



1991

Review Essay: Michael Aston, David Austin, and Christopher Dyer, eds., *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England: Studies Dedicated to Maurice Beresford and John Hurst*

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Recommended Citation

Wright, Raymond S. III (1991) "Review Essay: Michael Aston, David Austin, and Christopher Dyer, eds., *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England: Studies Dedicated to Maurice Beresford and John Hurst*," *Quidditas*: Vol. 12 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rmmra/vol12/iss1/18>

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and the nuclear family on the basis of his examination of 695 individuals and 588 marriages. Anyone working on late medieval Castile will be indebted to the author for the years of research this book represents.

While no real commentary on so much detail is possible here, I do have some general reservations about the author's focus on lineage to explain the motives for individual actions. Influenced as they were by an increasing early modern emphasis on genealogical proofs of racial purity (*limpieza de sangre*) and nobility (*hidalgúia*) for access to all sorts of opportunities, by the ever greater significance of entailed estates (*mayorazgos*), and by the diffusion of Italian treatises on nobility, the authors on which Sánchez Saus has relied tended to see lineage, meaning a genealogical entity binding together a certain group of people over a long span of time, as a far more important source of motivation than it was for late medieval Sevillian leaders. Unfortunately, in his general chapter on lineage Sánchez Saus attributes this early modern view to the individuals he has studied despite the huge quantity of evidence he presents showing that medieval patricians responded to a different scale of values. This difference will become clear only when someone brings together for a single city the two types of research these two books represent.

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Michael Aston, David Austin, and Christopher Dyer, eds., *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England: Studies Dedicated to Maurice Beresford and John Hurst*, Basil Blackwell, 1989, x, 318 pp., ill., maps, index, \$65.00.

This book was prepared in the spirit of a *Festschrift* for two longtime leaders in English local history, Maurice Beresford and John Hurst. Its purpose is to present a multidisciplinary view of current research into the origin and development of rural English communities. The essays collected by the editors present an overview of the latest research methods and update readers on developments in the study of medieval English communities since the publication of Beresford and Hurst's *Deserted Medieval Villages* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1971).

The book is divided into three parts, representing the research specialties of contributors. Historical archaeologists dominate the list of contributors and give the work its archaeological flavor.

Part One, History and Geography, includes discussions by researchers who have attempted to reconstruct rural communities on the basis of contemporary documents, nineteenth-century ordinance survey maps, and archaeological

BOOK REVIEWS

evidence. This section provides starting points for further meaningful research about lord-peasant negotiations and settlement changes, whether or not there was a retreat from marginal land in times of economic stress in the late Middle Ages, and the link between place names and settlement morphology in the study of nucleation and dispersion of populations.

Part Two, Field Work, presents essays in fieldwork methodology and the interpretation of evidence gathered through this type of study. An excellent introduction to the issues addressed by historical archaeologists, it should be required reading for students in medieval history. C. C. Taylor's article about shifting conclusions at Whittlesford is entertaining and valuable because it forces researchers to admit their own fallibility and to appreciate the contribution of older studies to current exploration.

Part Three, Excavation, details the use of archaeological excavation to describe medieval settlements and the social and economic life of their inhabitants. Essays by Richard Hodges and Martin Bell shed light on the roles of environmental archaeology and statistical sampling in understanding communities and the people who inhabited them. Hodges also shares some thought-provoking ideas on why scholars from different disciplines must cooperate with each other to accurately describe the past.

The Rural Settlements of Medieval England is a valuable summary of current trends and issues in the study of medieval English rural communities. Its scope is limited primarily to the work of archaeologists, but it does touch on the roles of historians and geographers in explaining the physical remains of medieval settlements. Unfortunately, there is no glossary or bibliography and the authors seldom define terms unique to this field. Footnotes are the only means provided for learning about related literature. The book is obviously intended for specialists in English local history.

Those who wish a more complete overview of medieval local history studies in England should supplement their reading of this book with *The Countryside of Medieval England*, edited by Grenville Astill and Annie Grant (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988). The articles in this compilation add the people, animals, and crops that are lacking in *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England*.

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Roland Bechmann, *Trees and Man: The Forest in the Middle Ages*, trans. Katharyn Dunham, rev. ed., Paragon House, 1990, 319 pp., biblio., index, \$24.95.