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The Bibliography for 2017 will appear in *The Journal of the English Place-Name Society* 51 (2019).

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Mark McKerracher (2018), *Farming Transformed in Anglo-Saxon England: Agriculture in the long eighth century* (Oxford: Windgather Press). ISBN 978 1 91118 831 5. Paperback, 164 pp. £34.99.

This book is extremely welcome, both because, as the author points out, the farming of early medieval England has hitherto been a neglected area of scholarship, and also because he has himself been a major contributor to the subject in recent years. The book builds upon McKerracher's 2014 doctoral thesis, in which he examined plant remains from two regions of England, the middle and upper Thames valley and East Anglia and its fringes, from the fifth to the ninth century. In that study, he concluded that, although there was a diversification of cereal crops during that time, the changes did not add up to a 'revolution'. Now, however, he does see, if not a revolution, then certainly a transformation. What has happened to change his mind? He has expanded his scope, not geographically or chronologically, but to include a wider range of evidence. The extra data are mainly archaeological: animal bones, pollen, artefacts, landscape studies. A huge amount of information is now available from such sources, making it possible to add much greater detail and nuance to what could be said even a decade ago. McKerracher does refer to written sources, but toponymic and other linguistic evidence is only drawn upon indirectly, via the work, mainly, of landscape historians. Putting all this variety of evidence together, the author now believes that agricultural changes in the

mid-Anglo-Saxon period constitute a much more significant phenomenon than he previously allowed.

For McKerracher, the fundamental changes remain those in cereal production: greater variety, greater volume, and more intensive methods, attested not only by plant remains, but by associated technology such as mills, grain-drying ovens and ploughs. He rightly associates this firmly with changes in animal husbandry: more oxen were needed for ploughing, and more manure from all species, but livestock also increasingly needed to be enclosed, to protect the expanding arable fields, leading to major landscape change. As livestock numbers increased, more animals (and not only oxen) were kept to maturity, and again, more intensive methods adopted. We can certainly imagine that farming in McKerracher's study areas looked substantially different in the ninth century, compared with the fifth. This kind of change might well give rise to new names for new landscape features.

The changes the author traces in East Anglia and the Thames valley are likely to have been common across most of lowland England, give or take a few wetland areas, and he provides data from some comparative sites to demonstrate this. Work led by Stephen Rippon has shown cereal cultivation increasing in the west of England at the same time. But upland areas are likely to have been very different. Cereals would certainly have to be grown in areas now considered unsuitable, but the intensification explored by McKerracher is unlikely to have been possible in, for example, the Pennines. We must therefore be cautious about believing that farming was 'transformed' in this way across the whole, or even the greater part, of Anglo-Saxon England. Readers may also be wondering what happened after the ninth century. McKerracher's interests certainly extend beyond this point, and he is now working on the 'Feeding the Anglo-Saxons' (FeedSax) project headed by Helena Hamerow in Oxford, which will trace agricultural change (or indeed continuity) in England right up to the twelfth century. We may expect further interesting results from that direction.

McKerracher has a neat turn of phrase, a great advantage in making what is, after all, fairly technical information accessible to a wider audience. And the book is as well produced as we have come to expect from Windgather: it looks attractive, has plenty of illustrations, mostly well presented (some of the site plans needed adaptation for reproduction at such a small scale), and there is a pleasingly small number of typographic errors. The book is a credit to all concerned.

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