

Book Reviews

A Matter of Time. An archaeological survey of the river gravels of England, prepared by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England). London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1960. 64 pp., frontispiece and 12 plates, 10 maps. 10s. 6d.

This attractive volume is produced with a care for typography and layout and a wealth of fine photographs which make it a pleasure to handle. The horrific glossy red of the cover suits its striking depiction of enormous mechanical gravel diggers clawing great gashes across circular crop-marks which record a four-thousand-years older earth-moving project, and might move to interest and dismay even the casual bookstall browser. At the same time the contents will not only whet but satiate the appetite of the reader more deeply interested in the developing pattern of settlement of the English countryside, with an abundance of tabulation, grid references, bibliography, and clear discussion. The Commission are to be congratulated on combining journalistic enterprise and meticulous scholarship. And it is pleasant that they have departed from their traditional anonymity sufficiently to record that this survey "has been written mainly by H. C. Bowen and R. M. Butler, members of the Commission's staff."

The task of recording all traces of occupation on river gravels, which the Commission shouldered in 1956, was the product of a threat and an opportunity: the threat of total destruction of many of these traces by bigger and better diggers getting more gravel faster; and the opportunity for anticipatory record afforded by the fine oblique photographs taken in increasing numbers from 1942 onwards by Dr J. K. St Joseph, Curator in Aerial Photography in the University of Cambridge, filling out the isolated hints of earlier pioneers.

When O. G. S. Crawford and Cyril Fox began to show that pre-history, and particularly the early history of agricultural settlement,

had as much to do with maps as with museums, their distribution maps demonstrated that the earliest farmers, clearing the forests in the third millennium B.C., preferred the well-drained chalk and limestone uplands for cultivation, settlement, stock-raising, and, in the second millennium B.C., for the erection, against the open sky-line, of funerary and religious monuments along what were by then belts of relatively open country. But well-drained river gravels, particularly along the Thames, are also conspicuous on these maps of the distribution of early farming settlement. Recent air and ground surveys, excavations, and botanical studies have changed the emphasis and demonstrated that the gravel terraces of our rivers were even more important than the uplands to early settlers, though their importance has not been realized so soon because on the good agricultural land of the gravels millennia of later ploughing have levelled those barrows, henges, and enclosure boundaries which on the downs might have remained conspicuous to attract the attention of field archaeologists. But the evidence has not yet gone. The ditch elements of these structures remain detectable from the air as crop-marks.

The Commission's maps of crop-mark sites on gravels, and their analysis of these sites into cursuses (Neolithic), circles (Late Neolithic and Bronze Age), enclosures (Early Iron Age to Romano-British mainly), and pit-alignments (assigned by Bowen and Butler to the Dark Ages, though their maps show that these alignments are frequently integral to the Romano-British layout, and never ignore it), demonstrate the continued favour in which all early farmers held these terrace gravels of the Thames, Avon, Severn, Granta, Ouse, Nene, Welland, Soar, and Trent. Here we have the visual demonstration of the wide extent of those clearance activities which Posnansky has shown, by the Middle Bronze Age, to have produced along the middle Trent large grassy areas where

one could be a kilometre or more away from the mixed woodland of the hinterland, so that a little grain cultivation could be combined with sheep grazing on the grassland of the terraces, summer kine pasturage on the floodplain, pig-keeping along the woodland edge, hunting in the forest, and fishing and fowling along the river and meres. These maps show also that these same river terraces continued to attract all later settlers, not only because the rivers themselves were highways, but because they now led through belts of open country among the still dominant woodlands, corridors for trade and the movement of people and stock, offering well-drained sites for fields and settlements, and not requiring the hard work involved in clearing fresh woodland.

The Appendix listing settlement sites in the Ouse, Trent, and Welland valleys (less previously studied than the Thames) is particularly important for assessing the density of settlement along these terraces, and tracing any increase in this density. But before we can form even a preliminary assessment of the sort of figures involved it is essential to know which of these sites were contemporary with each other. The report recognizes the need for extensive ground survey to settle these problems, and very rightly emphasizes that it is *concentrations* of domestic debris, including datable pottery, which are diagnostic, not thin scatters. But the Appendix gives indications of date for only 19 of the 126 settlements it lists, so that it would appear that the Commission regards this record as an incentive to the amateur field archaeologist, rather than as a challenge to its own resources. I know from personal experience that it is possible for one field worker to survey in the necessary detail over one hundred settlements, nearly all larger and more complex than these on the gravels, in two winter seasons, and I would not therefore have thought it beyond the means of the Commission to act on its own pronouncement that "detailed surveying is *urgently* needed." It is tantalizing to be told (p. 53) that nearly all the sites listed in the Appendix have been examined on the ground

by Dr St Joseph, but to find only four datings attributed to him, all published previously. We want to know what was found, even if it was nothing.

Beside this important question of a policy for ground survey other criticisms are minor. This record obviously represents a great bulk of card index work, which has not always been digested and presented in tables and text in a form which is easy to use. Cross-references between the numerous tables and maps are lacking or inconsistent. Grid references are given for sites in the Appendix (Settlement Sites in the Ouse, Trent, and Welland valleys), in the lists of Pit-alignments and Cursuses, but not in the lists of Circles Excavated and of Enclosures Excavated, nor in the text and the Notes on the Plates. Sites are numbered on the maps, but the numbers are not always used in the text. For instance, Maxey 17 is, I deduce, referred to as "a complicated site north-west of Maxey church" on p. 14, "the enclosure at Maxey" on p. 28, and "a small group of overlapping rectangular enclosures" on p. 36, while its grid reference appears only in the Appendix, where a single point reference is given for the large and by no means unitary complex Maxey 17-21, with cross-references to plates but not text. (Of these Plate 6 shows a site 400 yards away to the west.) Nor are sites easily found by number on the maps. Numbers in Maxey parish run up to 111. I have still not found Maxey 54. It happens to be a settlement, and is therefore listed in the Appendix, with grid reference. But the published map is not gridded, so I still cannot find it unless I happen to own a gridded map of the area. Why not simply grid the maps and use grid references throughout? Why are we given detailed references to air photographs by source and number in the table of pit-alignments, but not those for enclosures, circles, and cursuses, nor in the Appendix and list of plates?

These are points of detail, but this is a detailed work, and if the detail is for use, not show, it must be consistent, and usable. May we hope for another edition, incorporating the 1959 photographs which were too late for

this edition, out in late 1960. And may the warm welcome this is receiving encourage the Commission to bring out more slim, cheap volumes on particular *topics*, rather than fat lavish volumes on *everything* in one small area. Field systems on the uplands would fill a fine companion volume.

S. J. HALLAM

R. H. HILTON (ed.), *The Stoneleigh Leger Book*. Dugdale Soc. Publications, XXIV, 1960. lxiv+294 pp. Issued to members. No price stated.

The Cistercians' search for wild and solitary sites concentrated the abbeys of that order where the terrain had deterred any substantial village colonization. The abbeys of the Pennine Dales point to the position of the margin of settlement three generations after Domesday Book, but the northern hills were not the only regions which had failed to attract intensive settlement. In the Midlands, less sodden and less unkind than the North, the Arden carried forest trees long after the oaks south of the Avon had been assarted for the Felden and its nucleated villages. Near the very edge of Arden the abbey of Combe was founded in 1150, and five years later the abbey of Stoneleigh was founded a few miles to the south-west.

Neither of these abbeys was in the utter wilderness; indeed, the Stoneleigh site was a third choice of monks who had found their first choice (Radmore on Cannock Chase) too wild. The Radmore monks had had occasion to visit one of their outlying granges at Radway near Edge Hill and to be entertained at Bordesley Abbey near Redditch *en route*. The kinder south Midlands seduced them: they exchanged lands with Henry II and were established in Arden at Cryfield, halfway between Kenilworth and Coventry, and three miles from Stoneleigh village and the Avon. The villagers of Cryfield were removed to Hurst, a mile further away, and 237 years later the site of Cryfield manor was remembered only as an earthwork: "prout fossatis includitur et est nunc locus nemorosus" (p. 24). The Cryfield site in turn proved unsuitable:

it was too near the main road through the woods from Coventry, and the monks' third and final resting-place was alongside the Avon on the edge of Echills Wood, *illum desertum*. Migrations of this kind (as Dr Donkin has recently shown) were quite common, and it is salutary to remember that there were twelfth-century sites too inhospitable even for the Cistercians.

The Cistercians were not the first colonists of the woodland near Stoneleigh nor the only religious house with lands in these woods: Kenilworth Priory had been founded a quarter of a century earlier, and when the Kenilworth cartulary (Harl. MS. 3,650) eventually finds its editor there will be a remarkably thorough documentation of this interesting agrarian frontier. Within Stoneleigh parish, in 1155, were already five nucleated villages and hamlets besides Stoneleigh village itself: at least 104 houses. From these centres the free and near-free tenantry continued to assart and extend the plough, acquiring not only new lands but also a considerable measure of tenurial freedom appropriate to New Men, adventurers, frontiersmen in their little way. In 1305 a section of the Leger Book identifies 113 taxpayers in these six places, Cryfield having been resettled when the monks' final move took place. Colonization was also carried forward from six other centres, the abbey's granges. The Leger Book provides considerable detail of these assarts, with field- and place-names that can sometimes be precisely located. For example, nine 'fields' and four meadows were won from Echills Wood alongside the abbey buildings.

In their gratitude for the agrarian data that arise from records of colonization, historians have usually greeted assarting with approval and given the impression that no one was averse to the *zeitgeist*. But after all, it was the chronicler of Pipewell Abbey who mourned the vanished oaks and the timber assets dissipated for ever, and here in the Leger Book we read in the biography of the fourteenth abbot of Stoneleigh (1278-92): "He brought the waste of Stoneleigh into cultivation contrary

to the wishes of almost all the important men of the whole countryside" (p. 253). After all, the Statute of Merton had admitted that there was no necessary harmony of interest when woods and wastes became fields.

Dr Hilton provides a long introductory essay dealing with the provenance of the Book, some tenurial questions, the process of assarting, and other evidences for the agriculture of this *bocage* region. A clear and sensible map illustrates a final section on the major and minor topography of the area. It was a complex of clearings and woodland, and a mixture of severalty and common arable. Some of the assarted land, especially near the Avon, went to augment the selions of the open fields; there are hundreds of references to selions with their acreages, the average being just under half an acre. In the more wooded north-west quarter of the parish the new land more frequently went into hedges and severalty. Near Canley was a large enclosed waste named *Kannoc* (an echo of the Radmore site, or a coincidence?). Nor was the parish all monastic solitude and peasant toil: since Stoneleigh village did not adjoin the abbey, the abbot was able to have a market and fair there from May 1284.

The situation in the late thirteenth century is illustrated not only from the narrative of the chronicle sections of the Book but also from material brought together in the Introduction by the editor from the unpublished Warwickshire Hundred Roll of 1280; the Introduction also discusses the tallage roll of 1305, and the perambulations and custumals which mingle with the charters and chronicle in the Leger Book; it is a pity that three similar Books for other Stoneleigh estates have disappeared.

Dr Levi Fox's Preface makes it clear that the provenance of this edition is almost as complex as the provenance of the manuscript. Dr Hilton inherited the text as prepared by three previous editors who had either died or passed to other things. The Latin text is set up in the large type and with generous margins appropriate to those pre-war Dugdale Society days. It is broken for the ordinary

member's ease of reading only by sporadic cross-headings in English, some of which (but not all) correspond to the original headings of the Leger Book. "More about the Abbey's liberties," runs one cross-head alluringly, although there is nothing at all of a heading in the Latin. Another heading which has a journalistic ring—"Problems of tallage and murder fine"—has no equivalent in the original. Sometimes the Latin headings are paraphrased, sometimes ignored, and once bowdlerized: "Introitus Willelmi bastard in Angliam" becomes "The Norman Invasion."

It may have been one of the editors-designate who invented the date 1249 for a writ of exemption from payment towards the expenses of the knights of the shire in parliament when it should have been 1455 (33 Henry VI, not Henry III), although it is accepted in Dr Hilton's Introduction (p. xi). A typewritten errata sheet was sent to this reviewer (and no doubt to Dugdale Society members) correcting this and other errors, but it had failed to note that 1249 still haunts p. xxvi; it also missed unimportant errors in f.n. 1, pp. xv and xviii. The reference in f.n. 2, p. xxix, should be to vol. 27, p. 115, and not 27-8, p. 113. These blemishes do not detract from a handsomely produced volume and a highly informative and suggestive editorial Introduction. May we hope that the Society will now ask Dr Hilton to give its members the cartularies of Combe and Kenilworth, neighbours and near contemporaries of Stoneleigh Abbey in Arden?

M. W. BERESFORD

Carte Nativorum, edited by C. N. L. Brooke and M. M. Postan for the Northamptonshire Record Society. Oxford University Press, 1960. lxxv+262 pp. 42s.

Students of medieval agrarian history have reason to be grateful to the editors of this volume, and the Northamptonshire Record Society, for making available a very remarkable fourteenth-century text. It consists almost entirely of deeds recording transfers of small portions of land between peasants on

manors of the abbey of Peterborough in Northamptonshire, Rutland, Leicestershire, and Lincolnshire. Most of these appear to be of late thirteenth-century date; but the cartulary also includes a number of twelfth-century charters which were copied from an earlier register. There can be little doubt that a careful analysis of this abundant material will produce interesting results, but the work will be arduous and no editors could be expected to regard it as part of their task. It will need caution too, for the interpretation of these documents is not always a simple matter. Only about a dozen, out of more than five hundred deeds, were clearly leases—mostly for one or two lives, but in a minority of cases for years (four, five, or ten). The great bulk of the documents were grants—often to a man and his wife *et heredibus suis*—with a rent reserved to the grantor; and they have every appearance of being grants in perpetuity: even those made to an individual without any mention of his heirs or assigns sometimes provide that two years' rent must be paid *pro relevio*, which, as Professor Brooke remarks, means that the next tenant will pay that in his first year (e.g. Nos. 127, 177, 186, 191); and the absence of this provision from many such deeds is no argument against their perpetuity, for it is often lacking in those which specifically include the grantee's heirs (e.g. Nos. 93, 222, 286). The rents were evidently, in many cases, mere 'recognition rents'; and though such rates as fourpence an acre and twopence an acre appear rather frequently, many of the figures provide a fresh warning against the danger of regarding medieval rents as indicators of economic conditions. For example, two half-acres in the fields of Longthorpe, which were the subject of two thirteenth-century grants, were charged respectively with a rent of a halfpenny and a rent of sixpence (Nos. 104, 105).

Almost all the deeds relate to very small areas, only a negligible number being concerned with more than two or three acres at the most; but some individuals were recipients of several grants and by these means accumulated a dozen acres or so, which for all

one can tell may have been additional to land they already held. What one would like to know—but must be very difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain—is the economic position of the grantors. Were many of the transferred plots bits severed from regular holdings of virgate type, perhaps under the stress of poverty? Or were the bulk of the transactions concerned with the tiny holdings of humble cottagers, or with assarts or other additions to the regular holdings of substantial peasants, such as those of which so many examples are to be found on the Glastonbury estates in 1189 and on those of St Paul's Cathedral in 1222? The researcher who endeavours to obtain an answer to these questions will find that the editors have provided him with very welcome help in the way of cross-references, peasant-pedigrees, and an index of names. Professor Postan, moreover, discusses many problems connected with the peasant land-market in an interesting and rather challenging introduction of some thirty pages. This is sometimes rather hard to follow—not least because on point after point he refers his readers (eight times in the text and twice in footnotes) to a subsequent treatment of them, without always making it clear whether the reference is to a later page in the Introduction or to a further publication to be expected from his pen. As regards his conclusions (if I understand him rightly) one can readily agree that the land-market which is conspicuous in the *Carte Nativorum* did not come into being so late as the documentary evidence for its activity. But there is surely ground for thinking that conditions favourable to its development became more prevalent as a result of 'assarting' in the twelfth century—a century which was perhaps in this country "l'âge des grands défrichements." And I think he is much too ready to minimize the factors which made for the maintenance of holdings of virgate or bovat type and to suggest that alienations and sublettings unrecorded in our sources impaired holdings of this kind to such an extent that "the picture of the medieval village as largely made up of virgates and semi-virgates will

have to be greatly modified, if not given up altogether." He makes no allowance for the great difference in economic alienability (in the way of disruption) between tiny cottage holdings, cultivated perhaps by spade labour, and those whose extent was related to the economic use of plough-beasts—nor indeed does he allow for transfers which took the form of a labour-saving exchange of strips. And (though this is a very minor point) it is rather misleading, when arguing from the Chalgrove court rolls which "are available from 1278 onwards," to say that "unfortunately the court rolls of Halesowen and Wakefield are too late to reveal the events of the thirteenth century," for in fact the Halesowen series starts in 1270 and the Wakefield series in 1274.

Professor Postan's contribution is preceded by a careful and detailed account of the manuscript, with a discussion of its relation to other Peterborough registers and an examination of the problem of dating its contents, from the pen of Professor Brooke. It is followed by four Additional Notes. The first of these is a critical account of surveys contained in the Black Book of Peterborough, the dating of which has a close bearing upon the dating of texts in the *Carte Nativorum*, because names often occur in both. But it is hard to see the relevance of the last of these notes in which the reader is invited—in the course of a little more than a page—to take a glance at the Italian *libellus*, the *precaria* of the Merovingian and Carolingian ages, the Polyptique of Irminon, the sense of the term *conductor* in a decree of the Council of Paris of 829, and various views expressed by Hartmann, Brunner, Inama-Sternegg, Caro, Dopsch, Von Below, Sée, Genicot, and Déléage!

Finally, one should note that, though it is the great mass of peasant land-transfers that gives its real importance to the *Carte Nativorum*, there is much of interest in the more miscellaneous documents which occupy some of the last folios of the text. A memorandum on the duties of a beadle (No. 558) deserves special mention.

REGINALD LENNARD

J. M. LAMBERT, J. N. JENNINGS, C. T. SMITH, CHARLES GREEN, and J. N. HUTCHINGS. *The Making of the Broads: A reconsideration of their origin in the light of new evidence*. Royal Geographical Society Research Series No. 3. John Murray, 1960. viii+154 pp., illus. 25s.

This book tells how the discovery was made that the Norfolk Broads are not natural features of the landscape, as has hitherto been supposed, but the flooded basins of peat excavations carried out during the Middle Ages.

The discovery was the outcome of a remarkable co-operative effort. It was the botanist (Dr J. M. Lambert) and the geologist (Mr J. N. Jennings) who first hit upon the true interpretation of the facts they had so painstakingly collected (over 2,000 borings were put down). They found that the edges of the Broads were composed of sheer 'cliffs' of peat, that the floors were flat, that baulks of solid peat still remained here and there (often under water) and in one or two places these stretched almost from one side to another. These and many other observations pointed to only one conclusion.

At this point the historian (Mr C. T. Smith) was called in. He found plenty of supporting evidence. Contemporary records proved that peat was being dug on a large scale during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and on the basis of the rate of extraction during that period it was perfectly feasible for the Broads to have been excavated by hand. Moreover the historical evidence enabled the story to be taken a stage further. Mr Smith was able to show that from 1300 onwards the peat workings were becoming more profitable as fisheries than as turbaries and he suggests that the gradual flooding of the peat workings dates from about this time.

It was left to the archaeologist (Mr Charles Green) and the civil engineer (Mr J. N. Hutchinson) to establish the full significance of this flooding. From a study of the extensive excavations for the power station at South Denes, Yarmouth, they were able to show that the level of the land during the Middle Ages was some 13 feet higher than it is today. This

was the missing piece that had to be found to make the jigsaw fit together. It has long been known that the eastern parts of England are gradually subsiding, but at the present rate of subsidence the land level in the thirteenth century would have been only about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet higher than it is today. The discovery that the rate of subsidence was greater during the Middle Ages than it is today is of vital significance not only for a proper interpretation of the nature of the Broads but for an understanding of the history of all the coastal districts of eastern England.

Those who are concerned to throw more light on the history of other coastal areas will be disappointed that Mr Green does not develop more fully the significance of his discoveries in relation to what he calls the "Upper Clay Marine Transgression." There are so many theories current about this earth movement (it is thought to have taken place in the second century A.D. and to have been a sudden catastrophic fall in land level) that reliable evidence of when and how it occurred would be invaluable. Perhaps Mr Green and his colleagues will now turn their attention to the solution of this problem.

BASIL E. CRACKNELL

F. H. FENTON (ed.) and W. MCB. MARCHAM (transl.), *Court Rolls of the Manor of Tottenham, 1510-31* [Manor of Tottenham Series, vi], Borough of Tottenham, Libraries and Museum, 1960. 290 pp. 42s.; *Court Rolls of the Manor of Tottenham, 1547-58* [Manor of Tottenham Series, viii], Borough of Tottenham, Libraries and Museum, 1959. 176 pp. 40s.

The Tottenham Borough Libraries and Museum have decided to make more readily available to the public a magnificent collection of court rolls, covering, with only a few gaps, the period 1318 to 1732, together with other manorial records relating to the manor of Tottenham. The two volumes under review consist of an English translation of some of the sixteenth-century rolls with a full index. Another volume, published previously, covered the years 2 Edw. II to 1 Ric. II, but

is at present out of print. It is to be hoped that this commendable enterprise will receive enough support to pay its way and reach completion. For here is a splendid opportunity to examine in detail changes in the composition of holdings and in the structure of society, in a district where the field system defied satisfactory explanation by H. L. Gray, where much enclosure had taken place by the sixteenth century (though, in Tottenham, common meadows evidently remained), and where London merchants, ever alert to snatch a good pennyworth, were conspicuous by the Tudor period.

These rolls prompt many reflections which deserve fuller investigation. What social tensions, for example, resulted from the obvious division of this community into two camps: the resident natives, on the one hand, faithful attenders at the court, without much interest in the buying and selling of land; and those restless, greedy birds of passage, the citizens of London, who bought bits of land here and there, rarely attended the court, and were frequently presented for allowing the ditches on their land to get choked with rubbish? What effect had the different methods of transferring customary land upon the composition of holdings? The custom of inheritance in the manor was Borough English, and a number of younger sons appear in court to take seisin of their fathers' holdings. But not all customary land was passed on in this way. Some was partitioned before death among sons, some was conveyed to seeming strangers, and some was bequeathed by will. By this last method again, holdings were divided among many individuals, without sign of protest from the manorial lord. The consequences of these different procedures for transferring customary land merit closer study, for some knowledge of their relative importance over three hundred years could add much to our understanding of resulting field patterns and farming usages. Finally, what can one learn from these rolls of the unspoken social assumptions which made the routine of manorial husbandry work so remarkably smoothly? Clearly, the rolls afford

the best approach to this difficult subject. Through the court, law and order in the daily round of life was maintained, and the villagers, at once more submissive to the discipline of the community than their modern counterparts and more unruly, were kept at peace with one another. Stung to anger, any one was liable to draw his dagger and spill blood. Yet people submitted obediently to their neighbours' sharp judgements upon disorderly behaviour. The man who housed a disreputable woman of evil conversation was peremptorily fined and ordered to send her packing. The women who gossiped maliciously about their neighbours were fined and ordered to hold their tongues in future. How serious, one wonders, was the provocation before the court took cognizance of such offences? And how much persuasion was necessary before Robert Combes and William Palley, quarrelling about some damage done to Combes's orchard, accepted the arbitration of the court and agreed "that the one shall take the other by the hand, and after, drink one to another, and be in charity." In a parish where land was much intermingled, even though it was enclosed, and people were brought constantly together in their daily work, where convivial meetings were numerous enough to warrant the existence of nine alehouses in the manor, the community was much more closely integrated than the modern village. We who are brought up in a more individualist society find all the consequences of this fact difficult to grasp. But the manorial court ensured that the task of keeping law and order was more of a personal responsibility than it is today, and this presumably made it easier to accept the discipline imposed by one's neighbours.

JOAN THIRSK

GEORGE H. GREEN (tutor), *Historical Account of the Ancient Kings Mills (Castle Donington, Leicestershire)*, W.E.A. History Group, Castle Donington, 1960. 64 pp. 4s.

This booklet represents the research of the Castle Donington W.E.A. group into the history of the watermills and the hamlet, Milne-

thorpe, which lie alongside the River Trent on the western edge of the parish. It traces the changing use of the mills, which ground corn, fulled cloth, made paper, and finally ground plaster, flint, and grist, discusses their military importance and the trade that passed through this small inland port. It includes a most attractive description of the river scenery at Kings Mills and the overhead chain bridge which crosses the path down to the river, which will make every one who finds himself on the Birmingham to Nottingham road pause to visit the place for himself. This pamphlet, which promises to be the first of a series on the parish, is well produced, well illustrated, and well written.

JOAN THIRSK

MILDRED CAMPBELL, *The English Yeoman under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts*. Merlin Press (reprint), 1960. viii+456 pp. 42s.

Professor Campbell's well-known account of the English yeoman, first published in 1942 and now reprinted, is one of the latest of important works on social and economic history to become available again.

On a re-reading one is reminded again of the flexibility of the term yeoman—really a mark of status—and of the shadowy lines dividing the ranks of rural society. The "backbone of the English nation" comprised not only freeholders and copyholders but also the larger tenant-farmers; and the yeoman, although primarily concerned with agriculture, often engaged in various trades and crafts and apprenticed their sons to them. Their incomes ranged from £40 or £50 to several hundreds a year, so that there were great differences between the poorer and the "better sort" of yeomen. At the bottom they were scarcely distinguishable from the small tenants and husbandmen, and at the top they might command more wealth than the minor gentry with whom they often intermarried. There were no great barriers to social mobility, and owing to marriage and the entry of sons into the professions it was common for a yeoman to have a brother or son styled

gentleman. The yeomen, in fact, can only be defined as "a substantial rural middle class whose chief concern was with the land."

Although the author draws her examples from every corner of England, the regional differences between, say, the yeomen of Kent and those of the Midlands or the south-west, do not appear at all clearly. She is concerned to trace the characteristics of a whole social group, and as a consequence the more fine, but important, local distinctions are neglected. In the light of more recent writing on this period the picture, too, seems very much a static one. The impact of the price revolution and other great economic developments receive only casual mention. There is, however, plenty of evidence in her chapters that the yeomen seized the opportunities around them: they formed an advancing "group of ambitious, aggressive, small capitalists"—acquiring land, improving their conditions of tenure, developing more efficient husbandry, and enclosing.

The book really constitutes a readable and well-rounded social history, in which economic and technical changes are subsidiary to the delineation of social characteristics, community functions, and a way of life. There are, however, interesting brief accounts of methods of cultivation and even of that much-neglected subject, agricultural marketing. In its wide use of sources this book will ever be a model, and the bibliography remains immensely valuable.

G. E. MINGAY

M. W. BARLEY, *The English Farmhouse and Cottage*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961. xxii+298 pp., illus. 55s.

This book is the most important study that has yet appeared on the English farmhouse and cottage. The fact that strikes the reader at once is that there are many plans and sections (75 of them) and not just the usual collection of glossy photographs. For the first time the country has been taken area by area, period by period, and representative plans and photographs are given for each, so that it is at last possible to begin to analyse the

regional variations of farmhouses and cottages from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

Mr Barley starts with a chapter in which he attempts to set the medieval stage as a background to later developments. It is this part which is weakest, for not only does it have little bearing on the main theme but there are many statements which cannot be accepted. Surely the first-floor hall being set on fire in the Bayeux tapestry can in no sense of the term be called a peasant house, and the view that the Saxons all lived in small pit huts has not been seriously held for some years. In fact, much of the discussion on various types of hall has little bearing on the theme. The types of medieval peasant house will be worked out from excavations on deserted medieval villages. Though it is only just now possible to begin to draw conclusions from these, it is already clear that they are in quite a different tradition.

Mr Barley, however, comes into his own in his excellent chapter on early Tudor homes, which sets the stage for his description, in Part II, of the great rebuilding which took place between 1580 and 1630. Probate inventories, and other documentary evidence, are skilfully blended with the description of surviving houses to show the great changes during Tudor times which produced an increase in the number of rooms from the usual two-three roomed house, an increase which was most marked in south-east England and was progressively less perceptible nearer to the highland zone. In Part III the pace of new building is shown to slacken during the second quarter of the seventeenth century. In this period the increase in the number of rooms is more a question of convenience than comfort, often taking the form of new service or store rooms.

In Part IV the second great building period, which followed the Restoration in 1660, is described. In Part V Mr Barley places the death of vernacular architecture in the early eighteenth century, when there is less rebuilding than at any time since 1550. This provides a useful endpoint for his most valuable and lucid survey, since the enclosures of

the second half of the century start a major new phase of individual farmhouse building, which makes an entirely different subject.

It is remarkable that there is no trace in the lowland zone, in Tudor times, of the long house which, as excavation is now beginning to show, was the typical house type over the whole country in medieval times. The evidence of aerial photography suggests that it was between about 1525 and 1550 that the farm as we know it today, with its living house and separate outbuildings for animals and storage, was developed. For example, at Wharham Percy in Yorkshire, which was deserted between 1510 and 1520, all the houses are cots or long houses, while at Towthorpe, only a mile away in the same parish, which was deserted at the end of the sixteenth century, most of the houses have outbuildings. It does seem, therefore, that at the time of the great rebuilding, or just before, a fundamental change took place in the lowland zone which led to the abandonment of the long house. In the highland zone, on the other hand, the long house survived, though it was adapted for greater comfort from the middle of the sixteenth century.

The agricultural historian would like to know the significance of all this from the economic point of view. Evidence is now rapidly accumulating both from the medieval and post-medieval periods which may make it possible during the next five or ten years to give the answer. The three-roomed house is now clearly shown to be typical for anyone of villein status in the medieval period. In by far the largest proportion of these buildings the animals were kept in the third room, though there is evidence that it was sometimes used for storage. It is quite clear that the long house is not confined to pastoral areas. Even in the highland zone this was shown by Mr E. M. Jope's discovery of a corn-drying kiln in a village of long houses at Great Beere, Devon. The presence of many hundreds of long houses on deserted village sites, which were primarily agricultural, confirms this fact.

It is such a joy to have a book with so many

plans that it is a pity they are not all reproduced at the same scale and that some have no scale at all. It is also unfortunate that although standardization in plans is called for, several different conventions have been used which will confuse the reader. Figure 17 purports to show a typical series of Dartmoor long houses but there is something wrong with each one. In A and C Mr Barley has followed Hansford Worth, but the drain at Colliehole has now unfortunately been covered up and people wishing to see the now fast diminishing examples of these would be disappointed by a visit. Plan C is not of Shilston as the shippen here is on the right, not on the left, of the cross passage. In plan B of Higher Tor (not just Tor) there is surely a cross-passage as a blocked-up doorway is clearly visible; it should therefore be stippled on the plan. Surely house D at Lower Tor was not built in 1707 but was originally a type C house which was converted into type D in the early eighteenth century. The caution of not dating a house by its datestone is not followed in this example. There is also a serious confusion here in the naming of this farm, for Plate XIXB is not named, but in the caption index it is called Higher Tor (Plan B) while in point of fact it is clearly Lower Tor (Plan D). There is also an inconsistency in the references to the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. R.C.H.M. is clearly given in the list of abbreviations but on pages 8, 16, 115, 173, 238, and 248, H.M.C. is given, which will be bewildering to the uninitiated.

I hope however that these criticisms will not prevent people from buying and reading the book, which is excellently produced and illustrated, and is a credit to the publishers at a time when glossy books of photographs are still being produced with no plans at all. Until Mr Barley's book was published it was quite impossible to draw any conclusions about farmhouse and cottage plans without a considerable search for the scattered articles which have appeared in different periodicals. Here we have a pioneer work that will henceforth be a standard work of reference for students in this much neglected subject. Mr

Barley has shown the way, and it is to be hoped that it will be followed by further books on different regions, making greater use of archaeological information which has been so much ignored in the past.

J. G. HURST

MAUREEN WEINSTOCK, *More Dorset Studies*. Longmans (Dorchester) Ltd, n.d. ii+120 pp., maps. 8s. 6d.

More Dorset Studies, like the author's earlier *Studies in Dorset History* (1953), is a collection of essays on local topics. This time we have Weymouth and Melcombe Regis in Tudor and early Stuart times (three essays), Dorset fire relief in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Beaminster-Bridport turnpike, Simon Pretor of Sherborne (three essays), and parliamentary elections in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Weymouth and Melcombe Regis. Except for Pretor's activities as a late eighteenth-early nineteenth-century landlord, where details of rents, crops, tithes, and the cost of enclosure are given (pp. 94-100), there is hardly anything in the book directly relevant to agricultural history.

Historians of national affairs will sometimes find the essays, the first three in particular, a useful quarry. But Dorset readers will benefit more from them. Those who already know some local history will find fascinating new material here on subjects as diverse as fires at Beaminster and an eighteenth-century grocer's stock. Those who do not, have a detailed introduction, full of human touches, to aspects of their local social history.

Such essays, often written from a small number of documents and very readable, could well be imitated elsewhere. If they are, details of presentation will need to be more carefully considered: references in the text like E.179 and Inspeximus do not attract the general reader, and titles and footnotes need to be clearer, proofs more carefully checked, and the use of capital letters controlled. Most important of all, a Table of Contents, an index, and the date of publication (all lacking

from the present volume) must never be omitted.

ROBERT DOUCH

G. H. GARRAD, *A Survey of the Agriculture of Kent*. (County Agricultural Surveys, No. 1.) Royal Agric. Soc. of England, 35 Belgrave Square, S.W.1. 1954. iv+232 pp., illus. 25s.

R. H. B. JESSE, *A Survey of the Agriculture of Sussex*. (No. 2.) 1960. viii+140 pp. illus. 25s.

These two surveys are amplifications and continuations of the valuable Land Utilisation Survey carried out over twenty years ago. Both are written by men who spent forty years in the counties as agricultural organizers and saw the profound and swift revolution from the traditional horse to mechanical power, the changes brought about by two wars, and the immense development of scientific knowledge. They knew two worlds.

The foundation of the Kent survey is the authoritative division of the county into seven broad farming regions based on the geological formations. Five (mainly geographical) special areas, within the seven regions, are also selected for wise and simple treatment. The 4th of June 1950 Ministry of Agriculture returns for large 'samples' (mostly over 20,000 acres) of named representative parishes in each region or area are tabulated into (a) 22 crops by acreage with percentages, (b) 6 types of livestock by number and per 100 acres, (c) labour employed by numbers and per 100 acres. Each division has significant and lucid comment, geological and agricultural, by a man steeped in his subject. Insignificant areas (under 5 per cent of the agricultural land), such as the Gault and Upper Greensand, are briefly treated without tables, and exceptional areas are noted. The ordering of a complex position is most skilfully done, for Kent probably has more diverse farming than any county.

This excellent plan could be the model for all future surveys and indeed for a farming region plan covering Britain and applicable for at least the last four centuries. The success of the plan is due to the author's use of com-

prehensible and defined units, the farming region and the parish, to which facts past, present, and future can be accurately related. It provides the vital link with personal experience which transforms history into something more than meaningless fantasy. With such method the confused mass of information, frequently based on individual whim, becomes manageable and sensible. Valuable comparisons, and where no evidence survives, useful analogies are possible.

The rest of the book shows the same orderly thinking and the eye for significant detail; it has a full bibliography of 140 items, which are related by numbers to the text. The appendices are excellent and provide abundant tabulated and graphed information, as well as distribution maps, mainly, apart from hops, covering the twentieth century. There is a map of all parishes at 1 inch to 4 miles which, by using Mr Garrad's 136 representative parishes (covering 43 per cent of the agricultural land), could be coloured to show the broad farming regions.

Students of Kent agrarian history, particularly those with no practical experience, will find this book an essential tool, and if they are using farm inventories, a definitive selection of parishes. It is difficult to see how it could be improved, except by modifying an idea in the Sussex survey and including a description of a typical, not model, named, present-day farm in each region.

In the Sussex survey Mr Jesse had the disadvantage of knowing his own East Sussex intimately and West Sussex less well. Apart from the marshes peculiar to East Sussex and the coastal plain peculiar to West Sussex the county has the same broad farming regions and the administrative split of seventy years ago should have been ignored.

Mr Jesse's chapter-headings are superficially similar to those of Kent, but unhappily the balance and clarity are quite different. Kent gives 30 per cent of its pages to geological and agricultural comment on closely defined (by means of 'samples' of named parishes) farming regions and special areas; Sussex gives only 15 per cent to comment on "farm-

ing on the different geological formations," with no clear guide to the principal farming regions by named parishes. There is no bibliography, the author having relied "almost entirely on his own experience," and no appendices or parish map.

It is unfortunate that Mr Jesse did not follow the inspired lead given by the Kent survey six years earlier.

G. H. KENYON

H. T. WILLIAMS (ed.), *Principles for Agricultural Policy*. Oxford University Press, 1960. xiv+318 pp. 18s.

The declared purpose of this book is not to advocate a policy, which is the duty of government, but to suggest principles on which long-term policy might be based: such principles to be derived from a study of economic and social history, agricultural science and technique, nutrition, and military strategy. To this end, the book is divided into several Parts, of which the first—a historical review of the last hundred years—is of chief interest to readers of this journal. This in turn is subdivided into eight chapters, which set out soundly and lucidly, albeit briefly, the main trends and events.

Most of the material is well known to readers of agricultural history, but we are reminded of several facts and figures too often forgotten, and which need to be recalled today, when the future of home farming is once more at stake. In 1840 we produced almost all our own food; in 1940 barely 40 per cent. 1850-75 was the 'golden age' of agriculture, as it was of industry: a period of tremendous advance in technique and in the output and value of farms. Yet, despite this and the replacement of 300,000 workers by machines, farm wages hardly advanced at all. No wonder there were strikes and that the farmers got little sympathy from the workers in the really bad times that followed. The depression, beginning in the late 1870's, changed the general pattern from tillage to livestock, in particular to dairy cattle, which had become the sheet-anchor of British farming by the early 1900's. The position is the same today, but the per-

formance of the dairy cow is now far higher: likewise the production and quality of grass, where husbandry has undergone a real revolution. It was extraordinary how long Britain persisted with Free Trade, and this at the expense of soil and agriculture, the only real primary asset beside coal. Even the protective measures of the 1930's were piecemeal—subsidies for sugar beet and wheat; the marketing of milk, hops, potatoes, and bacon pigs; a few grants to aid better farm practice—all patchwork. Would anything radical have ever been done, one wonders, had it not been for the war? It was perhaps fortunate for farmers that war-time measures had to be continued into the peace, so that high productivity in agriculture could help meet the external balance of payments. It ensures a precedent of government assistance, which will be difficult to reverse, even now when a period of freer trade and food surpluses—at any rate in the West—seems to have returned.

The conclusions reached by the editor at the end of the first Part of the book are sound, though hardly striking. Perhaps they are too familiar? None the less they should be imprinted on the minds of the townsmen who govern us. They are that, in terms of history, farming has moved from a pattern of crops for human consumption to livestock and livestock products, a feat of remarkable adaptation in the face of years of neglect and—I would add—of the irresponsible exploitation of land; that farmers have shown a high degree of co-operation, are able to assimilate new knowledge and techniques quickly, and are willing to venture despite restricted resources; finally that the State must continue to intervene to iron out the price fluctuations of international trade, and by means of a reasonable expenditure of public money and advice to help maintain agriculture in efficiency and heart.

Those who read the first Part of this book will wish at any rate to glance at the remaining non-historical Parts, where they will find statements of similar caution and balance. In sum, the book renders a useful service in presenting a careful analysis of the relevant ma-

terial, and in summarizing the conclusions. It is therefore useful more as a reference book than as a guide to new thinking. The editor is no less to be congratulated on that account. He must have had a particularly difficult task. Quite apart from the complexity of the subject which he has had to clarify and condense, he has not overloaded the text with technical jargon, and has supplied some excellent tables and graphs. The result, for a specialist work, is comparatively easy reading. But that is not all. As Sir Frank Engledow explains in the Foreword, Mr Williams was called in at a late stage to absorb and refashion the research of an earlier investigator, and bring the book into line with the recent phenomenon of market plenty. He has my sympathy and felicitations.

VICTOR BONHAM-CARTER

Mechanization in Agriculture, ed. J. L. Meij.
North Holland Publishing Company,
1960. 380 pp. 55s.

This is a symposium with contributions by ten writers. Five are from this country, four from the Netherlands, and one from the U.S.A. They deal with agricultural mechanization from many angles: conditions in Europe, conditions in the U.S.A., capital requirements, the problems of management and marketing which mechanization raises, its place on the small farm, and the difference between mechanizing in agriculture and industry. There is also a chapter (Ch. I) which discusses the influence of economic conditions on the development of agricultural tools and machines in history. This is written by Professor Slicher van Bath of Wageningen. It is the only chapter which commends the book to an agricultural historian *qua* historian, for the other contributions necessarily pay little attention to history. But there is so much relevant material in van Bath's chapter that the book deserves attention by historians if only for this contribution.

There is a quite widely held idea that agriculture scarcely changed from time immemorial until the latter part of the nineteenth century. Consequently economic con-

ditions are often thought to have had little or no effect on the development of agricultural techniques. Professor van Bath's thesis is that economic forces, especially the fluctuations in the prices of corn, dairy produce, meat, and wool, have influenced both agricultural production in general and, more particularly in the present context, the development of agricultural tools. "More tools and machines are invented and applied in periods of high prices for farm produce than in periods of low prices;" and when the price ratio of corn to dairy produce is favourable to corn more developments are likely in arable implements, and *vice versa*. (This is an interesting commentary on the adage: "necessity is the mother of invention.")

Professor van Bath places more emphasis on the cyclical periods in agricultural expansion and contraction before industrialization than is usual amongst British agricultural historians, and the connection which he shows existed between these cycles and the development of farm tools and implements is particularly interesting. Thus, the expansion between 1050 and the end of the thirteenth century, "*l'âge des grands défrichements*," would not have been possible without the use of horses and the heavy wheeled plough with a mould-board. But the use of horses depended on the padded horse collar and shafts, both of which were first used at this time, and made it possible to displace the ox with the horse. Similarly, mould-boards were probably unknown before the eleventh century.

During the depression of the fourteenth century corn lost ground to stock farming, and the few improvements that were introduced into farm implements had to do with dairy equipment and with what would save labour, for throughout the period the ratio of wages to corn prices was high.

In the sixteenth century grain prices rose again and improvements were made in grain-growing implements. But although further inventions were made in the seventeenth century, the depression in farming, which extended almost to the middle of the eighteenth,

delayed their introduction into farming practice. Conditions changed again in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when industrialization, by providing an alternative outlet for labour, re-emphasized the need for labour-saving machinery, while the war and the growing population ensured prices for farm produce which made it possible for farmers to afford them. Moreover, with the improvements in transport and in the ways of disseminating information, the time-lag between invention and application was reduced.

By 1770 one European writer had stated that agriculture could not be improved further "with complicated instruments." Yet the growth of mechanization in the nineteenth century was so great that in 1855 complaints were made in Holland that "The poetry of agriculture is lost, it becomes a factory industry." Even in the New World similar laments were made, but in regions where machines could be employed, famines had become almost unknown for the first time in history.

It is unfortunate that printing mistakes throughout the book are so numerous. Although it is written in English, one suspects that English was not the proof-readers' mother tongue. At any rate, to see "Switzerland" with an initial "Z" looks decidedly un-English.

W. HARWOOD LONG

R. D. COLLISON BLACK, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question*. viii+300 pp. Cambridge University Press, 1960. 37s. 6d.

The Irish question of the nineteenth century had two aspects. The political one is well known and indeed has come to be considered something of a bore in this country. The economic and social aspect is less well known and deserves to be studied because of its considerable historical interest and importance in the general sense. The surging population growth before the Famine of 1846-7 and the unplanned reduction which followed at once spring to mind as an example. Again, without going into the question whether Ireland under the Union stood in a 'colonial' relation

to England, it is clear that Irish history provides early examples of the problem of under-development as we understand it today. In fact, the importance of a knowledge of Irish economic and social history might well be argued as a corollary to the necessity of studying the Industrial Revolution in Britain.

This book, although primarily written from the standpoint of the historian of economic thought, is an important contribution to Irish economic history. The point seems to be worth stressing, for there is a danger that the economist may grow impatient with the unfamiliar facts which to his mind clog the discussion of the relation between theory and policy, while the historian on the other hand may stumble over the tough abstractions which seem to him to hinder the narrative. Dr Black has drawn on an impressive array of sources, both manuscript and printed, in the preparation of this work. He has used the papers of the public figures of the day which are available in British and Irish archives, records of the Treasury, Home Office, and Colonial Office, and also had access to collections which have migrated across the Atlantic. To one who knows the material, his labours in the mass of blue-books relating to Irish problems are deserving of praise. In addition to all this, he had to deal with a vast pamphlet literature.

The spectacle of Irish poverty in the first half of the nineteenth century has always been depressing enough, and the picture presented in this book of the inability of those in charge of affairs and their advisers to grasp the problems involved or to provide any remedy makes it worse. Dr Black does not go in much for judgement, but he implies that security of tenure and self-government might have produced better results. Certainly the land system was at the root of the trouble, but in a self-governing Ireland it is hard to see how the problem could have been solved by other than revolutionary means. Security of tenure, too, would have been likely to aggravate rather than cure the population problem in the short run, at least before the Famine. It is

always well to remember that Ireland was created poor and long held down in poverty, and that it will be no easy task for her people to achieve a modest prosperity.

E. R. R. GREEN

A. N. DUCKHAM, *The Fabric of Farming*. Chatto and Windus, 1958. 224 pp., illus. 15s.

This is a day when few can see the whole technological wood for the flourishing trees, no less in agriculture than in any other scientifically based industry. Therefore any man who attempts to present a picture of the wood, as well as of its constituent timbers, earns our gratitude for the attempt. Professor Duckham has used a different metaphor, that of the whole cloth and its warp and woof and thread colours, to hang his text upon, whereof the subject is the integration of all the elements of farming, in its four dimensions, into the national agricultural industry.

This needs to be attempted periodically. I have tried to recall the last man who succeeded in the synthesis: and I think it was probably Caird, one hundred and ten years ago (although everyone will have his pet candidate for the honour). I do not think that Duckham has succeeded, although his is a most meritorious near-miss.

What is it that he has tried to do? To show how man harnesses the forces of nature to his agricultural purposes; to show how, in the historical development of farming, the "natural food cycle" becomes increasingly artificial; to pursue this theme biogeographically; and to extrapolate into the future the picture so built up. That aim is admirable; more, vital. In pursuing it, Duckham seems to me to have lingered too long over the perfections of the techniques of individual trees to leave himself the time, or his readers the patience, to seize the significance of the technological wood. He moves from the delightful chapter-heading texts:

"The town was Anson City, old Jones's county seat,
Where they raised Polled Angus cattle,
and waving whiskered wheat,"

to such stultifying textbookese as "the vitamin B complex and vitamin C are associated with cellular respiration," and back again to such startlingly novel truths as "even though he may not fully understand what he is doing, man has discovered and daily uses ways and means of raising the biological efficiency of the soil."

That, I think, is the fault. Duckham runs us up and down the stairs, between the starlit roof and the fungi in the cellar, too fast and too often, so that we (and he?) are breathless and uncomprehending.

But the idea of this book, and some part of its execution, are so good that Professor Duckham should pursue it in "the series of books that he is writing" (*vide* the blurb). He is one of the very few men today with the imagination, the breadth of knowledge, and the mental catholicism that are needed for the task. This may seem an impertinent comment for an agricultural journalist to make to the Professor of Agriculture in the University of Reading. But it is precisely for the likes of me that the likes of him write this sort of book.

R. TROW-SMITH

A. R. STEDMAN, *Marlborough and the Upper Kennet Country*. Butler & Tanner Ltd, 1960. x+398 pp., illustrated. 42s.

Mr Stedman has amply succeeded in his aim of superseding Waylen's century-old history of Marlborough, and has provided a rich vein for the local reader to quarry. The proliferation of names and dates of solely local significance may, on the other hand, make some passages tedious for the general reader and must have contributed to the mistakes noted on the two *errata* sheets which come with the book. One slip which has still escaped notice is the indexing of William Cobbett as Richard. It is good to learn that a fully referenced copy of this very detailed work will be deposited in the library of the Wiltshire Archaeological Society.

The book is at its best on the intricate and well-documented educational history of the town, with which Mr Stedman dealt in his

earlier history of Marlborough Grammar School. The remainder of the work leans heavily on administrative, political, and religious history, and agricultural and rural matters are passed over rather more lightly than might be anticipated in a regional study. There is little sign that the author has looked hard at the landscape of his district, other than at major architectural features, or read much of the last decade's refreshingly down-to-earth Local History. The map of the loosely defined Marlborough and upper Kennet district is inelegant: must reviewers continue to beg for stencils to be used?

There are some inaccuracies. The site of Aldbourne Chase (p. 4), contrary to the author's claim, is still distinguishable from the ploughland by a thin scatter of scrub oaks. Water meadows (p. 5) can be, and not so far away are, ditched by mechanical digger. The mention of floated meadows at Great Bedwyn in the middle ages (p. 90) reads like an anachronism, although it would be surprising if flooding were not in some way controlled during at least the thirteenth century, and Mr J. E. G. Sutton has found a reference in the *Cartulary of Ramsey Abbey* (I, p. 332) to meadows called Dammede and more significantly Flotgates at Houghton, Hunts., in 1252, which moreover could be mown every year whereas most others could be mown only every second year. It is difficult to believe (p. 241) that the supply of straw in the chalklands really proved inadequate for the straw-plaiting industry of Aldbourne and elsewhere in the nineteenth century, and (p. 261) it would be interesting to learn what mechanical improvements in farming Mr Stedman believes were initiated by the parliamentary enclosures of the eighteenth century.

E. L. JONES

ELIZABETH CRITTALL (ed.), *A History of Wiltshire*. Vol. IV. Oxford University Press, 1959. xx+486 pp., illustrated. £7 7s.

After six pages of introductory synthesis by Dr W. G. Hoskins, this volume settles down to treat *in extenso* of agriculture, the woollen and textile industries, engineering and rail-

way works, other industries, roads, canals, railways, sport, spas and mineral springs, freemasonry, and royal forests. Professor M. W. Beresford contributes very full analyses of the quotas for the subsidies of 1334, 1377, and 1428; and there are tables of population from 1801 to 1951.

Agriculture is handled chronologically by four writers: the medieval period by Richenda Scott, 1500-1793 by E. Kerridge, 1793-1870 by R. Molland, 1870 onwards by F. M. L. Thompson. It would have been hardly possible to find a better qualified team, regarded individually, but the team-work as such might in some respects have benefited from a stricter co-ordination. For example, Dr Kerridge begins the second article with an analysis of the six farming regions comprehended in sixteenth-century Wiltshire. It is unlikely that these divisions appeared suddenly in 1500, but there is no hint of regional characteristics in the earlier chapter.

For a volume of this size, containing such a wealth of detailed scholarship, and handsomely illustrated, the price of seven guineas cannot be called unreasonable. Many students of particular subjects will however regret that the present publishers have not seen fit to revive the practice of V. C. H. in earlier days, which made it possible for some of the main articles to be purchased separately in paper covers. To say nothing of the articles on agriculture, there would surely be a wide sale for Professor Carus-Wilson on the woollen industry before 1550 and Miss Mann on textile industries since that date: two outstanding contributions in an altogether admirable volume.

H. P. R. FINBERG

CLARK C. SPENCE, *God Speed the Plow: the coming of steam cultivation to Great Britain*.

University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1960.

184 pp. illus. \$4.75.

"Give me a steam engine on a frosty morning with fat dripping off the cylinder and sizzling down the side of the boiler. Why, it smells like bacon and eggs," a one-time steam ploughman is reported to have said recently.

It illustrates well the romantic aura which bedevilled steam ploughing during the comparatively short time that it served British agriculture. The men who worked the engines loved them with tender care; the farmers who used them spoke enthusiastically, almost rapturously, of their work, and the inventors and manufacturers approached their task with fanatical zeal. Yet it is a curious fact that steam cultivation first became of consequence in the 1850's and had declined to comparative unimportance by World War I, though it is true that there are still a handful of sets working today.

Professor Spence in his book, which won the American Agricultural History Society Award for 1959, has dealt faithfully and rationally with the subject. He has resisted the substantial temptation to be carried away by what more than one writer has termed "the halcyon days of steam," and he is left unmoved by the sizzling of the fat on the cylinder. It is the first serious study of the subject to appear and he deserves congratulations on a well-written and important book. His technical material is particularly complete and gives a very clear picture of the development of steam cultivating equipment from the early pioneer days until the end of the nineteenth century. He dispels the common belief that John Fowler invented it, discusses the importance of direct cultivation and its decline, and explains the many cable systems that found vogue until we are fully familiar with such standard steam terminology as "double engine, roundabout and headland opposite." From a painstaking search of journals and the press he gives very satisfactory résumés of the many controversies which raged about types of tackle, their effect on the soil, and the costs of the various systems.

It would, though, have been of interest to know more about the way in which these enormous machines were moved about the country. Those who have worked with steam ploughs know that, even today, it is necessary to give the railways advance notice before driving the engines over a level crossing, and

there must have been few roads capable of taking monsters weighing up to twenty tons without damage. How, for example, was John Heathcote's famous engine of 1836 moved from Bolton-le-Moors in Lancashire to Lochar Moss near Dumfries, into which it finally sank and remained, "bound to the soil by some sort of mortgage"?

The main question which Professor Spence, though he discusses it, never answers convincingly is why steam ploughing was in effect such a failure. Immense sums were spent for comparatively small results. Few technical introductions have ever been accompanied by such high hopes. Even if it is admitted that steam cultivation was most suited to the heavy lands of the country and that it really only suited large farms with large fields, its success was strictly limited. One small firm, Darby's, were estimated to have spent £100,000 in producing thirty machines between 1877 and 1898 and to have lost £8,000 in the process. The sum spent on development by all the firms concerned was huge. Farmers rarely found the reduction in costs as great as anticipated, and in addition the repair, maintenance, and labour costs were often very high. The number of farm horses (in England and Wales) which the experts firmly expected to drop sharply actually rose by over 130,000 during the 'steam age'. The author concludes his very useful chapter on the economics of steam cultivation with an apt quotation by the President of the Royal Agricultural Society in 1867 who described it as "a success which a small amount of ignorance and inattention would convert into a failure." To blame the decline of steam, as Professor Spence does, entirely on the introduction of the internal combustion engine is to fail to take the real failure of steam into account and to ignore the fact that the tractor was of little importance in agriculture in this country even after

World War I, by which time the use of steam had declined.

The author's conceptions of nineteenth-century economic history are at times curious. He writes, apparently without qualms, of "nearly two decades of unmitigated depression and misery for the farming industry" following the Napoleonic Wars, and having averred on page 4 that "steam on the farm came into its own amidst the golden prosperity of the 1850's and 1860's" he enters into an almost flat contradiction of the "Golden Age" theory by explaining in a footnote on page 63 that "the hard times of the 1860's, the difficult winters and dry summers" contributed to the downfall of J. J. Mechi. On page 105, when he invokes Lord Ernle's overworked quotation about a hundred farmers plodding along the Elizabethan road, he ignores the fact that he is applying to the mid-sixties a remark made specifically about 1837.

To be further critical, there are a number of irritating and avoidable errors of a minor sort. For example, the Royal Agricultural Society's steam trials in 1862 were held at Farningham not Farington (p. 38). On p. 44 (footnote 36) the date of the introduction of the Ivel agricultural motor is given as 1904 instead of 1902, and on p. 124 (footnote 67) Chichester is referred to as Chinchester.

The book is lavishly and spaciouly presented with good illustrations, but the typographer has conceived the irritating notion of placing the pagination half way down the outside margin so that there is a good chance of its being hidden under the thumb of any normal reader. These faults apart, it is a valuable contribution to the still slender technical history of nineteenth-century farming and will provide an important source book for the subject. Not the least of its virtues may be to teach us the advantages of spelling 'plough' more succinctly.

J. W. Y. HIGGS

Periodicals Received

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