

Beadoc – the British East Africa Disabled Officers' Colony and the White Frontier in Kenya

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Abstract

Beadoc was an attempt to found a co-operative settlement of disabled British officers in the Highlands of Kenya after the First World War. It was designed both to reward ex-soldiers who had lost their health in the service of the Empire, and to provide Britain with supplies of a vital material, flax, from within the confines of the Empire. Under-capitalized, grossly mismanaged, and located on unsuitable land, Beadoc collapsed with the end of the 'flax boom'. Its importance to the agricultural history of white Kenya, is that it illustrated the futility of placing comparatively large numbers of Europeans, with comparatively little capital, on the land as farmers. Kenya was a rich white man's country, which ultimately meant that it would not be any kind of white man's country.

ONE of the much advertised attractions of Kenya for the intending British emigrant was that it was a country eminently suited to the former public school boy, trained not actually to do work, but to supervise the work of others. With cheap African labour to take his orders, the public school man would be able to utilize this training which found little scope in the older Dominions of the Empire. The First World War enormously expanded this pool of potential emigrants to Kenya by creating thousands of men who could not, rather than would not, compete in the labour markets of the Empire. Particularly important in this regard were ex-officers. Men who had lost their health in the service of the Empire would 'only be required to supervise labour', in a setting in which their distinct social status as ex-officers could be maintained by their position at the top of Kenya's racial hierarchy. The first private scheme for settling disabled men on the land in Kenya was received by the Colonial Office in London in 1916.¹ There-

after, a steady stream of proposals for the settlement of those suffering from the effects of gas attacks, neurasthenia, and tuberculosis, and the disabled, in general arrived at the Colonial Office, from private individuals, the YMCA, and the British Ministry of Pensions. None, however, got beyond this stage. White settlement in Kenya had only started on any scale after the Anglo-Boer War, and whether white people could live in the Highlands of Kenya while exposed to the vertical rays of the equatorial sun was still a much debated question, particularly among the Colony's medical fraternity. The general consensus, however, was that 'East Africa is a country for fit men'.² As well, most of the schemes depended on Government grants of land and substantial financial aid to place the disabled on viable farms. Britain's Colonial Empire was still governed by the Treasury's rule that all Colonies and all economic development within Colonies should be self-supporting, and without government financial assistance.

¹ Lord Cranworth, *Profit and Sport in British East Africa*, 1919, pp 244-247; Public Record Office (hereafter PRO) CO533/176, No 48737, Memo. by Jesse Archer, 12 Oct 1916.

² PRO CO533/192, no 57481, Lord Leitrem to Colonial Office, 20 Nov 1917; CO533/203, no 40067, Ministry of Pensions to Colonial Office, 17 Aug 1918; CO533/199, no 62308, Bowring to Long, 23 Dec 1918.

I

Beadoc, or to give it its full title, the British East Africa Disabled Officers' Colony, however, was based on a question of great importance to Britain, the current world 'flax famine', and one which was vital enough to overcome the normal obstacles to settlement of the disabled. Before the First World War, Britain had imported more than 90 per cent of its flax requirements. The War expanded these requirements in the form of uniforms, tents, and especially for the burgeoning aircraft industry. At the same time, the traditional sources of supply, north-western Europe and Russia, were cut off by German occupation, and then by the upheavals of the Russian Revolution. The result was to send flax prices skyrocketing to £252 a ton by July 1919. Faced with soaring costs for a vital raw material, the British Government, in this as in much of its experience of the First World War, moved from a *laissez-faire* to a collectivist and interventionist attitude. Within Britain, the Flax Production Branch of the Board of Agriculture was established to stimulate domestic yields by Government flax production. In addition, and again duplicating much of the British reaction to the First World War, the British Government looked to the Empire to supply domestic needs. The Empire Flax Growing Committee of the Board of Trade was established in February 1918 to co-ordinate the Empire's contribution to Britain's needs. The Committee considered that even after the end of the War, the problem of flax would 'not cease to be the cause of grave anxiety and considerable expense until a safe and satisfactory supply can be secured within the British Empire'.³

One of the Colonies which most

impressed the Committee with its potential for flax was Kenya. Settler production of the crop had started in 1912 and as flax prices soared in the War so did settler interest in it. Flax seemed ideal for Kenya. It demanded masses of cheap labour, which the Colony's Africans could supply, whether they wanted to or not, and as a semi-manufactured crop it needed capital investment in machinery and detailed supervision of both labour and machinery, which white settlers could provide. Moreover, the very high prices for flax made it seem ideal for 'small men', individual settlers with comparatively small capital resources. Ever since white settlement had started, Kenya had enjoyed the dubious reputation of being a 'big man's frontier'. The high capital requirements of such typical products of settler agriculture as coffee and cattle had made Kenya the home of ex-Indian Army colonels and aristocrats, rather than 'the ordinary British emigrant'. Flax, with its quick returns, offered white Kenya a staple crop suitable for comparatively dense white settlement, a vital need for any true 'white man's country'. Existing settlers were so excited about the prospects for flax at the end of the First World War that some had begun pulling up young coffee trees in order to plant acreage.⁴ Beadoc sought to take advantage of Kenya's opportunities for both the disabled ex-officer and the production of flax.

A scheme, involving the placing of some fifty-five disabled or wounded 'ex-officers and men of the Public school type' on 25,000 acres of land in Kenya was first submitted to the Colonial Office by Lt.-Col. Hughes Ridge in December 1918. The fundamental basis of the scheme was that 'Flax growing in East Africa is not a speculation, it is a certainty'. Hughes

³ *Cmd. 281*, Interim Report to the Board of Trade of the Empire Flax Growing Committee on the General Supply and Immediate Prospects of Supply in April 1919, 1919, p. 3; Alfred S Moore, 'Facing the Flax Famine', *World's Work*, March 1919, p. 352; *Cmd. 1208*, Final Report of the Flax Production Branch, 1921, p. 12; *Cmd. 281*, p. 5.

⁴ I D Talbot, 'The Kenya Flax Boom', *Kenya Historical Review*, II, No 1, 1974, pp. 59-66; Cranworth, *Profit and Sport*, p. 141; Kenya National Archives (hereafter KNA), Ukamba Province, Annual Report, 1919-1920.

Ridge estimated that Beadoc would be able to clear and plant 5000 acres of flax within eighteen months of starting. The £87,000 in revenue this would produce would enable Beadoc to pay off all the capital invested in it. This capital, which Hughes Ridge estimated at £50,000, would be provided by the British Government, while the Colony's Government would provide Beadoc's land. The scheme appeared to offer something for everyone. The Empire Flax Growing Committee specifically recommended Beadoc as part of its larger task of securing Imperial flax supplies. Fifty-five ex-officers who had been disabled in the service of the Empire would get rewarding careers in the Empire. Kenya would get new settlers and new Government-provided capital. This last item was especially welcome to existing settlers, who greeted news of Beadoc as the 'thin edge of the wedge of a larger measure of financial help' for all the settlers. The Colonial Governor of the time, Sir Edward Northey, was then engaged in starting a far larger soldier settlement scheme for a thousand ex-soldiers on a million acres and quickly earmarked 25,000 acres near Kericho in South West Kenya for Beadoc. An ex-soldier himself, Northey was always eager to help other ex-soldiers, even if it meant harming Kenya's African inhabitants. It was later revealed that over 4000 acres had been illegally excised from the Kipsigis Native Reserve to provide Beadoc with some of its land.⁵

The British Colonial Office and the Ministry of Pensions, however, which were to supply Government approval and Government funds for Beadoc, were both hesitant. Partly, this was due to the demand for Government financing, but

mainly it was due to distrust of the scheme's organizer. Lt.-Col. Hughes Ridge was a sometime dentist whose expertise in flax was based on his work as Chief Crop Supervisor with the British Flax Production Branch. He had left a none too savoury reputation behind him, after he had been dismissed for being 'slack and casual', with little real knowledge of growing flax. Hughes Ridge, however, neatly side-stepped both objections by revising his scheme. Beadoc was recast as a friendly society consisting of seventy-five wounded or disabled ex-officers. Each would contribute £500 in share capital and loan stock. The sole financial contribution of the Imperial Government would be training grants and increased pensions for the ex-officers to enable them to survive until returns were made on flax. Hughes Ridge was able to secure the subscriptions of thirty-seven ex-officers at a meeting in London in June 1919, and with men, money and scheme all provided, the Colonial Office gave its official approval in September 1919. Fifty-five ex-officers passed a Government selection board. Any ex-officer with a wound gratuity or disability pension was eligible for the scheme. One Beadoc member had lost a leg in the War, but the fact that this was mentioned both in newspaper reports at the time and in later memoirs, may indicate a general lack of visible disabilities. Possibly more typical of Beadoc's members was Lt. W G Searle, who received a pension for malarial attacks and an anal fistula acquired in the British campaign against German East Africa. An initial party of thirteen arrived in East Africa in December 1919, while the remainder attended training courses in flax production in Britain.⁶

⁵ PRO CO533/205, no 61443, Memo by Hughes Ridge, Dec 1918; CO644/219, no 10783, Board of Trade to Colonial Office, 27 Feb 1919; *East African Standard* (hereafter EAS), leader, 19 Apr 1919; CO533/207, no 55201, Northey to Milner, 8 Mar 1919; CO533/280, no 43481, Northey to Churchill, 31 Aug 1922.

⁶ PRO CO533/228, no 39610, Dale to Bottomley, 27 Jul 1910; CO533/221, no 30309, Memo by Hughes Ridge, Jun 1919; CO533/222, no 50416, Colonial Office to Ridge, 23 Sep 1919; EAS, 31 Jul 1920; Rhodes House, Oxford, (hereafter RH), MSS Afr. s. 504, 'Recollections of Kenya by Mrs M W Dobbs'; CO533/224, Beadoc to Colonial Office, 3 Dec 1919.

II

The initial appearance of Beadoc members in the Kericho district of Kenya came as a considerable shock to local administrators, none of whom had been consulted about the project.⁷ C M Dobbs, the local District Commissioner, organized parties of Government porters to clear bush on Beadoc's land, carry in members' baggage, and pitch tents for them. This was just the start of Government aid to Beadoc. In the world of post-war Kenya, white settlers who were disabled ex-officers had special claims on the time and hearts of colonial administrators. Technical advice was provided by the Departments of Agriculture and Forestry, a road was constructed to tie Beadoc's land with the rest of Kenya's primitive transportation system, and Beadoc was favoured with a visit from the Governor in 1920. More concrete, and probably more useful, help, was given by the District Commissioner's wife, who baked enough bread to keep the first Beadoc party from starving. A second party of twenty-two arrived in March 1920, and a final group of seven-teen appeared in January 1921.

Most of these individuals needed all of the help they could get. Many were utterly without experience of Africa, their knowledge of the continent based on popular novels of the period, and the wives especially had to deal with a new world in which one washed clothes in a chamber-pot because there were no buckets. Kenya, despite the invitations to tea from the District Commissioner's wife, was still an unfamiliar frontier for urbanized settlers. One Beadoc member built his own house of earth and corrugated iron. It fell down the first night after completion, and member and wife

returned to their habitual tent. Kenya had compensations, however, even for Beadoc members. The ability to shoot a water-buck from a dining room window was matched by Beadoc's enthusiasm for dances. According to one survivor, it was considered nothing to ride five miles in full evening dress to dance away the night on a mud floor to the sound of a gramophone. Much of this was typical of the early days in any white-settler district in Kenya. What was unusual about Beadoc was its attempt to apply military methods to land settlement. The Colony was organized on quasi-military lines with individual officers in charge of Works, Transport, Labour, and Agriculture and, if reports are correct, Beadoc regulated its working day by bugle calls. It was magnificent, but it was not agriculture.

Here, Beadoc ran into any number of problems. Some were inherent in all European settlement in Kenya, many others were self-inflicted. Beadoc's land was covered in dense African bush and Kenya's Survey Department had found this one of the most difficult areas of the Colony even to survey. Clearing this bush was far more difficult. The Beadoc land was not reached by a proper road until 1921. In addition, the agricultural expert whom Hughes Ridge had imported, at a high salary, was a soil expert and of little value in flax production. Hughes Ridge himself proved as 'slack and casual' in Kenya as he had been in Britain, and awarded himself a salary of £1000 a year. In the event, Hughes Ridge did not last long in the new surroundings.

Major Trevor Hill arrived at Beadoc in March 1920 with the second party of members. In the first general meeting after his appearance, Hughes Ridges was dismissed, and Trevor Hill was appointed general manager. Hughes Ridge returned to Britain, owing Beadoc £1500 and leaving Beadoc's finances 'in a hopeless muddle'.

⁷ Information in this and the following paragraph is chiefly derived from RH, MSS Afr. s. 504, the unpublished memoirs to Mrs M W Dobbs, the wife of the local District Commissioner. Mrs Dobbs included reminiscences of Beadoc by two wives of Beadoc members, Mrs A H Daly and Mrs N Birkett, in her work.

After his departure, Beadoc imported five surplus army tractors to aid in clearing the land, but, by the end of 1920, only 800 acres of flax were being cultivated, instead of the 5000 Hughes Ridge had forecast. Beadoc started to branch out its activities. A clearing and forwarding agency, a contract post office, and a store were established in nearby towns. These last activities made money for Beadoc; farming did not.⁸

It was just as Beadoc was preparing to harvest its first flax crop in 1920, that the flax market 'became suddenly paralyzed and flax was almost unsaleable'. Overproduction, the end of Government aircraft contracts, and consumer resistance to extremely high prices ended the flax boom. Flax prices in Kenya plummeted from £590 a ton to £80 a ton, far below even the cost of production. The collapse of the market was particularly disastrous for Beadoc, which had been counting on a quick return on its capital if it was to survive. Flax was especially unfortunate in that, as a semi-manufactured crop, it demanded expensive processing machinery which was virtually useless for any other purpose. Beadoc had spent £5000 on a flax mill, and by the end of 1920 was in debt to the amount of £27,231. Most of this money was due to its own members in the form of unpaid interest on their loan stock, but a bank overdraft of £7000 was especially serious.⁹

Trevor Hill sailed to Britain in August 1920 to negotiate a loan from the Officers' Association, a private organization of ex-officers, which Hughes Ridge had said was promised to Beadoc. Typically, the loan had not in fact been promised,

but under Trevor Hill's urging, the Association agreed to provide Beadoc with £10,000 in quarterly instalments. Trevor Hill arrived back in Kenya in January 1921 with the loan and the last party of Beadoc members, to discover that yet another general meeting had been held in his absence, and Major G L Dymott had been appointed to replace him as general manager. Hill left Beadoc 'vowing vengeance', and initially this seemed to take the form of representations to the Officers' Association that it should cease payments of its loan. The Association was, in any case, becoming nervous about its unsecured advance and, starting another trend in Beadoc's troubled history, asked the Colonial Government for a guarantee of repayment. Northey, still the Governor, was sympathetic to Beadoc, but had to refuse. There were many settlers, many of them ex-soldiers, in financial difficulties because of the collapse of the flax, and the general post-war recession which was affecting the entire Imperial economy. Government guarantees for loans to one group of settlers would lead to endless demands from other settlers for the same treatment and Kenya's always shaky finances could not afford the strain. The Officers' Association stopped payment after £5000 had been paid to Beadoc.¹⁰

III

On the ground, Beadoc had decided to continue with the development of flax, in hopes that the market would recover. It did not, and by the end of 1921 Beadoc had 800 acres of unusable flax, and 200 acres of maize under cultivation. Both

⁸ KNA: Kericho District, Annual Report, 1921; PRO CO533/246, no 37804, Memo. by C Turner, encl. Overseas Settlement Office to Colonial Office, 24 Jul 1920; CO533/235, no 43093, Northey to Milner, 28 Aug 1920; EAS, 17 Apr 1920; KNA: Lumbwa District, Annual Report, 1920-1921.

⁹ Cmd. 1208, p 12; Elspeth Huxley, *White Man's Country*, II, London, 1935, p 57; PRO CO533/259, no 33654, Memo. by Beadoc, encl. Northey to Churchill, 30 Mar 1921.

¹⁰ PRO CO533/247, no 58636, Officers' Association to Colonial Office, 20 Nov 1920; EAS, 8 Jan 1921; CO533/291, no 10586, minute by Bottomly on Sir Hugh Daly to Colonial Office, 3 Mar 1922; CO533/271, no 11488, Churchill to Northey, 10 Mar 1921; CO533/265, no 59004, Northey to Churchill, 26 Jul 1921; CO533/272, no 63301, Officers' Association to Colonial Office, 21 Dec 1921.

were devastated by a drought in the Kericho area in 1921. By now, Beadoc's lack of cash meant that it could not afford experienced, and expensive, Luo labour, and had to resort to 'raw' Africans, with a consequent loss of efficiency. Beadoc, unlike other settler operations, could not simply endure hard times and wait for things to improve. The demands of debts and simply the need to find occupations for its members forced further expansion. After a visit from the Kenya Coffee Officer, it was planned to plant 2000 acres of coffee. Coffee, however, took four years to achieve returns. In the meantime, Beadoc established a sawmill, workshops, and a maize mill on its property, and members set up two labour-recruiting agencies for other settlers. One Beadoc member helped the Colonial Administration to hand out maize and onion seeds to local African farmers, as Beadoc hoped to build up a trade in these products. These activities probably increased Beadoc's financial difficulties as inexperienced newcomers tried to compete with established interests. Beadoc opened a store in the town of Lumbwa. It succeeded in capturing sympathetic European trade, but inexperienced Beadoc members lacked the patience and the prices to attract African customers away from Indian shops.¹¹

By early 1922, Beadoc's financial affairs were approaching a crisis point. Flax was dead, the entire Kenya economy was in a recession, local creditors refused further advances, and the training grants and increased pensions, which many Beadoc members had been living on, were due to end in March. Another general meeting was held. Dymott was authorized to sail to Britain and try to raise £25,000 in debentures on Beadoc's land. Beadoc also

ended its existence as a co-operative colony and was transformed into a limited company. As a part of this financial restructuring, Beadoc was put on 'a proper business basis' by ridding it of most of its members. Only seventeen were to be retained on staff, nineteen had already left, and the remaining members were left 'free to take outside employment', although Beadoc would still retain the capital they had invested in it. A last, suitably bitter meeting in February 1922 approved the plan and Dymott sailed to Britain. His efforts were fruitless. The Officers' Association, British banks, and rich individuals such as the Duke of Westminster were all approached for funds and declined, at least in the absence of any guarantee by either the British or Kenya Governments that the money would be repaid. The Colonial Government did its limited best to help Beadoc. At the start of 1922, the Governor ordered that Beadoc's 25,000 acres be given free of charge to the organization. Beyond this, however, it could not go. This left Beadoc very firmly in the lap of the Colonial Office.¹²

Beadoc had been warned from the start that 'Financial assistance cannot be given in any circumstances', but not for the first or the last time, the Colonial Office discovered that official approval for schemes involving individuals with a high political profile, such as disabled ex-officers, usually entailed uncomfortable consequences. The officials in the Colonial Office were genuinely sympathetic to Beadoc's plight, and the thick files Beadoc accumulated in the Colonial Office archives are testimony to the time and effort that they gave to trying to aid Beadoc, through private sources or with government money. None of the private sources would advance funds without a government guarantee and here the Colonial Office ran into a

¹¹ KNA: Kericho District, Annual Report, 1921, Handing Over Report, c. 1921; PRO CO533/291, no 20769, Holm to Colonial Office, 30 Apr 1922; CO533/291, no 10586, Daly to Colonial Office, 3 Mar 1922.

¹² PRO CO533/279, no 22747, Northey to Churchill, 19 Apr 1922; CO533/291, no 10586, Daly to Colonial Office, 3 Mar 1922; CO533/275, no 1943, Northey to Churchill, 10 Jan 1922.

wall of opposition from the British Treasury. The Treasury, never notably sympathetic to human suffering at any time, still remained the repository of Gladstonian rectitude and refused help. Neither personal approaches through the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill, nor a direct assault on the Treasury's opposition, through an appeal to the Government's Law Officers, succeeded in loosening the purse strings. In the middle of these bureaucratic endeavours, in September 1922, Beadoc itself went into liquidation. The Colonial Office continued its efforts to find some financial aid for a resurrected Beadoc, but the collapse proved to be final.¹³

Beadoc left liabilities of some £62,200 on its demise, including £10,000 to the National Bank of South Africa, another £10,000 to the Officers' Association, and £2,500 in unpaid salaries to employees, and £35,000 to its own members. There ensued an intricate legal ballet of three years' duration between the Liquidator, the Bank, the Government of Kenya and the Colonial Office over the disposition of Beadoc's only real asset, its land. This eventually provided something of a happy end to the history of Beadoc. Its land was in the centre of what was to become Kenya's thriving tea industry. The Liquidator sold the Beadoc land to the Brooke Bond and Findley Muir tea companies in 1925 for a price of £3 10s an acre, an operation which should have brought in almost £90,000. The Liquidator was able to pay off all of Beadoc's creditors in full, even including some of Beadoc's former African employees, who had remained unpaid for three years. Each surviving Beadoc member received £800 from the sale and those still in the area in 1926,

when final payments were made, declared themselves satisfied.¹⁴

IV

There had been a general dispersal of Beadoc's members as early as February 1922 when its restructuring occurred. The European population of Kenya's Nyanza Province, in which Beadoc was located, dropped by ninety with its collapse. Some members returned to Britain, others stayed in Kenya to work on railway construction, and a few tried to find work in flax production through newspaper advertisements. Some members did remain in the Kericho area and apparently very successfully. Captain T N Derby organized the first tea plantings on the former Beadoc lands for the large companies in 1926. The first small tea crop, grown by private settlers in the area, was purchased by H B Hine, a Beadoc member who had taken over its store at Lumbwa. The most successful of Beadoc's members was W H Billington. Recognized very early as one of Beadoc's members who was 'very good with natives', Billington had managed Beadoc's labour recruiting agencies. After Beadoc's end, he became one of the chief labour recruiters in Kenya and eventually a labour consultant for international firms which invested in Kenya.¹⁵

Individual success stories and the successful liquidation of Beadoc, however, could not disguise the fact that Beadoc as an experiment in land settlement had been a complete failure. The immediate effects of this failure on the broader community

¹³ PRO CO533/222, no 50416, Colonial Office to Ridge, 23 Sep 1919; CO533/287, no 47893, minute by Churchill, on Treasury to Colonial Office, 22 Sep 1922; CO533/282, no 47490, Bowring to Churchill, 22 Sep 1922. Because this was an Inter-Departmental controversy, the Beadoc affair accumulated vast amounts of paper of interest only to historians of bureaucracy.

¹⁴ PRO CO533/292, no 11325, Cornydon to Devonshire, 29 Jan 1923; *House of Lords*, 184, Joint Select Committee on Closer Union in East Africa, (1931), memo. of Sir Humphrey Leggett, p 51; KNA: PC/NZA, 3/21/15, Chief Native Commissioner to Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza, 14 Sep 1925; *EAS*, 18 Sep 1926.

¹⁵ KNA: Nyanza Province, Annual Report, 1923; RH, MSS Afr. s. 504. KNA: Kericho District, Annual Report, 1921; A Clayton and Donald C Savage, *Government and Labour in Kenya*, 1974, p 150.

of white settlement in Kenya were probably minimal. Other settlers maintained a discreet silence on Beadoc's demise and its fate was usually assigned to the collapse of the flax boom or as one settler, Elspeth Huxley, historian, put it, 'a second breaking on the wheel of world events outside their control'. Governmental losses on the scheme were comparatively minor. Imperial aid to Beadoc was confined to the training grants and free passages provided to Beadoc members, a total of approximately £4600, but both grants and passages were available to all ex-service personnel under Britain's demobilization plans. The main loss for the Kenya Government was the loss of revenue when Beadoc's land was given free of charge to the organization, but it is likely that if the land had not been assigned to Beadoc, it would have been used for other soldier settlers, all of whom received their land for free, or have remained in the hands of the Africans who had owned a large part of it. As usual in the history of Kenya, it was Africans who paid the price for settler folly. The Kipsigis never received their land back.¹⁶

The causes of Beadoc's failure were legion. Speculating on flax was, to put it mildly, an unfortunate choice for a staple crop. It is difficult, however, to believe that there was any alternative. Tea or coffee both required substantial amounts of capital and time to produce profits and Beadoc had neither time nor enough money. The heavy debts Beadoc incurred are evidence that the scheme was undercapitalized from the start. Leadership was one of Beadoc's weakest points. The constant internal friction it provoked at the very least distracted attention from agriculture. The real reason for Beadoc's failure, however, lay not in its crops or its

leadership, but in the number of its members. There were simply far more Europeans on the land than it could support. The economics of European plantation agriculture in Kenya meant that having ten white men supervise the work which one white man could have supervised was both inefficient and costly in the extreme. Beadoc's constitution as a co-operative society complicated the problem. The members, having invested their £500, would then have to be fed, housed, and employed at a European standard of living. Doing this meant ever greater expansion of activities, which in turn meant debts, as £500 was insufficient to establish a white man on the land in Kenya. Debts to the bank entailed either bringing in more members to provide more capital, or more development to pay off the debts; in short, it was an endless circle leading inevitably to failure.

What Beadoc illustrated was that Kenya was fundamentally a 'big man's' country. Ever since large-scale white settlement had begun in the Colony, it had been characterized by the dominance of a few 'big men', individuals with large capital resources undertaking the development of large areas of land and living a pseudo-aristocratic life on their broad acres. Indeed, from its first days, Kenya attracted real aristocrats, the Lords Delamere, Cranworth, and Hindlip, who set much of white Kenya's social tone. From its first days, however, white Kenya, even the 'big men' themselves, disliked this fact. These were white settlers who were determined to make Kenya into another 'white man's country' on South African, if not Australian, lines, and there was an uneasy awareness that this would be difficult to do with pseudo- or even real aristocrats. The 'small man', or the individual farmer with limited capital on small acreage would provide a denser white farming population and a more solid foundation

¹⁶ *EAS*, 7 Oct 1922, forms one of the few mentions of Beadoc's failure in the local press; Huxley, *White Man's Country*, II, p 57; PRO CO533/351, no x. 8429, Crown Agents to Colonial Office, 23 Dec 1926.

for white self-government.¹⁷ Entirely by accident, Beadoc was an attempt to place 'small men', with only £500 of capital, on a comparatively small area of about

350 acres per member of Beadoc; and it failed totally. The limited capital and small area turned out to be a recipe for financial disaster. Much as they might wish otherwise, Kenya was going to be a 'big' white man's country, which would ultimately prevent it from being any kind of white man's country.

¹⁷ Vide M P K Sorrenson, *Origins of European Land Settlement in Kenya*, Nairobi, 1968, for a fuller discussion of these themes in Kenya prior to the First World War.

Notes and Comments

CONFERENCES

The Society will be holding its joint one-day Winter Conference in association with the Historical Geography Research Group on Saturday 5 December 1992, at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC2. The title will be 'Rural Trade and Industry' (not the title announced in the last issue of the *Review*). A booking form is included with this issue of the journal and further copies can be obtained from Dr Peter Dewey, Department of History, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, Egham Hill, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX.

The 1993 Spring Conference will be at Gregynog Hall, near Welshpool, from Monday 5 to Wednesday 7 April. A booking form and details of the programme will be included with the next issue of the journal.

PROFESSOR M W BARLEY (1909-91)

Maurice Willmore Barley, who died in June 1991, pioneered the study of rural housing in England. Brought up in Lincoln, he read History at Reading University. In 1935 he was appointed assistant lecturer in History at Hull University, and after spending the war in the Ministry of Information he moved to Nottingham University in 1946 as organizing tutor for Adult Education. In 1962 he was appointed lecturer in Archaeology, and in 1971 he was promoted to a personal chair. He retired in 1974.

In 1955 Maurice Barley published a paper in the *Economic History Review* outlining the use of probate inventories in studying rural housing in the early modern period. This led directly to two commissions; one from Routledge for a book on the subject, and one from H P R Finberg for a substantial chapter to be included in the planned volume of the *Cambridge Agrarian History of England and Wales*, covering the period 1500-1640. The book, *The English Farmhouse and Cottage*, was published in 1961. With the publication of the *Agrarian History* in 1967, Maurice Barley estab-

lished himself as the pioneer authority in the study and interpretation of specific buildings in the context of surviving documentary sources, particularly probate inventories. He went on to write a further substantial chapter for Volume V of the *Agrarian History*, covering 1640-1750, and in 1990 his chapters were reprinted in *The Buildings of the Countryside 1500-1750*. Maurice recalled of these chapters that 'I was trying to write social history rather than to convey the results of archaeological work'.

A NATIONAL SURVEY OF FARMSTEADS

The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) will shortly commence a three-year project on the buildings of historic farmsteads. The project is intended to raise awareness of the historical significance of farm buildings, and to enhance understanding of this seriously threatened class of monument. The Royal Commission will seek to establish a methodology for the recording of surviving buildings with an emphasis on recovering information related to the development of farming systems. It is proposed that widely differing areas of the country should be selected for detailed fieldwork, and that the results of the survey should be made available both through the National Monuments Record (NMR), RCHME's public archive, and through publication.

During the course of its survey, RCHME will seek to encourage other individuals and organizations to record farmsteads and, wherever possible, to deposit their records in NMR. As an initial stage in this process, RCHME would like to establish contact with individuals and organizations who already undertake such recording, in order to compile a register of existing material. Anyone who is involved in making records of farmsteads and who wishes to have further details of the programme is invited to contact Colum Giles or Janet Atterbury at RCHME, Shelley House, Acomb Road, York, YO2 4HB (Tel. 0904 784411; Fax 0904 795348).