

NRPB and knows that the Board is an advisory body. It could never have "directed that the dose limit for workers be immediately reduced from 5 rems per year to 1.5 rems per year" (p. 247). Indeed, it did not even recommend such a reduction. It did suggest that, *while the limits remain at their present level*, it would be prudent to adopt some time-averaged restriction so as to achieve an *average effective dose*

equivalent of 15 mSv per year.

This is a good book, one that deserves a wide audience. It does not tell the whole story, nor is it without bias. But then, books without bias make dull reading, which is not a charge that can be levelled at Catherine Caufield. □

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from its members. But few of these records acquired the quality, continuity and wide dissemination of Barker's, which from 1771 were annually published in the *Philosophical Transactions*. Barker's reputation spread far beyond Rutland, for he was invited to contribute to an account of the severe winter of 1789–1790 being compiled by the Académie des Sciences of the unfortunate Louis XVI.

As Kington's account amply demonstrates, Thomas Barker was a pioneer in appreciating the importance of well-controlled, quantitative, continuous and extended observations in the study of nature. His journals show a keen awareness of the regularities of the British climate, and of the longer-term climatic fluctuations of his time. As a meteorologist of sorts, I stand in awe of Barker's insight and industry. But what sort of man was he? Some hints emerge from Kington's scholarship. A friend thought that marriage might relieve his "extreme Abstractedness & Speculativeness". At 61, he had a "streight belly", undertook a journey of 118 miles on horseback "without the least complaint or fatigue"

## In the country

John S. Perry

**The Weather Journals of a Rutland Squire: Thomas Barker of Lyndon Hall (1722–1809).** Edited by John Kington. Rutland Record Society, Rutland County Museum, Catmos Street, Oakham LE15 6HW, UK: 1989. Pp.217. Pbk £16.50.

IN the journals of the Squire of Lyndon Hall, 1751 was a year "all on the extremes". His bees had been "so weaken'd by the cold and wet mid May which hindered their working for their numerous young ones, that without feeding them . . . several would have dyed". Oats were 12 shillings a quarter in the British Midlands "country" of Rutland. In other countries, the French vintage was bad; earthquakes troubled Finland; droughts beset Italy and Carolina. But in Rutland, 2.656 inches of rain were to be found in the Squire's cistern gauge, situated 7 ft 3 inches above the ground.

Employing no doubt the same scrupulously legible round hand of even the earliest of his journals, the Squire in later years communicated to the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions* not only the weather of Lyndon Hall, but also his calculations of comets' orbits and astronomical inferences from Eratosthenes and Ptolemy. To other audiences he presented his theological views on the benefits of baptism.

Thomas Barker, grandson of William Wiston, Newton's protégé and successor at Cambridge, emerges from the pages of this lovingly composed volume as a complex and vital man of his time, wedded to the soil of his comfortably self-contained "country" of Rutland, but intellectually linked with the larger worlds of politics, religion, science and, above all,

nature. His life spanned the most eventful years of the eighteenth century, but little of that turbulence intrudes into the voluminous journals that he began as a teenager. His lifelong passion was the ever-changing weather, together with its effects on his agrarian world. Thus, his meteorological journals contain not only notes of the conventional variables of pressure, temperature, wind and precipitation, but also detailed accounts of storms, droughts, floods, crop yields, pests — a rich, moving panorama of his century that has provided a treasure trove for students of past climate.

John Kington, a climatologist at the

and ran foot races with his son Samuel.

One leaves Kington's charming monograph with lasting respect for this trail-blazing climatologist — and with a wistful longing to know more of Barker the man. Whilst waiting for a fuller biography, I try to close the gap of centuries by picturing him in today's Rutland, now politically homogenized with "countries" he would have termed foreign. I see him at Lyndon Hall busily puttering away with his PC, his ham radio, his collection of tropical fish. Of course, Lyndon Hall's acres would be festooned with automatic weather stations. On his bookshelves, beloved classics would be joined by Kafka and Kundera, and he

would no doubt struggle with enormous telephone bills and maintain lively correspondence equally with the *Times* and specialist journals. In the stables would stand his vintage Bugatti, next to his well-used Range Rover. This eighteenth-century man of the country would have been thoroughly at home as a twentieth-century man of science and the world. □

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Baromet. Ther. Clouds Wind direction

May 1784. 225

26 35	24.59	63.4	600	W	1	WSW 2	chiefly cloudy morning
14 15	65	635	655	W	2	WSW 2	in the past a few drops, sunny
26 45	87	602	515	W	2	var 1	in great wind and very calm
14 10	58	613	644	W	1	WSW 1	Wind WSW to 1 2 and after
22 25	84	594	534	W	1	SW 1	clear or sunny calm and hot
14 10	79	623	674	00	0	0	Wind S to SW 2
06 35	65	629	590	W	1	0	in morning, clear, windy for
14 15	49	690	760	SW	1	SW 2 16	noon hot, windy, cloudy in
24 625	44	655	564	WSW	1	SW 1	Thunder much about 1/2 p.m.
14 35	49	651	608	—	—	SW 1	Lightning SSE at night
25 620	52	620	553	—	—	SSE 1	Wind SSE to WSW 2
14 45	46	657	710	SW	1	SW 2	clear morning and evening
26 620	21	663	630	SSE	2	2 1/2	sunny and hot at night
14 30	17	694	738	S	3	S 3	Wind S to SSW 1 2
26 620	38	652	532	WSW	2	W 2	part of a thunder shower early
14 50	51	613	635	WSW	1	WSW 1	very early the middle, hot

Weather report — an extract from the *Meteorological Journal 1777–1789* for May 1784, showing daily observations, made by Thomas Barker, of pressure, temperature, clouds, wind, rain and weather.

University of East Anglia who studies eighteenth-century weather, has given us in this engaging little volume an ample selection of materials from the journals of Thomas Barker, together with brief but insightful sketches of the scientific and cultural worlds within which he lived, and the observational tools and methods he employed. Meteorology as a quantitative science was young. The barometer was less than a century old; the thermometer scarcely a half-century older. In 1723, when Barker was a toddler, the Royal Society began collecting weather journals