

Agricultural Treatises and Manorial Accounting in Medieval England

By P. D. A. HARVEY

REVIEW ARTICLE OF DOROTHEA OSCHINSKY, *Walter of Henley and other Treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971. xxiv + 504 pp. £7.

IN 1890 the Royal Historical Society published *Walter of Henley's Husbandry*, edited by Elizabeth Lamond. This contained text and translation not only of Walter of Henley's work, but also of three other thirteenth-century treatises: the anonymous 'Husbandry', the 'Seneschaucie', and the 'Rules' of Robert Grosseteste. In 1934 Eileen Power read a paper to the same society opening a discussion 'On the need for a new edition of Walter of Henley'.¹ The need was by then generally admitted: the discovery of new manuscripts of the text and increasing knowledge of medieval agriculture were making it clear that Miss Lamond's edition was an imperfect guide to the precepts of Walter of Henley and his fellows. As time has gone on the need has become more and more evident. Now, at last, it has been met by the newly published book by Dr Dorothea Oschinsky, Senior Lecturer in Palaeography of Liverpool University; in it she gives us new texts and translations of the four treatises edited by Miss Lamond and much else besides.²

It is not difficult to see why we have had to wait so long. Miss Lamond knew of 21 manuscripts of *Walter*, 7 of the *Husbandry*, 7 of the *Seneschaucy* and 6 of the *Rules*; Dr Oschinsky has taken account of 38, 12, 15, and 14 respectively. This larger number of manuscripts would have made little difference to the editor's work had they all been straightforward and accurate copies of their exemplars. This, however,

is far from the case. Three of the texts—the *Seneschaucy*, the *Rules*, and the *Husbandry*—were so drastically rearranged by some of their early copyists that even the basic plan of the original treatises is open to question. All four texts, especially *Walter*, have been glossed, miscopied, and mistakenly corrected, often by scribes who understood little of the authors' arguments. The resulting confusion was only partly resolved by Miss Lamond's edition; it has made it hazardous to draw on any of the texts for detailed technical evidence, and it has made Dr Oschinsky's task a peculiarly hard one. What she has tried to do is to give us the text of each treatise in its original state, as near as possible to what was written by its author or compiler. In this she has been brilliantly successful. On some points, to be sure, there is still room for doubt: the best manuscripts of all the treatises are copies at several removes from the originals. Thus in *Rules*, iv, in the phrase "cumben de quarters en semence, e en seriaunz la terre rependra," "e en seriaunz" reads very like an insertion misplaced in copying; or, again, the surviving manuscripts do not enable Dr Oschinsky to decide whether the proverb in *Walter*, c. 9 ("On yeer other to wronge wylle on honde go ant evere at en hende wrong wile wende") has been omitted from the text by one tradition of copyists or inserted as a gloss by the other.³ Points such as these can be resolved only in the unlikely event of the discovery of new and significant manuscripts that have eluded Dr Oschinsky; meanwhile she has provided us with texts of the treatises that are probably as good as we

¹ Eileen Power, 'On the Need for a new Edition of Walter of Henley', *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.*, 4th ser., xvii, 1934, pp. 101-16.

² Henceforth references to the treatises are given in the forms used by Dr Oschinsky: *Husbandry* (i.e. the anonymous 'Husbandry'), *Rules*, (i.e. of Robert Grosseteste), *Seneschaucy*, and *Walter* (i.e. Walter of Henley's 'Husbandry').

³ Pp. 347-8.

shall ever have. Their publication is an important event for medieval economic historians. It is not too much to say that we can now for the first time make proper use of these fundamentally important texts.

Dr Oschinsky backs up her texts with discussion of their transmission and with diagrams showing the relationships of the surviving manuscripts and lost exemplars. The variant readings given in the footnotes and critical apparatus to each treatise are confined to those that are relevant in establishing the text and its descent; minor variations in wording or spelling are ignored and it should perhaps be mentioned that although Dr Oschinsky's transcriptions of the texts are basically trustworthy their spelling very occasionally departs from that of the manuscripts.¹ As in Miss Lamond's edition, each text is accompanied by a parallel translation. For *Walter* Dr Oschinsky has used the translation made by William Lambarde in 1577 and hitherto unpublished. Lambarde used a corrupt copy of the text, and Dr Oschinsky has had to correct his translation in many places, but the idea of using it here is a happy one: it is well written, and it is valuable to have the English phraseology of a writer necessarily more familiar with the techniques of medieval agriculture than we are today. For the other three treatises Dr Oschinsky has provided her own fairly free translations; these are more accurate and more comprehensible than Miss Lamond's, reflecting our increased knowledge over the past eighty years, and they even attain elegance of style, a considerable achievement from such unpromising raw material. It is perhaps a pity that Dr Oschinsky does not take the reader more into her confidence over the various difficulties and perplexities that must have arisen in the work of translation, for there

are a few significant points where her interpretation of the texts can reasonably be questioned. These, and some significant manuscript readings that are open to doubt, are listed and discussed at the end of this article. But besides translating the texts Dr Oschinsky provides further elucidation, partly in the critical apparatus, where she explains some points of detail, but mostly in more general discussion of the contents of the treatises in the separate introduction to each text.

It is here that Dr Oschinsky gives us the full benefit of her knowledge not only of the treatises but of medieval agriculture in general. Many aspects of agrarian practice are discussed, learnedly and illuminatingly. Among them is the difficult question of the heaping of corn measures by the threshers and the *incrementa* included in the issue of corn on many manorial accounts. This was important to Walter of Henley and his fellows because it touched on a loophole in the accounting system which might permit the reeve to enrich himself from the lord's corn, and it is important to the economic historian because of its bearing on medieval crop yields. Dr Oschinsky is the first to discuss the problem in a general context and to offer a well-reasoned and convincing explanation of the varied and puzzling evidence of manorial accounts. Her answer may not explain every case—we must always reckon with the strength of local variation in medieval practice—and it will have to be tested against the many references in surviving account rolls.² But here as in many other instances she provides a sound starting-point for further investigation, a starting-point very properly based on the rules and advice offered to those in charge of husbandry and accounting at that time.

In the introduction to each treatise Dr

¹ E.g. the manuscript used for the text of the *Seneschaucy* (B.M. Add. MS. 32085, fols. 132-8v) reads, in cc. 1-16: 'meyns' for 'meynz', c. 9, line 3; 'seit' for 'seyt', c. 9, line 6; 'surcarke' for 'surkarke', c. 13, line 2; 'poet' for 'poez', c. 13, line 2; 'lez' for 'les' (twice), c. 15, line 3.

² Among local peculiarities may be mentioned the entry of amounts 'de incremento mesure' for corn delivered to the lord, though not for the issue of corn whether threshed by hired or customary labour (Newton, Cambs., 1311-12: muniments of the Dean and Chapter of Ely), and the entry of *incrementum* for issues of all types of corn threshed by hired labour except oats (Froyle, Hants., 1363-4, 1365-6: St Mary's Abbey, Winchester, estates: B.M. Add. Rolls 17479, 17480). Cases such as these make it the more likely that local custom in agreements made with hired threshers lay at the root of the use of heaped measures as recorded on the account rolls rather than, as Dr Oschinsky suggests, the greater ease or speed of measuring by heaped measures. Cf. P. D. A. Harvey, *Medieval Oxfordshire village*, 1965, p. 55.

Oschinsky also discusses its origin, date, and authorship. In the case of *Walter* she is able to demonstrate clearly first that its form is that of contemporary sermons and second that its arrangement so clearly follows that of the *Seneschaucy* that it was probably written as a commentary on what must have been the earlier of the two treatises.¹ Beyond this Dr Oschinsky gives us no indisputable new evidence of the provenance of any of the treatises. She points to references in *Walter* that might suggest associations with Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, and connects this with the presence of a *dominus miles* Walter of Henley in 1266-7 in the following of the Clare family who were, of course, important Marcher lords; the suggestion is a very interesting one, but the local associations are not conclusively proved.² Similarly she suggests that the *Husbandry* originated at Ramsey Abbey, primarily because the best (and only un-rearranged) text is in a manuscript with Ramsey associations, but also because the treatise refers to (i) leaving gaps in manorial accounts for the insertion of totals at the audit, (ii) the organization of sheep-farming and wool-marketing for the estate as a whole, not manor by manor, (iii) a method of estimating corn yields that involved recording the issue of individual stacks of unthreshed

corn, and (iv) particularly detailed accounting for corn and for harvest expenses; all these features occur in surviving accounts from the Ramsey estates.³ But in fact (i) is found almost universally in unenrolled manorial accounts,⁴ (ii) is very common on large estates,⁵ while (iii) is one of only three methods mentioned by the treatise and, like (iv), can easily be paralleled elsewhere.⁶ At least five, probably six, of the other manuscripts of the *Husbandry* come from Kent;⁷ the emphasis in the treatise on the profits from woodland and pasture accords very well with a Canterbury or other Kentish origin⁸ and much less well with a Ramsey one. Here again Dr Oschinsky's suggestions are stimulating and interesting, but are not necessarily conclusive.

The same is true of her discussion of the dates of the treatises. Because *Walter* gives an abstract of the document known as the 'Extenta Manerii' while the *Seneschaucy* does not, Dr Oschinsky suggests that the *Seneschaucy* was written before about 1276, when estate management in general and this document in particular were discussed in Parliament, and *Walter* after that date. The argument would be tentative even if these proceedings in Parliament were well attested, but in fact they are known only from references in the sixteenth century.⁹

¹ Pp. 75-82, 149-52.

² Pp. 147-8. The references that Dr Oschinsky associates with later practice in Gloucestershire and Herefordshire are to (i) reaping to leave a long stubble that might be cut for thatch, (ii) the high proportion of butter, as against cheese, produced from the milk, suggesting that the cheese was of low fat-content, and (iii) keeping sheep in houses in winter, and feeding them there on the haulm and pods of peas (pp. 175, 181, 183-4, 376).

³ Pp. 201-2, 204, 207.

⁴ Close examination of most original manorial accounts will show that, as first drawn up, a gap was left for the total of each paragraph of the cash account as well as for the total charge, discharge, and balance; the totals were entered on audit, sometimes by the original clerk, sometimes in another hand. Sometimes gaps were left for totals in the corn account also, but the stock account was normally fully written up from the first, with totals and balances. Occasionally preliminary totals for corn or cash were entered as tiny marginal figures when the roll was first written, e.g. Gisleham, Suff., 1349 (Biskele family estates: B.M. Add. Roll 26085) or Little Hinton and Stockton, Wilts., 1266-7 (muniments of the Dean and Chapter of Winchester).

⁵ D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, 3v., 1948-59, I, p. 42.

⁶ E.g. on the estates of Merton College, Oxford, as in the surviving grain-estimate rolls of 1272, 1276, 1282, and 1322 (Merton College muniments, 5529 dorse, 4120, 4122b, 4137).

⁷ Pp. 37-8, 201.

⁸ It appears very clearly, for instance, on the enrolled accounts for the estates of the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1273-4.—B.M. Add. MS. 29794.

⁹ Pp. 70-2. It is difficult to follow Dr Oschinsky's argument on the significance for dating of *Walter's* inclusion of the 'Extenta Manerii'; as she herself mentions (p. 68n.), the particular form of the document that he uses had been included in Bracton's 'De legibus' (ed. G. E. Woodbine, 1922, II, p. 219) probably at least twenty years before 1276.

Building on this foundation, Dr Oschinsky argues that the *Seneschaucy* was written after about 1260, because it was omitted from a manuscript compiled then, and noting that *Walter* speaks of 24 weeks between Easter and Michaelmas she suggests that this refers to 1285 when Easter fell on 14 April, exactly 24 weeks before 29 September.¹ Combining this with a note in one manuscript that *Walter* of Henley 'primes fu chivalier e puis se rendist frere precheur', she suggests that the author, whether or not the former retainer of the Clares, became a Dominican about 1280, wrote *Walter* in the sermon form that he now learned, and died before about 1290-1300, the date of a copy of the treatise that refers to the author in the past tense.² Clearly all this is very hypothetical indeed, and Dr Oschinsky claims no more for these arguments than that they point to dates that on general grounds are not unlikely.

But there is room for more work that would enable these two treatises—and the *Husbandry*—to be dated more exactly. Dr Oschinsky gives precise dates for very few of the manuscripts she has used; so many are involved and so much detailed work would be needed to date

any one of them that this is hardly surprising. But now that she has pin-pointed the key manuscripts in the transmission of these treatises it could well be that careful study of their hands and of the associated texts could produce useful results. The treatises themselves also provide some internal evidence for their dates of composition. For instance, the *Seneschaucy* envisages the rendering of manorial accounts by bailiff and reeve jointly. This was a practice only of the earliest period of written accounts, and although on some estates it lingered on into the fourteenth century by the end of Henry III's reign it must have seemed a rather old-fashioned form;³ accounting by the reeve alone is a normal feature of the slicker methods typical of estates where the earliest written accounts date from after 1250, as at Westminster Abbey or Merton College. Even if we accept Dr Oschinsky's *terminus a quo* for the composition of the *Seneschaucy* this points at any rate to a date nearer 1260 than 1276. Other features of the treatise also point to an early date: the direct responsibility of the *famuli* rather than of the reeve on their behalf, and, indeed, the role of the steward himself as an estate supervisor.⁴ In turn, an early date accords better with one

¹ Pp. 89, 144-5.

² Pp. 145-6. Dr Oschinsky does not mention the possibility that casting the treatise in the form of a sermon may have been slightly humorous in intention; the use of ecclesiastical or solemn forms for very mundane purposes was a frequent form of humour in the Middle Ages. It certainly seems bizarre, to say the least, that a new entrant to a landless Order should use the homiletic style that he now learned to write what is by and large a very worldly treatise on estate management. There is no evidence that *Walter* of Henley became a Dominican apart from the note in this single manuscript, and it is not impossible that this too is no more than a humorous reference to the style of the treatise, or even to the fact that it takes the form of a sermon. Humour—and humour of this sort—does occur in texts of this type: the accounting formulary in B.M. Add. MS. 45896 concludes with the mock-serious colophon 'Explicit Rotulus Nobilissimus secundum vsum Ithonis de Barton', and contains the obviously comic entry of the death of a sow by illness, attested 'per visum coronatoris'.

³ In *Accounts and Surveys of the Wiltshire lands of Adam de Stratton*, ed. M. W. Farr, Wilts Arch. & Nat. Hist. Soc., Records Branch, vol. xiv, 1959, we actually see the change taking place: the accounts for 1269-70 and 1272-3 are presented by bailiff and reeve together, those from 1273-4 on by reeve alone. At Peterborough Abbey, however, where old styles of accounting long continued in use, bailiff and reeve were still normally accounting together in 1310 and at Winchester Cathedral Priory the change was not complete until the 1320's (Northants. Record Office, Fitzwilliam (Milton) MS. 2389; J. S. Drew, 'Manorial Accounts of St Swithun's Priory, Winchester', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, LXII, 1947, pp. 22-3). The reference to joint accountability might help to provide evidence of the place, as well as the date, of the composition of the *Seneschaucy*; the system was widespread (it is found, for instance, at Canterbury, Peterborough, Winchester, and Worcester), but even in the mid-thirteenth century was far from universal (thus it does not appear on the estates of Crowland or Ramsey Abbey, nor on the royal estates). Dr Oschinsky (pp. 96, 234) may be right in saying that the bailiff was held especially responsible for a joint account's accuracy, but the financial responsibility seems always to have been the reeve's alone (Drew, *loc. cit.*, pp. 26-7; N. R. Holt, in *The Pipe Roll of the Bishopric of Winchester, 1210-11*, 1964, p. xx, finds the same use of singular, not plural, verb to express the final debt).

⁴ Dr Oschinsky (pp. 98-9) notes that interest in the *Seneschaucy* soon waned, as it was hardly ever copied after the early fourteenth century. This could well be because the type of organization it describes was now out of date.

piece of internal evidence from *Walter*, which, as Dr Oschinsky shows, must have been written later than the *Seneschaucy*. It is an interesting fact, and may well be a significant one, that *Walter* nowhere suggests that the reeve or bailiff of each manor should present written annual accounts. If *Walter* was written in, say, the last decade of Henry III's reign this would not be surprising, especially if (as will be suggested) the treatise was written for lay owners of small estates: written accounts were probably known then only on a limited number of ecclesiastical and large lay estates. But if *Walter* was written in the mid-1280's the omission would be surprising. Written accounts of that date survive from a wide variety of estates; their use was spreading fast,¹ and they represent just the sort of up-to-date, provident technique that would appeal to Walter of Henley. This, of course, is arguing from negative evidence, and it would be wrong to attach too much weight to it. It may serve to show, though, that we have more to learn about the dates as well as the provenance of these treatises. The question is an important one, for the differences between the four treatises are interesting and may be seen as significant if they can be placed in their proper chronological context. The same applies to the other texts on accounting and estate management that Dr Oschinsky discusses. Probably almost all were written over a relatively short period,² a period when the use of written accounts was spreading rapidly and when other new techniques and new methods of organization were being adopted.

Here we touch on the remaining contents and the overall plan of the book. Besides giving us a full edition of the four treatises, Dr Oschinsky deals with other contemporary texts on estate management and accounting: the detailed list of manuscripts that forms the bulk of the book's first chapter comprises all manu-

scripts containing this type of material, a long chapter is devoted to analysing and discussing the treatises on accounting, and in an appendix nine unpublished texts of this sort are printed in whole or in part. The contents and arrangement of the book are dictated by the conclusions that Dr Oschinsky has reached, first on the purpose of the four treatises that she has edited in full and secondly on their relationship to the development of manorial accounting. These conclusions are basic to her work, and as much of what she says stems from them they deserve very careful examination.

"This book," Dr Oschinsky writes, "by the nature of our principal treatises has become a study of didactic literature for the training of officers employed on non-monastic estates."³ Because many copies of the treatises are found in compilations of legal texts, she argues that they were intended for the instruction of future estate officers—stewards and bailiffs—who would be trained in estate management while acquiring a working knowledge of common law. In the mid-thirteenth century these officers had no need of legal education and they probably learned their job simply by practice and experience—grew into it as it were—but "the legal demands under Edward I made it essential for stewards and bailiffs to have a good legal education," and, from the evidence of the manuscripts, "at least some lawyers received, in addition to their legal training, instruction on estate management, conveyancing, and accounting."⁴ It is in this light that Dr Oschinsky views each of the treatises. Thus of the *Seneschaucy* she writes, "The stress laid on legal training and the legal demands to be made on steward and bailiff suggest that the compiler had himself been trained in law."⁵ The sermon form of *Walter* suggests that this was composed as a lecture: "The delivery of the lecture will very likely have taken place in Oxford. Pre-

¹ By 1325 at Langenhoe, Essex, we see written accounts being prepared for the owner of a single manor (R. H. Britnell, 'Production for the market on a small fourteenth-century estate', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., xix, 1966, p. 380).

² Probably very few of these texts were composed later than 1300. For one (Gloucester, Library of the Dean and Chapter, MS. 33, fols. 48–55v), for which Dr Oschinsky suggests a mid-fourteenth-century origin, a mid-thirteenth-century date seems more likely on internal evidence: (i) the growing of winter barley, (ii) the description of all cash discharge as *expense necessarie* except forinsec expenses and liveries, and (iii) the use of *estricum* and *hop* as measures of capacity for corn and flour (pp. 249, 469–75).

³ P. 257.

⁴ Pp. 61–5.

⁵ Pp. 88–9.

scribed courses in business training are known to have existed there, which provided instruction in the art of letter writing, the formulation of writs, deeds, and accounts. Within such a course instruction in estate management would merely have been an extension of the syllabus." Soon afterwards a copyist of *Walter* revised it, by introducing chapter headings and altering some of the more rhetorical turns of phrase, so that it could be used more easily as a textbook; it is this 'didactic version' that is represented by most surviving manuscripts.¹ The *Husbandry* was compiled as a work of reference for an auditor, probably from an existing file of notes and memoranda, arranged in the order in which the matters would arise on audit;² in this form, Dr Oschinsky argues, the work would be of limited use, as auditing procedures varied from one estate to another, but all but one of the surviving copies are of a very much revised version, a 'didactic adaptation' that arranged the material in the order of a manorial account so that it could be used more generally by clerks or bailiffs as a guide to their composition³. The *Rules* too were, of course, not drawn up as a work of general instruction; they were compiled, perhaps by Robert Grosseteste himself, between 1240 and 1242 for the specific guidance of the newly widowed Countess of Lincoln. But from the surviving manuscripts Dr Oschinsky argues that some fifty years later they were "adopted by the legal profession as a textbook for the training of estate personnel" and they thus acquire a sort of honorary status

as a didactic treatise for general instruction.⁴

The suggestion that there existed a regular programme of instruction for future estate officers and that these treatises played an important part in it, were, indeed, mostly written for this purpose, is a very interesting one that deserves careful consideration. We should be wary, though, of regarding it as proved fact. We know little enough of how students learned common law in the thirteenth century, but it is far from certain that any form of instruction was offered them beyond attendance in the courts and gathering up what crumbs of wisdom, experience, and anecdote their elders let fall. To add instruction in estate management to a formal training in the common law is to add hypothesis to hypothesis. Certainly, though, the presence of the treatises in legal manuscripts points to their being used for guidance (which is not the same thing as formal training) by men with knowledge of the law whose duties included estate administration. These men would be the estate stewards or seneschals; what is normally meant by a bailiff, an officer having the oversight of not more than a very few manors, would hardly have needed any form of specialized legal knowledge.⁵ The mid-thirteenth-century steward, however, was expected to supervise the running of an entire estate, which would include holding the court for each manor; this would clearly call for a knowledge of more than local customary law, and the *Seneschaucy* (c.1) specifically says that he "deit saver la assise du regne pur foreyne bosoynes defendre, e pur lez baillifs ke desuz

¹ Pp. 117-20, 148.

² This suggestion can be supported by the curiously contradictory passages in the treatise (e.g. c. 28 and c. 32, or c. 35 and c. 36).

³ Pp. 201-6. It is worth noting, though, that very often—perhaps normally—the same order was followed in writing manorial accounts as in auditing them, i.e. the dorse with the corn and stock accounts would be written first, and the cash account on the front last. This would be the most efficient order of procedure for the clerk as well as for the auditor; it can be demonstrated from accounts where there is a change of hand partway through the writing of the account or where alterations made in the corn or stock account have already been taken into account in the cash account, e.g. *Whitchurch, Hants.*, 1260-1 (muniments of the Dean and Chapter of Winchester), *Melbourne, Cambs.*, 1317-18 (B.M. Add. Roll 25866). Cases where it can be demonstrated that the cash account was written first, the corn and stock accounts last, seem much rarer, but *Cuxham, Oxon.*, 1290-1 (muniments of Merton College, Oxford, 5809), and possibly also *Broughton, Hunts.*, 1378-9 (Ramsey Abbey estates: B.M. Add. Roll 39535), are examples.

⁴ Pp. 5-6, 196-9.

⁵ Dr Oschinsky mentions (p. 89) the legal demands made on the bailiff by c. 21 of the *Seneschaucy*; but this, effectively, requires him to hand over to the steward's judgement any decision requiring a knowledge of more than the local custom of the manor.

luy sunt en lur dutes certefier e aprendre.” Significantly, perhaps, towards the end of the thirteenth century, as more emphasis was placed on their duty of holding courts and on their legal qualifications, the stewards played less and less part in the actual running of estates.¹ However, there is no reason to doubt that, as its name implies, the *Seneschaucy* was actually compiled to assist men of legal background who found themselves taking up posts that involved a knowledge of estate management.²

But to find *Walter* bracketed with the *Seneschaucy* as composed for the instruction of estate officers is surprising. Even Dr Oschinsky’s interesting demonstration that it is a commentary on the *Seneschaucy* cannot alter the fact that, *prima facie*, it gives advice not on how to run someone else’s landed property but on how to extract—honorably and honestly—the greatest profit from one’s own. There is no mention of a steward; throughout it is implied that the owner of the estate, presumably a fairly modest one, will oversee it in person. When the author mentions bailiffs (c.33) it is not to instruct them in their duties but to give advice on how they are to be selected. Of course, this could well be a literary device: by being told how to manage landed property from the point of view of its owner *Walter*’s audience or readers would learn how to run it on his behalf. But for this suggestion to carry weight much more evidence is needed. Even if it is accepted, it is still difficult to accept the

further suggestion that *Walter* was composed as a lecture for students of estate management at Oxford. Mr H. G. Richardson has shown, from surviving collections of specimen documents, that training in the *ars dictaminis*, known to have been taught at Oxford by the mid-fourteenth century, was probably available there at least a century earlier.³ This *ars dictaminis* was the basic training of a clerk. It included letter-writing and the drafting of conveyances and other legal documents and it is very likely that it came to include training in compiling accounts; there are reasons to suspect that certain specimen manorial accounts originated at Oxford.⁴ Instruction in drafting accounts would naturally include the techniques of auditing, for, as Dr Oschinsky shows, the clerk writing a manorial account played almost the part of an intermediary between the officer rendering the account and the auditors,⁵ but as far as we know the actual running of a landed estate would normally lie quite outside his duties.⁶ To suggest that instruction was offered in estate management is to assume the presence at Oxford of a quite different group of students, the future stewards, and this is something for which we have no evidence. On the whole it seems simplest and soundest to regard *Walter* as written for the edification and profit of small estate owners, who were too lowly to employ an experienced or professional steward and supervised their own property; it was written to be read as a book, not heard as a lecture,⁷ for if an audience of would-be estate

¹ See, for example, Jennifer C. Ward, ‘The Estates of the Clare Family, 1066–1317’, *Bull. Inst. Hist. Res.*, xxxvii, 1964, p. 115.

² It is interesting to note that the proportion of surviving copies in legal manuscripts is higher for the *Seneschaucy* than for the other three treatises (Oschinsky, p. 61, n.1).

³ H. G. Richardson, ‘An Oxford Teacher of the 15th Century’, *Bull. John Rylands Library*, xxiii, 1939, pp. 436–57; ‘Business Training in medieval Oxford’, *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, xliv, 1940–1, pp. 259–80; ‘The Oxford law school under John’, *Law Quarterly Rev.*, lvii, 1941, pp. 319–38; *Formularies which bear on the history of Oxford, c. 1204–1402*, ed. H. E. Salter, W. A. Pantin, and H. G. Richardson, *Oxf. Hist. Soc.*, N.S. iv, v, 1942, II, pp. 331–54.

⁴ Dr Oschinsky (p. 251) mentions the possible Oxford associations of the text in B.M. Harley MS. 274, fols. 29–49. Several texts of the ‘Forma Compoti’ group (notably B.M. Add. MS. 45896, B.M. Egerton MS. 2360, and P.R.O., E.163/24/34) contain references to places in Oxfordshire, or are linked with texts that suggest an Oxford origin; this was probably the most popular of the specimen manorial accounts that were in circulation from the late thirteenth century onwards.

⁵ Pp. 231–2.

⁶ Dr Oschinsky, however, argues otherwise (p. 234). We badly need some case-studies of the careers of individual clerks; these would be difficult to compile, but not impossible in areas where surviving records happen to be abundant.

⁷ The changes from rhetorical to less rhetorical style that Dr Oschinsky notes (pp. 118–19) among the

stewards is unlikely, an audience of trainee gentlemen farmers is unthinkable.

If we do not accept that *Walter* was written as a didactic guide for estate officers, it follows that of the four treatises only the *Seneschaucy* was originally compiled for this purpose. This makes it harder to accept the distinction drawn between these texts and two other contemporary treatises on estate management. One of these is the rules in French compiled for the Mohun family's estates centred on Dunster, written in their fourteenth-century cartulary.¹ Dr Oschinsky prints the text as an appendix, but without translation or discussion of its contents; it has never been printed before and although it was written for a particular estate (so too were the *Rules* and the *Husbandry*) and contains some purely local detail this seems all the more reason for fuller elucidation. The other treatise is the Latin text headed 'Scriptum quoddam' in the Gloucester Abbey cartulary published in the Rolls Series.² As Dr Oschinsky points out, this was probably written as a general treatise, not necessarily at Gloucester, as there is another copy in a manuscript from Luffield Priory,³ and yet a third manuscript, of uncertain origin, includes passages from the text translated into French.⁴ The text is a very interesting one; its bureaucratic, almost military, rules for the governance of a manor are very different in tone as well as in content from the other treatises. In 1934 the late Mr R. V. Lennard called attention to the importance of the text and the need for a critical edition.⁵ It is difficult not to regret that Dr Oschinsky's view of the purpose of the four edited texts should have prevented her from

placing these two other treatises alongside them.

Besides determining her choice of the texts to edit, Dr Oschinsky's view of the purpose of the treatises has governed her treatment of those selected. Aspects of the treatises and their history relevant neither to the establishment of the texts nor to their presumed purpose of training estate officers have been omitted. Thus there is no discussion of those points of the *Rules* dealing with the regulation of the household; indeed Dr Oschinsky almost apologizes for including them in the edited text.⁶ She alludes once or twice to the 'sermon' adapted from the opening chapters of *Walter* (i.e. omitting all the agricultural contents), but tells us no more about it, not even mentioning the curious fact that in one version it is written in rhymed couplets,⁷ and for the late medieval English translation of *Walter* we must still use Miss Lamond's edition. It is a pity that Dr Oschinsky should have limited the scope of her edition for reasons that are so open to question.

But the plan of the book has been determined also by Dr Oschinsky's view of the relationship of the four edited texts to the development of manorial accounting. The *Husbandry*, of course, is clearly and closely linked with the system of presenting and auditing manorial accounts, a system that was in general use by the time it was written at the very end of the thirteenth century. But it is argued that in the *Seneschaucy* too "special emphasis is laid on accounting responsibilities and on the importance and methods of checking the accounts of manorial offices,"⁸ and indeed that a similar emphasis on accountability to the lord is to be

alterations made for the 'didactic version' of *Walter* are very interesting, but do not amount to proof that it was originally intended for oral delivery; in one or two cases the revised version seems to use a more high-flown style than the original (as 'vos fenz facet unyr' for 'facez aunir vos fens').

¹ B. M. Egerton MS. 3724, fols. 19-20.

² *Historia et cartularium monasterii sancti Petri Gloucestriae*, ed. W. H. Hart, Rolls Series, xxxiii, 3 v., 1863-7, III, pp. 213-21.

³ Pp. 30, 256.

⁴ In Paris, Bibl. Nat., MS. Fr. 400, at the end of the conflation of *Walter* and the *Husbandry* that Dr Oschinsky describes (p. 49; L. Lacour, 'Traité d'économie rurale composé en Angleterre au treizième siècle', *Bibliothèque de l'École de Chartes*, 4e sér., II, pp. 375-7 (sections 34, 35)).

⁵ *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.*, 4th ser., xvii, p. 115. ⁶ P. 198.

⁷ Pp. 21-2, 36, 113. The verse version is in B.M. Egerton MS. 3724, fols. 39-40; the text in Cambridge Univ. Lib. MS. Hh. III. 11, fols. 82-3, is in prose and seems to have much less obvious connection with *Walter*.

⁸ P. 98.

found in both *Walter* and the *Rules*. Dr Oschinsky sees the development of manorial accounting in thirteenth-century England as lying at the heart of the system of demesne farming that created the need for the treatises on estate management. The existence of a well-developed royal accounting system that private estate owners could adapt to their own needs was, she suggests, an important reason why demesne farming flourished in England, and she draws a contrast with Germany, where it failed to develop despite similar economic conditions.¹ It is on this basis that she devotes a substantial part of the present book to accounting treatises and formularies.

For this we have every reason to be grateful. Dr Oschinsky has already given us some valuable work on the accounting treatises;² she now provides the fullest discussion we have yet had of this interesting and important class of text. At the same time, it is not to be compared with her work on the four edited treatises as final or definitive treatment. Almost certainly we have more to learn about the treatises on accounting. For one thing, there are more manuscripts to be discovered; the following additions to those listed in the book are probably no more than a tithe of those that have still to come to light:³

British Museum, Sloane MS. 513, fols. 3r-10v.

Specimen account of Winchester form, with interspersed rules (without heading), opening with the verses 'Quid de quo quantum . . .' (see Oschinsky, p. 241), and continuing 'Notandum quando aliquis debeat ordinare compotum alicuius manerii necesse est quod habeat rotulum redditualem in quo sunt nomina terre tenencium . . .'

Hand of late 13th cent.; the manuscript, miscellanea mostly of the 15th cent., came from Buckfast Abbey, Devon.⁴

B.M., Add. MS. 45896 (lost; but a photocopy forms MS. Facsimiles 504). Roll giving specimens of a manorial court roll (dated 1348) and an account with interspersed rules (heading missing). The rules and headings of the account, but not the contents of the paragraphs, are those of the 'Forma Compoti' (see Oschinsky, pp. 247-9). Hand of mid-14th cent.; probably compiled for use on the estates of the Harcourt family.⁵

B.M., Add. MS. 48978. Specimen accounts for a single unspecified year (probably about 1260-70), with interspersed rules, etc., for all manorial officers and obedientiaries of Beaulieu Abbey, Hampshire; Bodleian Library, MS. Barlow 49, fols. 58-114, (see Oschinsky, p. 254) is largely a copy of the sections of this text relating to Faringdon. Hand of mid- or late 13th cent.⁶

Bodleian Library, MS. Oseney Roll 2. Roll giving specimens of manorial court rolls (of which one is dated 1333) and an account (imperfect: latter part of stock account only) endorsed with a single rule. The account is one of the 'Forma Compoti' group (see Oschinsky, pp. 247-9). Hand of mid-14th cent.; from the archives of Oseney Abbey, Oxfordshire.

Muniments of King's College, Cambridge: Ministers' accounts before the time of the College, Ogbourn 17 Edward II. Specimen account roll, without rules, dated 1322-3. The account is one of the 'Forma Compoti' group (see Oschinsky, pp. 247-9). Hand of early to mid-14th cent.; from the archives of the English estates of Bec Abbey.⁷

¹ Pp. 72-3, 213-14.

² D. Oschinsky, 'Medieval Treatises on Estate Accounting', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 1st ser., xvii, 1947, pp. 52-61; 'Notes on the editing and interpretation of Estate Accounts', *Archives*, ix, 1970, pp. 84-9, 142-52.

³ Besides these additions to the list of surviving manuscripts, one item can be added to the note of those now lost (Oschinsky, p. 10, n.2): Royal MS. 11 A. XVIII, which contained a 'Formula Computus Servientis in Manerio pro A.D. 1377'. This manuscript was probably in existence in 1698, when it was mentioned in Bernard's *Catalogi manuscriptorum Ang'iae*, but by 1734 it had disappeared (G. F. Warner and J. P. Gilson, *Catalogue of western manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections*, 4v., 1921, I, p. 343).

⁴ N. R. Ker, *Medieval libraries of Great Britain*, 2nd edn., 1964, p. 14.

⁵ Described in the British Museum's *Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts, 1936-45*, 2v., 1970, I.

⁶ I am grateful to Mr M. A. F. Borrie for helpful discussion of this manuscript.

⁷ It is interesting that here and in the previous item we see the specimen account for a lay-owned manor being used on ecclesiastical estates. The Bec version shows no obvious adaptation, retaining even the heading

Muniments of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury: Rural Economy 65. A single membrane from a roll probably of three membranes, giving a specimen account, without rules, in somewhat disarranged order, with specimen deeds on the dorse. The account seems unrelated to other specimen accounts known. Hand of late 13th or early 14th cent.

The last three items are significant as each occurs in a collection of actual manorial rolls, its status as a specimen unrecognized; many others must still be lurking among the thousands of surviving manorial accounts of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. The discovery of further texts and, even more perhaps, detailed study of the forms of actual accounts in relation to the specimen texts have almost certainly much to tell us about the spread of written accounts and accounting techniques in general, as well as about wider questions of estate organization. Further work in collating the various specimen accounts may throw light on their provenance and, in turn, on the training of clerks; those of the 'Forma Compoti' group are particularly promising here as some have wildly corrupt texts suggesting that they were copied and re-copied many times.¹ Here Dr Oschinsky's work opens the way to further research. The chapter on the accounting treatises is very far from being an unimportant part of her book.

At the same time, we may still question the reasoning that led to its inclusion in a work on agricultural treatises. Apart from the *Husbandry* the edited treatises say nothing of the techniques of manorial accountancy. The *Seneschaucy* (c. 81) refers once, almost in passing, to account rolls, as do the *Rules* (vii), while *Walter* does not mention them at all. The

'Expense Domini et Domine'; the cash account is missing from the Oseney version. Dr Oschinsky's insistence on the distinction between monastic and other estates in auditing and accounting techniques (as on pp. 212-13) is interesting, and it is to be hoped that she may develop it further; it is not immediately apparent from the manorial accounts that survive from both types of estate.

¹ Cf. p. 176, n. 4

² Pp. 3-4, 64, 233. Dr Oschinsky's contention (p. 4) that on monastic estates accounting developed late, and then mostly on large estates, is hardly borne out by surviving accounts: I know of no small lay estates to be compared with Little Dunmow Priory, Essex, or Southwick Priory, Hants. (to name only two) from which written accounts survive from before 1250. But I would not disagree with her general argument that manorial accounting developed primarily on very large estates.

³ I would agree with Dr J. Z. Titow (*English Rural Society, 1200-1350*, 1969, pp. 43-4) in associating the growth of demesne farming with the rise in prices of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

chronology of the widespread adoption of demesne farming is one of the most important outstanding questions in medieval English history, a question with far-reaching implications to which we urgently need an answer. In the present state of our knowledge it cannot be assumed that the spread of demesne farming went hand-in-hand with the adoption of written accounts. Manorial accounts, as Dr Oschinsky points out, are known from few estates, and those mostly very large ones, before the second half of the thirteenth century;² the references to them in the *Rules* and the *Seneschaucy* are not surprising, for both these texts were probably written for very large estates indeed. But it is not improbable that the leasing of estates gave way to the general adoption of demesne farming in the twenty or thirty years after 1200.³ Of course demesne farming implied some form of account-keeping and audit: the lord of the manor and his reeve or bailiff would have to know the state of account between them, how much money was owing from one to another at any particular time. But this need not imply the compilation of written accounts. There is no reason why proceedings at audit should not have been conducted entirely by verbal explanation aided by tallies and counters; indeed, this would seem the obvious and natural method. It was only in the reign of Edward I that the sophisticated techniques of written accounts became general, a process in which the accounting treatises and specimen texts clearly played an important part. But this had no necessary connection with the good husbandry, the close watch on reeve and *famuli*, the eye for profit, that were necessary to efficient demesne farming; there is no essential link between the treatises on husbandry, written for estate owners and their stewards, and the

treatises on accounting, written for the clerks who drew up the manorial accounts.

Whether or not we agree with all Dr Oschinsky's conclusions, it cannot be questioned that she has given us a most important and valuable book. In some ways it is not easy to use, as information on a particular topic is apt to be scattered in several places. It will be a great pity if future students of medieval agriculture allow

themselves to be daunted by this: the book is learned and thorough, a mine of erudite information and of interesting, stimulating ideas, and it will be the starting-point for researches in this field for many years to come. We may be certain that forty years hence we or our successors will have no reason to meet for a discussion 'On the need for a new edition of Walter of Henley'.

APPENDIX

Questioned Readings and Translations [Godefroy: F. Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française* (10v., 1880-1902)]

Seneschaucy

- c. 18. par la perche mesure: by the measured perch. A preferable translation might be 'measured by the perch'.
- cc. 19, 48. custumers, custumeres, custumes: customary tenants. As they are differentiated from the boon-workers, who were themselves customary tenants, 'customary workers' (i.e. customary tenants doing their week-work) might be a better translation.
- c. 21. vyleyn aleger: remove villeins from the lord's jurisdiction. Perhaps, more precisely, 'manumit villeins'.
- cc. 26, 36, 52, 56. The translation does not follow the author's distinction between *affres*, 'plough-horses', and *avers*, 'cattle', especially 'draught-cattle' (the usage differs from that of the glossarial note cited on p. 27, n.1, where *averium* is applied to any farm animal). In c. 31 'affres' is almost certainly a scribal slip for 'avers', which occurs in the same context in c. 57.
- cc. 27, 62. mors, morz: killed. Probably 'bitten' (Godefroy, s.v. *mors* (1)).
- c. 38. lez crappes: the chaff. Probably 'the sweepings of straw' (cf. Godefroy, s.v. *crape*); the chaff would be 'lez remesilles de ventur' that are mentioned next.
- c. 38. ventresse: winnowers. Strictly, 'winnowing-women'; winnowing was, of course, normally women's work.
- c. 38. huise: boots. Thus Godefroy, s.v. *heuse* (1); but the word is a cognate of the English *hose*, i.e. stockings or leggings, and this fits the context better. The author occasionally uses English words, as 'croddes' in c. 43.
- cc. 39, 74. tascurs: stackers. Almost certainly 'threshers', and probably 'hired threshers' (corresponding to the Latin *tascatores*); the implied contrast with *batur*s, the threshers in general, is significant in view of variation between them in records of heaping measures (cf. Oschinsky, pp. 170-1, and p. 171, n. 2 above). But in some areas *tasker*, in English, seems to have been synonymous with *thresher* from the 14th century to the 19th (B. Sundby, *Studies in the Middle English dialect material of Worcestershire records* (1963), pp. 235-6; *The Countryman*, lxxiii, no.1 (Autumn 1969), p. 63; *English dialect dictionary*, ed. J. Wright (6v., 1898-1905), s.v. *task* (3)).
- c. 41. forage: hay. More likely straw used as fodder (presumably mostly oats straw), in contrast to *litere*, the straw that could be used only as litter.
- c. 43. de plaider nul play: to begin an action at law. But 'to hear a plea' (cf. the use of *pleyder* in c. 21) fits the context better.
- cc. 53, 54. The translation does not bring out the distinction between the *tenurs dez charues*, the men who hold and guide the ploughs (Latin *tentores*, etc.), and the *charuurs* the men who drive on the oxen when ploughing (Latin *fugatores*, etc.); the description of their duties shows that these are the meanings intended.
- c. 61. lez hetches e lez thetches reparayller e

fere: repair and do hedging, fences and hurdles. 'thetches' is obscure, but it can equally be read as 'checches' on the manuscript (B.M. Add. MS. 32085, fol. 137), and it is tempting to see it as a scribal error for 'crecches' (cf. 'cresches' in *Walter*, c. 103); in this case the meaning would be 'make and repair the hay-racks and mangers', which fits the context admirably. Alternatively *thetch* might be taken as an English word, in which case the phrase might mean 'make and repair the doors and thatched roofs'.

- c. 71. e fere lez amendes: assess the fines. Simply 'make good their loss' would fit the context better.

Walter

- c. 47. estreit: narrow (Lambarde's translation). Dr Oschinsky suggests (pp. 165, 321 n.) that this should be 'straight', but this is a scarcely admissible translation of *estreit*, and 'narrow' makes good sense: the furrow between the selions should be as narrow as possible (to gain land and save wasted seed) and to reduce its width the small hillock of soil that runs down its centre (since it was formed by two separate traverses of the plough in opposite directions) should be turned over to one side with spades after the plough has passed.
- c. 55. gerner: barn. Correctly, 'garner' (as in the translation of the *Seneschaucy*, cc. 39, 40).
- c. 64. e pus estramer sure: and after cast upon it. I.e. spread straw on it (Godefroy, s.v. *estramer*).
- c. 65. en wasseaus: in muckhilles. Correctly, 'in wet places' (as on p. 177, and in the translation to the *Seneschaucy*, c. 23; Godefroy, s.v. *gacel*).
- c. 66. sans feyntyse: without loytering. Better perhaps, 'without deceit'.
- c. 106. ii des meudres: two of the lesser (amended by Dr Oschinsky from Lambarde's 'two of the greatest'). It is difficult to accept this amendment on which much of the discussion on pp. 185, 382, is based: *meudre* is a normal comparative of *bon* (Godefroy, s.v. *meillor*), and though a few manuscripts of *Walter* give instead some form of *menor* (e.g. B.M. Lansdowne MS.

1176, fol. 136v, clearly reads 'meindr's') these are not the best texts, nor does this make such good sense. The translation should almost certainly be 'two of the best'.

Rules

- i. vos foreyne terres: those of your lands which are not part of your demesne manors. 'those of your lands which are not part of your manorial demesnes' might be a clearer interpretation, for the contents of rules i and ii suggest that it is meant to include tenants' lands on all manors, even those in demesne; rule ii envisages a further survey of the demesne manors, but this time restricted to the lands of the manorial demesnes.
- xviii. aline: soul. Probably 'alme'; the manuscript (B.M. Harley MS. 1005, fol. 53) admits either reading.

Husbandry

- c. 9. aioynz: mated. Alternatively, 'added to the older stock' (Godefroy, s.v. *ajoindre*).
- c. 12. veux: aged cattle. Probably 'calves'.
- c. 19. dedenz la cort: on the manor. Perhaps 'in the farmyard', the reference being to all the poultry and smaller livestock that would normally be kept in or around the farm buildings.
- c. 37. des acres de rente: acres put out to rent. Probably 'increases of rent' (Godefroy, s.v. *acrois*).
- c. 39. clonnes: nails. Probably 'clouues', meaning either nails or cloves; the manuscript (Bodl. MS. Ashmole 1524, fol. 25) admits either reading, and both interpretations fit the context.
- c. 51. chevestres: harnesses. Or, more specifically, 'halters' (Latin *capistrum*).
- c. 58. espesement: sparsely. Literally, 'thickly' (Godefroy, s.v. *espesement* (2)), but in the context this does not affect the sense.

Appendix I

- p. 459. carta forinseca (*bis*; and quoted thus on p. 236). Correctly 'carca forinseca', i.e. forinsec charge; the manuscript admits either reading, but the latter makes better sense.
- p. 459. Finito comptus. Correctly 'Finito

compoto': the manuscript reads 'Finito compot'.

Appendix III

p. 463. titulus. Or, more likely, 'tunc': the manuscript reads 't'c' or 't't'.

p. 463. The table at the end of Appendix III is an editorial illustration, not part of the text.

Appendix IX

p. 476. caefe. Probably 'aese', though the manuscript is not very clear.

GENESIS OF BRITISH AGRICULTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Continued from page 169

circulated by Mr Trow-Smith. At this meeting ninety people were present, and a large number of letters from well-wishers was received. Sir James Scott Watson took the Chair and outlined the need for such a society. I explained what had so far happened, and moved that such a society be formed. Naturally different views about the Society and its objectives were expressed during the discussion, but the faint hearts about its future were reassured by a stimulating address by Professor Slicher van Bath. Mr (now Professor) W. E. Minchinton seconded my proposal, and the motion was put to the vote, which was unanimous in favour.

The Chairman proposed that a formal committee be elected. Mr Trow-Smith proposed that the first meeting of the Society should be held at Reading University, and Mr John Higgs agreed to this. A committee was elected. Since Mr Higgs was the secretary, it was arranged that the address of the Society should be the Museum of English Rural Life, 7 Shinfield Road, Reading, Berks. Sir James Scott Watson remained chairman, and Professor Edgar Thomas, treasurer. Other com-

mittee members were: Mr Frank Atkinson, Mr G. E. Fussell, Mr Alexander Hay, Mr W. E. Minchinton, Mr Francis Payne, Mr R. Trow-Smith. The Association of Agriculture presented a cheque for £15 15s. to assist with the expenses of establishing the Society.

After a good deal of work the Inaugural Meeting of the British Agricultural History Society was held at Reading University on Monday, 13 April 1953, with Sir James Scott Watson as the first speaker on 'The scope of agricultural history'. After lunch an address of welcome was given by the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Mr J. F. Wolfenden, C.B.E., and a paper on 'The Manor in English History' was read by Sir Frank Stenton. I circulated a press notice about the meeting, which over 100 people attended, and this was published in a good many journals and magazines whose readers were likely to be interested. With this Conference the Society may be said to have been launched upon what has fortunately proved to be a successful career. H. P. R. Finberg agreed in the following month to become editor of the Society's Review.