business properly. William Thompson of the South Shields salt-pans, for example, found a lack of the proper receipts meant that payment for services rendered was not forthcoming. Accounts allowed the judgement not just of honesty and competence but also enabled performance to be monitored. This worked against the mine manager Nathan Horne, who found himself accused of inefficiency and mismanagement as a result of the failure of the mine under his control to turn a profit. But in other circumstances the meticulous construction of accounts protected stewards and, in some cases, enabled them to prove their value and, in consequence, advance their interests.

Oldroyd's general conclusions run contrary to those of Sidney Pollard in his influential *Genesis of modern management*. Pollard argued that because of inexact costings, confusion between capital and profits and inability to recognize capital as the central motivating force behind entrepreneurship, accounting was of limited use to those making business decisions. Oldroyd's view is that accounting was actually an essential and adaptable tool in the management of the estates in question and that it did function as a means of maximising profits. Consequently, *Estates, enterprise and investment* provides a valuable contribution to the debate about the progress of capitalism during the eighteenth century.

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CHERYL SCHONHARDT-BAILEY, *From the Corn Laws to Free Trade. Interests, ideas and institutions in historical perspective* (The MIT Press, 2006). xiii + 426 pp., 32 figs, 30 tables, 3 maps. £30.95.

The protection of agriculture is an enduring concern in every modern state, no matter how devoted it may be to the freeing of international trade. The repeal in 1846 of Britain's Corn Laws by a parliament dominated by landowners has therefore never ceased to fascinate economists, political scientists and historians alike. The author of this study is a political scientist. She is keenly interested in the theoretical implications of her study for political explanation; and toward this end, she deploys a range of methodologies which are daunting to the layman. She succeeds nevertheless in bringing out some points of enduring importance to anyone, whether layman or scholar, who is interested in crucial turning-points in agricultural trade policy.

This study focuses much of its attention on those Conservatives in the House of Commons who ultimately voted alongside Sir Robert Peel to repeal the tariff on cereals, pre-eminently wheat, which they had been elected to uphold. Free-trading ideas, as the author documents, had remarkably little to do with their decision. The

economic interests of most of these Conservative MPs were still predominantly agricultural and pointed in the opposite direction, though free-trading interests were gaining ground in their constituencies. So what persuaded this Conservative minority in the Commons, subsequently known as Peelites, to vote for repeal? Only four of them had voted on the free-trading side on this issue in the House of Commons over the previous four years.

Using computer-assisted content analysis, the author finds her answer in the debate in the Commons. This methodology enables her to identify the need felt by Conservatives, particularly those representing constituencies with substantial interests in the freedom of commerce, to find a Conservative rationale for their change of mind. Sir Robert Peel suggested one such possibility in his opening statement to the House of Commons, but without laying much emphasis upon it. He argued vaguely for repeal as a good way to preserve the landed basis of parliament. Would-be Peelites embraced this notion with such enthusiasm that it crystallized and bulked large when Peel drew the prolonged debate to its eventual close. They welcomed the conception of repeal as the best way to preserve the 'territorial constitution' of King, Lords and Commons dear to all Conservatives. Peel was in effect proposing an economic concession by the landed classes to preserve or at least to prolong their political primacy. The House of Lords, where landed interests were still stronger than in the Commons, found Peel's suggestion equally persuasive, and accepted the economic concession required of them in order to ward away the democratic reforms which would destroy their political base.

In the event Peel was proven triumphantly right, though his political opponents drove him from office the moment that he secured repeal. The Anti-Corn Law League, which had mounted a massive, radicalizing agitation throughout the country, was disbanded, and the fervour it had generated died. Two years later, the intransigence of the July monarchy in France precipitated a wave of revolutions across continental Europe, thus apparently validating the line of thought and action that Peel and the Peelites had embraced in Britain. Doubts about the wisdom of the Peelites were nevertheless raised on both flanks of the Continent: in Britain by Disraeli and protectionist Conservatives in the name of party loyalty and honouring commitments to constituents; by the generation in the wilderness to which the Peelites consigned the Conservative party by going their own way; and by Russia which managed to avoid revolution for the rest of the century through relentless repression.

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H. KRISTENSEN (ed.), *The diaries of William Brewis of Mitford, 1833–1850* (Wagtail Press, 2007). 116 pp., 21 illus. £9.99.

Farmers' diaries take a variety of forms. At their simplest they are kept intermittently and consist of short notes about family, weather and prices, with an occasional aside about local events of more than usual importance. More elaborate journals are written up regularly, often with an entry for each day which may sometimes occupy several pages of manuscript. Published editions of farm diaries usually begin with an introduction containing substantial information about the diaries and their author, the area in which the diarist was farming and something about the historical significance of the diary. *The farming journal of Randall Burroughs (1794–99)* edited by Susanna Wade Martins and Tom Williamson and published by the Norfolk Records Society provides an excellent example.

The publication of Brewis' diary follows none of the conventions. The book under review consists of extracts from fifteen diaries kept by William Brewis, a tenant farmer at Mitford in Northumberland, between 1833 and 1850 (the volumes for 1835 and 1836 appear not to have survived). An illustration of two pages of the diary, included in the book, demonstrates that the diary was written in copies of the annually issued *Newcastle memorandum book and register of the northern counties*, a local almanac and diary. The diaries are now in the Special Collections section of the Robinson Library at Newcastle University. Extracts had previously been separately transcribed by two scholars, Joan Foster and Dr Michael Smith, who drew the current editor's attention to the diary. It is their extracts which, as she explains in the introduction, she has edited for publication. One consequence of this, as the illustrations show, is that the stated editorial convention of retaining original spelling and grammar has not been followed. A second is that no effort seems to have been made to provide any of the usual information about the diarist or his farming background. The short paragraph about him in the introduction is culled from the extracts and is only supplemented by the inclusion of a family tree and an epitaph given at the end of the book.

Much that might be useful to many historians has been lost by this process. Brewis was a tenant of the Mitford family whose estate covered several thousand acres in the neighbourhood of Morpeth, one of the two most important towns in Northumberland at that time and the location of an important livestock market. The farms that he tenanted were situated at Throphill on the north bank of the river Wansbeck approximately three miles west of Morpeth. Although the book contains illustrations of maps made of both farms in 1839 for

the estate, no information about them is taken from the accompanying schedule of the acreage, rent or cropping systems. Similarly, no use has been made of other estate papers or of Tithe Commutation files. During the period covered by the diaries, two important articles on agriculture in Northumberland appeared in *The Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*. John Gray of Dilston's was published in 1840 and William Colbeck's in 1847. Both were noted authorities on farming in the county and provide important contextual information which apparently escaped the attention of the editor.

The publisher states that the 'diaries give the reader a fascinating insight into farming, markets and fairs, weather, crops and livestock, sport, horses and hounds etc', while what is really presented are randomly selected vignettes for the entertainment of a general reader. The thorough analysis of the work of one local farmer that would have been of considerable use to local and agricultural historians remains a desideratum.

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GEOFFREY TUDOR, compiled by HELEN HILLIARD, *Brunel's Hidden Kingdom. The full story of the estate he created and his planned house at Watcombe, Torquay* (Creative Media Publishing, 2007). 160 pp. £23.50.

This is the story of Watcombe house and estate, lovingly researched over twenty years by local resident and former Sandhurst and Dartmouth lecturer, Geoff Tudor, and brought to publication in commemoration of the bicentenary of Brunel's birth by the wife of the general manager of what is now Brunel Manor, a Christian Holiday and Conference Centre.

It was characteristic of Isambard Kingdom Brunel that when he looked for a country seat at the height of his career in the 1840s, he disdained to buy any existing estate but was determined to create one for himself out of a bare, arid and exposed hillside above Torquay – a site he had discovered while engineering the building of the South Devon Railway. It provided enough problems for him to solve to satisfy his need for a challenge, and this book tells how he engineered his park and laid the foundations for his house before his financial losses over the calamitous construction of the SS *Great Eastern* forced him to initiate steps for its sale just before his untimely death in 1859, at the age of 53.

The account is largely formed around two documents – the Watcombe Estate map of 1859 in the Devon Record Office, and Brunel's garden memorandum book in the Bristol University Library Brunel archive – and it is a useful case study of how a new park and garden was created in the Victorian period: the creation of a surrounding shelter belt of trees; the establishment