

BOOK REVIEWS

Maurice French: *The Lamington Enigma: A survey of the evidence*: Tabletop Publishing, 2013: 280 pp., AUD\$39.95 (UK readers can buy directly from Professor French at a discount price of AUD\$30 plus surface mail of AUD\$20 from Tabletop Publishing, 60 Phillip Street, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350, e-mail <Maurice.French@usq.edu.au>).

The lamington is a square cake iced with chocolate, then rolled in desiccated coconut. It is an iconic Australian goodie, often the central offering of fund-raising lamington drives, and now takes its place, with this book, in the new tradition of analysis of Australasian sweet and baked foods. The cake is named for one of the Lamingtons (Lord or Lady) – he was governor of Queensland, 1896–1901. He seems a feisty fellow, or maybe just a rich man out of his depth in a somewhat rough Australia. There's a great bit of invective quoted by Professor French from *The Worker* who describe him as a 'peevish, fretful kind of joker'. And he was pretty rude himself about lamingtons, describing them as 'those bloody poofy, woolly biscuits.' A man of taste, evidently. Astonishingly, for a brief year around 1900, the Lamington's governess was Helena Rubinstein (and if she wasn't a governess then she was a maid). She went on, of course, to make face powder for the masses. This book is just a wonderful romp through the intimate details of colonial life at the turn of the twentieth century encompassing governors, technical colleges, newspapers and any number of red herrings about who thought up the lamington. I will not spoil your read by telling you the conclusion, save to observe that the general theory of 'recipe evolution' proposed by Helen Leach plays a part in the final judgement. The book is large, lavish and enormous fun. Well done.

Jane Whittle and Elizabeth Griffiths: *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth-Century Household*: Oxford U.P., 2012: 266 pp., £60.00.

The Le Stranges of Hunstanton in Norfolk are a well-archived family, their early-modern financial accounts are astonishing. Alice Le Strange, who married Sir Hamon, was particularly good at keeping a record of the household and no mean estate manager to boot. This study analyses the consumption patterns of the household, not forgetting a good section on the kitchen and the hall. Full of useful facts and an interesting comparison to Mark Dawson's study of the Willoughbys of Wollaton.