

John Broad. *Transforming English Rural Society: The Verneys and the Claydons, 1600-1820*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. xvi + 292 pp. \$75.00. Reviewed by CATHERINE PATTERSON, UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are generally held to be an era of economic and social transition. While we often read of these large-scale changes, we less often get a glimpse of how they affected particular families or communities across a long stretch of time. John Broad's study of the Verney family and their estates in Buckinghamshire provides just that. The book's stated intention is to use the Verney family as a case study into how the rural economy, landholding patterns, and society were shaped by the great landowning families of England. Exploiting the extensive Verney correspondence and estate records, Broad situates one landed family in its local context, offering useful insights into the changing nature of rural society in the early modern period and weaving together a story of dynastic aspiration, economic development, and community interaction.

Much of the book focuses directly on the Verney family and its dynastic aspirations. Multiple generations of Verney men made active decisions to value expansion of the family fortune over enhancing the family's social status or national political profile. The first Sir Edmund, a courtier to Charles I, built up the family name, but also accumulated debt in his service to the crown. On his death in the Battle of Edgehill, Sir Edmund's son Ralph struggled to keep the family solvent during the difficult war years. Despite having married a well-to-do heiress, Sir Ralph's finances remained insecure; as head of the family, he had to deal with the financial needs of his many siblings and resolve the debts left by his father. Sir Ralph seems to have been of a fairly pragmatic nature. Seeing his financial straits, he worked to restructure the family finances, undertook some serious belt-tightening, and rigorously paid down his debts. Weathering the 1640s and 1650s with some difficulty, he emerged at the time of the Restoration in reasonable financial shape.

The same hard-headed approach he took to securing his finances he used in providing for his children. He married his eldest son, Edmund, to a substantial heiress, Mary Abell, while his younger son, John, was set up with an apprenticeship to a merchant, making his own living in the Levant trade. John's three wives all came from families with London connections and

substantial fortunes. Sir Ralph was a hard bargainer in marriage negotiations, expecting large dowries but not offering particularly generous jointures to the new daughters in law. Upon Edmund's death, John gave up trade to become the heir to the Verney estates. Like his father, he focused on the family's financial health, marrying his eldest son Ralph to the heiress of a wealthy but declining gentry family in Essex. Across multiple generations, dynastic aspirations centered on the accumulation of wealth rather than advancement of social standing. With the exception of the first Sir Edmund in the early seventeenth century and a later Ralph, second early Verney, in the late eighteenth century (who ruined the family fortune through profligate spending), the family's social sphere lay in the locality and the county, not at Court. A rising social status gradually accompanied the family's growing wealth—Sir John's son Ralph would become the first earl Verney in the mid eighteenth century—but leaping to the highest levels in the social universe was clearly not the top priority for the Verneys.

The family's attitude toward estate management mirrored the calculated attitude toward marriage and dynastic development. The family's imperative was to maintain and increase the central holdings in Middle Claydon, using enclosure and the purchase of neighboring properties when possible. The family's estate management physically changed the landscape, making Middle Claydon an enclosed estate community, and put into place more modern farming practices. The heads of the family remained directly involved in estate management, employing stewards but retaining control over much day-to-day decision-making. They charged high rents—at times, higher than the market would bear—but also worked flexibly with tenants in order to ensure long-term profitability. Sir Ralph Verney actually detailed in a letter written in 1650 his philosophy of estate management, including his attitude toward rent levels and tenant relations; his heirs seemed to have followed his hard-headed approach. One of the more interesting sub-themes of the book is the level of economic awareness of the Verneys, and the "modern" sense of economic decision-making they pursued. While the author does not make an explicit argument for this, the book provides evidence for a developing capitalist (or at least market-oriented) outlook among the landed gentry.

Even if the Verneys were fairly hard-nosed businessmen on their estates, they nevertheless operated with a sense of paternalism regarding their tenants.

While seeking to maximize rents, they also made allowances for good tenants who fell on hard times. But in return for this benevolence, they expected—and wielded—a great deal of control. The Verneys' enclosure of Middle Claydon reduced the village's population, and the family strove to keep the population small. They also kept a firm hand on housing and charity in the village, significantly influencing the lives of the people. Broad argues that the Verneys' dealings with the people of Claydon reflects the tension between the family's modernizing economic outlook and a strong sense of paternalism, "modified and modernised to accommodate the Puritan ethic" (195).

Broad's detailed look into the lives and landholding strategies of one prominent family offers a useful window into both the changing patterns of rural life in England and the development of "modern" economic attitudes. The author might have done more to grapple with the issue of economic thinking—was Sir Ralph Verney's focus on the bottom line in his farming practices and his prioritizing of wealth over status in marriage negotiations typical of gentlemen of his rank in 1650? It is perhaps less surprising that his son and grandson followed these practices in the eighteenth century. The words "modern" and "modernizing" are also used without clear definition at times. Nevertheless, the story of the Verneys, their estates, and the people of their community is well told; it should appeal to scholars interested in local history, rural society and agriculture, and economic development in early modern England.

Guy Rowlands. *The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV: Royal Service and Private Interest, 1661-1701*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xxv + 404 pp. \$70.00. Review by WENDY F. KASINEC, SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY.

This ambitious and provocative book by Guy Rowlands regarding the army during Louis XIV's rule situates this vital institution within the context of personal and dynastic concerns held by both the king and his noble subjects. While nominally considering the ministries of Richelieu and Mazarin and the early years of the Sun King's personal reign, the work deals primarily with the latter portion of the seventeenth century, especially from the Nine Years' War into the War of Spanish Succession. Rowlands's decision to concentrate his research on those years is especially relevant given the importance of the army