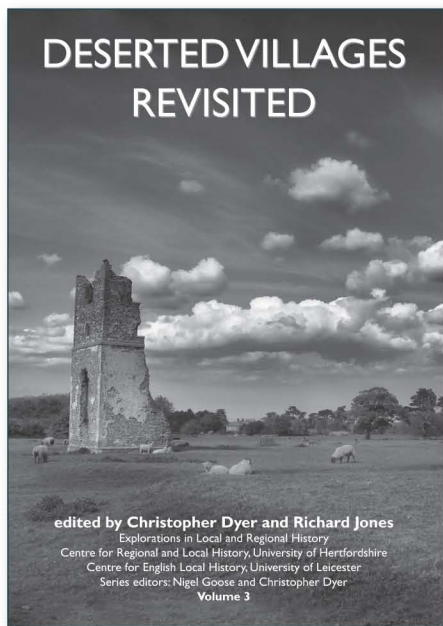


Deserted Villages Revisited

Chris Dyer and Richard Jones (eds)
Hertfordshire University Press 2010,
price £14.99



The study of deserted villages can be given a surprisingly precise starting point; in June 1948 when a group of historians, geographers and archaeologists visited the sites of 'lost' villages in Leicestershire. The scholars involved (including Professor Postan of Cambridge, W.G.Hoskins, Grahame Clark and Edward Miller) had been at a conference in Cambridge to discuss the relevance of archaeology for economic history. In 2008 a conference was held at Leicester to mark the 60th anniversary of this event. The sites were visited again and the whole subject revisited as a field of academic enquiry. The results are the subject of this book. It looks at the dates and causes of desertion from the middle ages to the eighteenth century and examines the implications of survey and excavation of village sites. It covers settlements smaller than villages in the southwest and Wales, as well as the regions with nucleated villages that were abandoned in the Midlands, Yorkshire and East Anglia. The book will be relevant to rural history, archaeology and geography.

The Warrens of Breckland, a survey by the Breckland Society 2010

Available free from 01760 755685, or
anne@providence28.fsnet, or downloaded
from www.brecsoc.org.uk

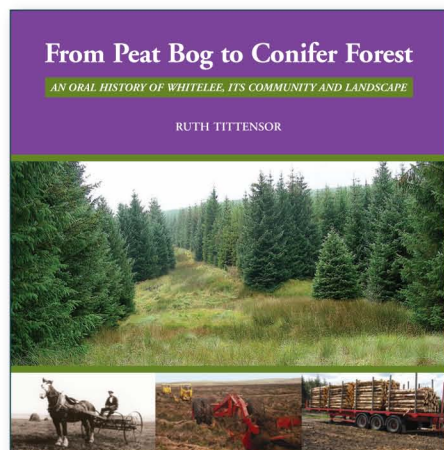
'Nowhere in Britain, and arguably the world-has such a complex and extant system of warren-related earthwork perimeter banks, internal enclosures and trapping banks, and medieval warren lodges as the Brecks' (p.56). This detailed study undertaken by the Breckland Society under the guidance of Anne Mason and supported by English Heritage sets out to provide a field survey of the earthwork evidence for rabbit warrens in this unique sandy area of south-west Norfolk and north-west Suffolk. The survey work was accompanied by documentary research and the interviewing of people who could still recall the days before afforestation when rabbits were all-important to the economy of the region. The book begins with a short historical introduction, followed by the field



surveys of the earthworks of 27 identified warrens and a section on the documentary and oral evidence. It will be of interest to medieval and later rural social and economic historians as well as archaeologists of the landscape. It is a fine example of a well-integrated piece of research undertaken by a team of volunteers.

From Peat Bog to Conifer Forest – an oral history of Whitelee, its community and landscape

Ruth Tittensor Packard Publishing £27.50
Available from info@ruthtittensor.co.uk



Short-listed for the Saltire Scottish History Book of the Year in 2009, this book describes, using oral and landscape evidence, the transformation of the barren Whitelee Plateau in Ayrshire into 5,000 hectares of

coniferous forest. The ecology, environment and way of life before the forestry is described as well as the farming and economy of the area. This is followed by a description of the dramatic changes to the landscape and the destruction of a way of life that the forestry brought. The latest changes involve the erection of wind turbines. Nobody asked the local people for their consent for any of these developments and this book tells their story in their own words. The book is lavishly illustrated with colour photographs, tables and maps and is a pleasure to handle. It represents the best of a new type of social and environmental history.

CORRECTION

It is good to know that Rural History Today has at least one reader. Philip Saunders of the Cambridgeshire Record Office wrote to point out that J.L. Brereton's college in Cambridge (see 'An experiment in secondary education' in RHT 18) known at the time as Cavendish College was subsequently taken over by Homerton College, and not the Leys School as stated in the article. Many thanks for this correction.