

Obituary of Professor Harold Fox written by Professor Charles Pythian-Adams

Historian of Devon's societies and landscapes

Harold Fox's work focused with exceptional originality on the interactions between the societies and the landscapes of Devon, illuminating the place of people in past physical contexts on the basis of meticulous historical research. His main concern was not with the traditional history of the landscape for its own sake, but in understanding the continuing relationship between landscape and society.

Harold Stanley Anthony Fox was born at Dartmouth and took his first degree in geography at University College London.

His 1971 doctoral thesis was on the field-systems of both Devon and Cornwall and his interest in the medieval three-field system widened into his late-medieval studies of settlement, farming practices, and tenant farmers in Devon and Cornwall for *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, III, 1348-1500* (1988).

During the late 1960s he was becoming increasingly aware of the work then being done comparatively at the University of Leicester on more general agrarian matters during the early modern period by Joan Thirsk and Alan Everitt, in which a new emphasis was being put upon the relevance of regional variation to understanding social patterns.

In 1976 Fox became Senior Research Fellow in the postgraduate Department (now Centre) of English Local History at Leicester. He advanced eventually to become Head of Department in 1998; to a British Academy Research Readership between 2000 and 2002; and to a personal chair in Social and Landscape History in 2003.

He died within weeks of his retirement, leaving behind him the almost complete text of the second of two monographs: *Alluring Uplands: Transhumance and Pastoral Management on Dartmoor, circa 950-1550*. In his first, *The Evolution of the Fishing Village: Landscape and Society along the South Devon Coast, 1086-1550s* (2001), he had traced back the origins of such permanent settlements to the temporary cabins set up to house fishing tackle or boats on the foreshore.

As an editor he had long associations with the *Journal of Historical Geography* and with three different monograph series originating in the department. Additionally, in the last decade Fox served as president of the Devon History Society, vice-president of the English Place-Names Society, president of the Medieval Settlement Research Group, and chairman of the Society for Landscape Studies.

Professor Harold Fox, regional and agrarian historian, was born on July 14, 1945. He was found dead on August 20, 2007, aged 62