

Mick Reed/Roger Wells (Hrsg.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside*, Frank Cass, London 1990, hbd., 236 S., 19,50 £.

Six scholars have collaborated to produce a collection of essays on the structure of rural society in England between 1700 and 1880 and on the different ways in which farm labourers and village craftsmen protested against the harsh conditions under which they lived, particularly in times of agricultural depression. Seven of the ten essays have already appeared in *The Journal of Peasant Studies*. The contributors are quarrelsome colleagues. They appear to agree on fundamental issues but to quarrel over relatively minor matters.

The authors criticise the traditional division of English rural society into three classes – landlords, tenant farmers and agricultural labourers. They claim that historians have failed to appreciate the significance of a fourth group, namely the village craftsmen and providers of services. In most villages there were self employed workers such as innkeepers, blacksmiths, farriers, joiners, carpenters, carriers and shopkeepers. Some men had two or even three jobs. A publican, for example, might also be a bricklayer and would probably have a smallholding as well. Members of this group generally relied upon family labour. From time to time they furthered their interests by collaborating with one of the other social groups in the village.

The contributors to this volume also criticise historians who have discussed unrest in the English countryside in the first half of the nineteenth century by describing the depression of 1815–16, the Swing riots of 1830–1 and the Rebecca riots of 1839–43. By concentrating upon major outbursts of rural violence there is a danger that unrest in other periods may be overlooked. Villagers had many grievances – low incomes, tithes, road tolls, the game laws, and the poor law. It is hardly surprising that sheepstealing, fowl thieving, cattle rustling, poaching and the burning of haystacks and barns were endemic in the English countryside. And in some districts the introduction of threshing machines was delayed because farmers were intimidated by violent attacks upon them.

In the final essay Roger Wells appeals for further research into English rural history. To the topics that he mentions may be added – developments in the north of England and in Scotland and Wales and the significance of enlistment in the army and emigration to the colonies as means of escape from the harsh conditions of life in the countryside.

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John Saville, 1848. *The British State and the Chartist Movement*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1990, 310 S., hardback, 37.50 £, paperback, 13.95 £.

Few aspects of British social history have been more thoroughly investigated than the Chartist movement. A recent bibliography lists 40 books on the subject. The early works, such as those of Gammage, Hovell, West and Dolléans, surveyed the movement as a whole, while in recent years the emphasis has been on regional studies (London, Bradford, Bristol, Scotland) and biographies (Doherty, Lowery, Harney, Ernest Jones).

Professor Saville has adopted a fresh approach to the subject. He has examined Chartist activities month by month in the critical year 1848. His approach is different from that of earlier writers since he devotes much attention to the link between Chartism and affairs in France and Ireland. A number of Chartists expected a revolution in France, led by the Paris workers, would be a signal for popular risings in England and on the Continent. When Louis Philippe fell from power in February 1848, the Chartist leaders Julian Harney and