

Book Reviews

H. C. DARBY and I. B. TERRETT (eds.), *The Domesday Geography of Midland England*. Cambridge University Press, 1954. xvi + 482 pp. 55s.

The second volume of *The Domesday Geography of England* covers a group of nine midland counties (Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, and Northamptonshire), which in 1086 were already very different from each other in physical features, social structure, and historical development. The uniformity of procedure of the Domesday commissioners tended to disguise regional peculiarities, but the comparative methods used by Professor Darby and his team of geographers bring out these contrasts as far as it is possible. Since this work must be primarily one of reference, the editor has rightly caused the author of each county chapter to repeat the analysis of the data under the various headings dictated by the form of the return: hidage assessment, plough-teams, population, woodland, meadow, and so on.

The most interesting general conclusions, as the editor shows in his final chapter, concern the way in which population and wealth are distributed in the region. The south-eastern portion stands out as the most populous and productive (judged mainly by the evidence of plough-team density). In particular the Vale of Evesham and the Avon valley below Warwick appear even in 1086 to have been exceptionally prosperous areas. But it is interesting to note too that while there is often a correlation between high population and high plough-team density, this is not invariable. East and central Herefordshire, with a lower population density than central Leicestershire, appear to have had a higher plough-team density. This should warn us against assuming that a high population density in an area indicates general prosperity. In such areas there might be many peasant families without plough-teams or with only very small shares in teams.

A consideration of this problem suggests that more might have been said, under the heading 'Prosperity and Population', about economic conditions in the different counties. We cannot know from Domesday Book what was the average equipment, in plough-teams, of the different classes of peasants. But we can calculate the ratio, on a village or manor basis, between peasants and plough-teams, disregarding classes. Since we do know what were the numbers in each village of sokemen, villeins, and bordars, it could be seen how the ratio of peasants to ploughs varied according to variations in village social structure. Another factor which should be taken into account when considering the relation between population and plough-team density is the proportion between the number of demesne and peasant plough-teams. Where there was a higher than average plough-team density and a normal or lower than average population density, this might be explained by the existence of extensive, well-equipped demesnes.

These points raise again the question of the boundary between historical geography and social and economic history. This is probably a question that will never be solved, except temporarily, and for special purposes. We must, however, continue to discuss it. In the work under review, the scope of the geographer seems to have been defined too widely in some respects and not widely enough in others. The discussion of taxation assessments, that is, of 'hidage', is a traditional and highly respectable element in Domesday studies, much pursued by legal and constitutional historians. In view of the admitted artificiality of Domesday hidage, at any rate in relation to agrarian reality, it seems that elaborations on this theme could be considerably shortened in a geographical survey. Similarly, the discussion of 'ploughlands' as distinct from 'plough-teams' could well be less elaborate than, for instance, in the Leicestershire chapter, for the editor himself

tells us that "we cannot use (these figures) in any attempt at reconstructing the economic geography of the Domesday Midlands." Are not the problems of the social distribution of plough-team wealth, as posed above, more relevant to the task of the geographer than the minutiae of the incidence of taxation?

Any reader of this book who has an interest in Domesday problems is bound to have his own views as to what could have been more fully treated. Perhaps the waste villages of Staffordshire could have been analysed with Mr T. A. M. Bishop's treatment of the Yorkshire waste villages in mind. Perhaps the important discussion of the Droitwich salt industry and its ramifications would have benefited from attention to Mr Houghton's work on the midland salt ways. One has the impression that the contributors have had to conform to rather a rigid framework, and that this has prevented them from deviating along paths that might have been irrelevant, but might also have been fruitful.

However, whatever has been left out, there is a good deal in. The production of the book is magnificent. The 159 maps are finely done. There are useful lists and tables summarizing the Domesday data at the end of the book. And each chapter provides very important lists of village entries illustrating various points. To find these for oneself in the mass of Domesday data is no simple task. These things will make the book an indispensable handbook, not only for the Domesday scholar, but for all English local and regional historians.

R. H. HILTON

W. G. HOSKINS and R. A. MCKINLEY (eds.),
The Victoria History of the County of Leicester, Vol. II. Geoffrey Cumberlege, O.U.P.
270 pp. 63s.

Leicestershire is one of the first beneficiaries from the *V. C. H.*'s new emphasis on agrarian history, and in all respects the volume is of more than local interest. The quality of the 125 pages here devoted to agrarian history will be found to rest on three other gifts of Fortune: the first, the arrival of a stranger from Devonshire who has repaid his adopted

county manifold in model papers, and now with the general editorship of this volume. The second happy chance is a long tradition of writing of high quality, from Burton's *Description* (1622), through Nichols's *History* (1795-1815) to the papers which for a century the *Transactions* of the Archaeological Society have housed; rarely can scholars have had the satisfaction of seeing their small and various contributions brought to a synthesis so soon. County volumes of this quality do not grow on trees, and there are counties—alas—where even the appointment of Dr Hoskins would not produce a *V. C. H.* in a decade: where few have sown, reaping is a slow business. The third piece of good fortune is that in the authors of the two agrarian sections the *V. C. H.* was able to profit by skills already sharpened in other service. Dr Hilton had already studied many aspects of local medieval agriculture, and from this firm ground could the more easily pass to colonizing some of the untilled wastes which still abound. Dr Joan Thirsk had not previously written specifically of this county, but her intimacy with seventeenth-century sources put her in a unique position for bringing together the course of agrarian change between 1540 and 1760 into a continuous, reasoned, and balanced narrative. For the first time one can see these two centuries as a whole: too often the textbooks have had to slide hastily—for want of local monographs—from the agrarian troubles of 1607 to the beginning of parliamentary enclosure. Historians in other counties will be grateful.

The two authors' achievements both in original work and synthesis enable them to be frank about what still remains. To take one example, Dr Thirsk's figures of the 2,200 acres added to an arable acreage of 8,000 in forty parishes between 1793 and 1801 will whet appetites for a good local, quantitative, study of a ploughing-up campaign which must surely have left its mark in estate records if it were on this scale. It is also clear—reading between the lines—that local enclosure awards, tithe awards, and the working papers of the enclosure commissions are still unexhausted.

Leicestershire's agrarian history derives much of its interest from the terrain. Set, as one fifteenth-century writer put it, *in umbilico regni*, it has displayed variety and pliability. The existence of Charnwood and Leicester Forests kept it from a tame plough-going uniformity in the earlier Middle Ages, while its variety of uses made it the storm centre of agrarian politics in 1517, 1548, and 1607. It produced corn or grass with almost equal ease: "a great delight and profit either way," as Burton put it; a fickle jade who followed either of two masters at the jingle of a coin. The hunger for wool (1450-1550) extended its pastures, while the hunger for cattle in the next century preserved them even against renewed competition from a corn-hunger deriving from a rising and an urbanizing population. Thus here, even in the late seventeenth century when the lords were all but converted to the idea of general enclosure, the war against the progress of the hedged field flared up again in the Moore-Lee pamphlets. The fickle balance between corn and grass shows not only in the immunity of some open fields until parliamentary enclosure (detailed in App. 1), but also in the long-drawn-out retreat of the open fields (detailed parish by parish in App. 11). A fine, full-page plate (p. 159) shows the village of Kilby from the air: the houses and crofts of husbandmen who experienced the fortunes sketched in Dr Hilton's narrative; the plough-marks of their furlongs and strips in the fields beyond; and, set over their corrugations, the diverse shape of hedges created piecemeal by the enclosures from 1609 to 1771.

Other counties may regard this volume properly as a model. With an eye on the future, a few minor comments may be raised unquerulously. Dr Thirsk sees the geographical distribution of "early" and "late" enclosure as an "untidy pattern." She passes to students of soil and climate the task of detecting a neater logic than the accidents of ownership. Geographical determinism may be a good tool by which to separate chalk from cheese in Wiltshire, but it seems doubtful whether a county of more homogeneity such as Leices-

tershire would respond to a more particular examination. And as to climate, did not the Leicester rain fall equally on the just and the unjust landlord? the only difference, the song tells us, was that the unjust had the just's umbrella. Again, there are dangers that a reader will take too literally some of the figures and percentages in that part of Dr Thirsk's study which rests on Dr Hoskins's work in inventories and the 1524 tax-lists. These are samples, as the original examination made plain. But it is a far step from a sample to (p. 212) a statement that in 1588 peas took 45.9 per cent of the sown area.

It is also a pity that the unified editorship did not permit a brief note in the Religious Houses section (pp. 1-54) indicating to whom the principal possessions passed at the Dissolution, a matter highly relevant to agrarian history. Some overall figures (p. 210) suggest that Mr McKinley has in fact extracted the data for which we must now wait until the distant village-history volumes. Readers of this volume who have not possession of Vol. 1 (1907) are warned that a good atlas will be necessary to follow the earlier part of Dr Hilton's argument, but his Domesday pages may now be aligned with the maps in Mr Holly's chapter of the *Domesday Geography*, Vol. 11 (1954).

Two final matters, on which one would like to examine the authors viva voce, would make good examination questions anywhere. Dr Hilton speaks of medieval England as "under-populated" without a gloss on this relative term; and Dr Thirsk sums up the latter-day agrarian history of the county thus: "Since 1860 it has reproduced in brighter tones the picture of English agriculture as a whole." Does local variation from a national story end in 1860?

M. W. BERESFORD

OLIVE COOK and EDWIN SMITH, *English Cottages and Farmhouses*. Thames & Hudson, 1954. 53 pp. of text and 273 photographs. 42s.

One picks up a new book on cottages and farmhouses with some misgiving, especially

when it is lavishly illustrated, but for once the serious reader is not disappointed. Edwin Smith's photographs are superb and are brilliantly reproduced in photogravure, showing among other things the texture of the building materials in a way that makes them as valuable as the text. There is no cheating over the subject: no manor houses and country houses creep in to enhance the pictorial quality of the book. We are given genuine farmhouses, barns and sheds, granaries and cow-stalls—even a remarkable pig-sty from Coln St Aldwyn with a Roman colonnade taken from the remains of a nearby Roman villa—and a number of farmhouse interiors. There are also cottages of all dates and types, again with some delightful interiors. The photographs are not only beautiful but are valuable as records of English rural habitations, and English interior arrangements, in the mid-twentieth century. One can imagine some of these interiors, especially, being seized upon a hundred years hence to illustrate the domestic history of our time.

Miss Olive Cook contributes a careful introduction to the book, with particular emphasis on the building materials used in this vernacular architecture, and some scattered remarks on structure and plan. She rightly draws attention (p. 12) to the general wave of rebuilding among all classes but the poorest, beginning about 1570 and lasting until the outbreak of the Civil War. In the four most northerly counties this wave of rebuilding appears to have been delayed until the last generation of the seventeenth century. But she is in error when she attributes this remarkable revolution in English housing to a doubling of the population since 1500: there is not the slightest evidence for this belief. The true causes are much more interesting. They were the high level of money-savings among farmers of all degrees, accumulated as a result of two generations of rising prices and relatively fixed costs; and the growth of a desire for privacy of living which by the latter part of Elizabeth I's reign had percolated down to the yeomen and by the 1630's to all but the labouring class.

It is hardly true to suggest (p. 13) that the "plans of yeomen farmers' houses . . . defy classification." There are indeed many regional variations of plan, and few regions have yet been studied intensively from this standpoint; but we shall eventually be able to define, one feels confident, certain basic plans for these houses in the different regions, and perhaps to some extent for cottages also, though here there is naturally less scope for variety. We shall also discover how these plans evolved in subsequent generations down to the present day. The study of peasant building in England has hardly begun, though Miss Cook would have found the work of James Walton in Yorkshire, of M. W. Barley in the East Midlands, and of Sir Cyril Fox and Lord Raglan in Monmouthshire, very much to her purpose. As it is, she tells us very little about farmhouse plans, and no plans are drawn in the text.

One must be careful, too, to define the cottage type unequivocally. The beautiful example of a medieval "cottage" at Didbrook, Glos. (plate 5) was undoubtedly the house of a peasant-farmer originally, and a substantial peasant at that. Nor is it permissible to call the elaborate timbered fifteenth-century houses at Lavenham and Hildersham (plates 9 and 10) "cottages," as they are called in the introductory notes. This criticism applies to a number of other plates (e.g. nos. 1, 15, 16, 17, 21, 28, 38, and possibly one or two others). These houses may well be cottages today, but in origin they were unquestionably the houses of yeomen and husbandmen, and even perhaps of wealthy clothiers at Lavenham. It is, indeed, doubtful whether a genuine cottage (i.e. the house of a labouring family) survives in this country from a date anterior to about 1660. One does not know of a single certain example of this type, though it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that a few—but only a very few—may yet be discovered by patient fieldwork. The reason for this is simple. The true cottages were built by the labourers' landlords, who were not disposed to spend more money than was absolutely necessary upon their housing. There were plenty of

jerry-builders in medieval England and later (as Mr Salzman has shown in his recent book *Building in England*) and they met the landlords' requirements for economy. Various records tell us that there was a great deal of cottage-building in Elizabethan England, and if all this has disappeared it is because it lasted at the most three or four or five generations and was being largely replaced in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, from which time we find considerable numbers of true cottages standing in our villages.

Miss Cook's notes upon the photographs, these criticisms apart, are excellently done, full of sensibility for the buildings and their varied settings, whether in the Somerset marshes or among the Lakeland fells, or anywhere between; and they are precisely informative about building materials (her strong point) and constructional details. A black and white geological map of England and Wales is provided to guide the reader through unfamiliar territory. This is not entirely easy to read, but one can see that the printing problem was a difficult one. Another map shows the location of all the photographs in the book. One notices with personal regret that a great block of central England, comprising Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire, Leicestershire, Rutland, and Northamptonshire, is not represented by a single photograph, and the large county of Lincolnshire by only one. Yet this region of England has a number of distinct types of farmhouse and cottage building, of which one need only cite the eighteenth-century framework-knitters' cottages with their long windows of tiny panes in the upper floors. But the subject of farmhouses and cottages is a vast one. With all the destruction that has taken place, England is still rich in this kind of agricultural record. The next step is surely a series of regional surveys by this admirable and knowledgeable partnership (assisted by some local advice here and there) getting down to closer detail, while still covering an area that is a unity in itself and is sufficiently large to encourage sales.

If one has been critical of certain aspects of

this book, it is because it makes a real contribution to our understanding of vernacular building in England and is therefore worthy of close attention. Readers of the AGRICULTURAL HISTORY REVIEW should not fail to study it, even if they cannot persuade a friend to make them a present of the book, for it may well stimulate them to do fieldwork in their own regions. Though so much is left to us, from every century since the fifteenth, much perishes every year or is altered beyond recognition as farmers become more opulent, and with this destruction and change some unique detail of farming history may well be lost for ever. If this book stimulates only fifty readers to go and do likewise (though Edwin Smith's photographs are admittedly discouraging by their very excellence) one would be delighted. Half a dozen of us cannot do much in so rich and difficult a field.

W. G. HOSKINS

MAURICE BERESFORD, *The Lost Villages of England*. Lutterworth Press, 1954. 446 pp. 45s.

Until this book appeared, the literature on deserted villages was limited to a few essays on single counties, all too localized in their scope to receive much publicity. Yet the subject offers the historian the golden opportunity of sharing with others his delight in fieldwork and fresh discovery. It is a pleasure, therefore, to welcome a book which is designed to bring the subject to the attention of a wider public. Mr Beresford has perceived the popular appeal of his subject, and has shaped his book to meet the needs of the general reader. He takes nothing for granted: the layout of the open-field village, for example, is explained simply and clearly. Nor does he assume at the outset that the subject will be of absorbing interest to his readers. To draw them on, he employs the devices of the novelist, whetting the appetite in the early chapters, and postponing satisfaction by a non-chronological treatment of his story for some 170 pages. Then, having enticed his readers into the fields to identify old, and perhaps even discover new, sites, he coaxes them

on still further into the libraries and record offices to seek out the documents that will supplement the evidence on the ground. A description of the principal sources of documentary information follows. Lay subsidy rolls, he says, are easily read, and we might have been persuaded had he chosen a less daunting example than the illustration on page 286. Altogether, this is a fascinating book, excellently illustrated, and written in a lively and colourful way. The personal descriptions of visits to deserted sites are particularly successful in conveying to the reader the author's sense of adventure in the field. Yet the student of the subject may justly feel aggrieved that his needs should have been sacrificed to the tastes of the general reader. The non-chronological treatment is exasperating if one wants to return to the book for reference. Even the author must have had doubts about an arrangement which constantly obliged him to warn the reader of matters discussed earlier or postponed till later in the book. And inevitably the book is full of repetition. John Hales's statement in the *Discourse of the Commonweal* that the worst enclosures occurred before the beginning of the reign of Henry VII is printed four times, twice briefly on pages 148 and 241 (where the quotations are inaccurate), and twice in a longer form on pages 120 and 149. The over-generous treatment accorded to certain topics, moreover, involves considerable sacrifice in the detail necessary to make this book a complete survey of present knowledge on deserted villages. Lists of known sites are printed county by county in an appendix. But the lists for Leicestershire, Yorkshire, and Warwickshire, dealt with by Dr Hoskins and Mr Beresford elsewhere, are represented by samples only. This means that the reader has to refer to other books and periodicals for the three lists which are the most complete and reliable of all.

To those who are already familiar with some of the sites of deserted villages, much the most interesting part of Mr Beresford's book is that in which he analyses the causes of their disappearance. The compass of the book,

it should be pointed out, is narrower than the title would suggest. The author has no more than a paragraph about villages swallowed up by the sea or consumed by fire. His main concern is with the villages which disappeared in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, and those mainly in the Inner Midlands, whence the loudest complaints of enclosure were heard in the Tudor period. Of the many entangled causes of depopulation, he makes a thoroughly balanced and fair appraisal. Depopulation did not happen overnight. It was usually a long drawn-out process to which it is impossible to assign one single cause. But most cases which Mr Beresford examines in detail had two common factors. The villages were already small, and the freeholders were few. The plagues of the fourteenth century weakened them further, but the immediate and most decisive cause of their decay was the superior profits of wool over corn. This was the hard economic fact, which held true until towards the end of the sixteenth century, and which dictated the policy of those ruthless manorial lords who enclosed their land for sheep. Not every farmer everywhere was lured by the golden fleece to change his husbandry. But in the counties of the Inner Midlands, on the claylands that were equally suited to corn and grass, the temptations were strongest. Here it was that the enclosure movement achieved the greatest destruction of villages.

There remains one further cause of depopulation about which there is little certain evidence, though much speculation. How many villages disappeared as a result of a retreat of settlement from marginal land taken into cultivation during the years of high farming in the thirteenth century? Discussion of this question and also of regional differences in land use is the weakest part of the book. This is not entirely Mr Beresford's fault. There are so few studies of regional farming to equip us with even the rudimentary information about land use and social structure before the eighteenth century that no one is in a position to argue effectively. Yet Mr Beresford is incautious. On what evidence, for example, does he base his state-

ment that in the marginal counties of the west and south (referring apparently to the Worcestershire to Somerset area) "the area under corn was initially small, but it does not seem to have contracted in the period 1450-1550" (p. 247). Lincolnshire is the victim of some broad and unhappy generalizations. Arthur Young's description of "the rich grazing lands . . . the glory of Lincolnshire" referred to the fenlands of Holland, not the convertible claylands of Lindsey and Kesteven. They are inappropriate as an example of land that was adaptable to both corn and grass. They were unfit for anything but pasture until after the drainage operations of the eighteenth century.

The same fenlands, cited on page 245 as an example of convertible land, are swept into a generalization on page 246, to the effect that the fen was so excellent for corn in the sixteenth century that there was no economic incentive to convert it to pasture. It is true that the fenland of Lincolnshire escaped the distress of enclosure, but this was not because the land was first-class arable, but because it was already mostly in grass. The villages avoided depopulation because the sites suitable for habitation in the fen were limited, and the villages though few were large. The parishes also were extensive, and it was not unusual to have as many as six manors in one parish. It would have been difficult to destroy a community of some seventy to a hundred families, in which no one manorial lord held sway, and where also the number of freeholders was high.

It is a mistake to attribute the depopulations at the southern end of the Lincolnshire wolds to the infertility of the soil (p. 202). Over most of the district the soil is a good loam or clay. Moreover, until the Parliamentary enclosures of the nineteenth century, most of the villages had valuable common rights in East, West, and Wildmore Fens. It was evidently attractive country in the early days of settlement, for it was among the most densely settled in all Lincolnshire by the time of Domesday, and it continued so in the sixteenth century. The depopulations which oc-

curred here seem to have been the result of over-population rather than under-population. There were too many villages for the amount of land.

Finally, some minor errors may be mentioned for correction in another edition. Sennington in Gloucestershire (p. 415) is a misnomer for Sevenhampton. Howardshoe wapentake is an old and unfamiliar form for Haverstoe wapentake in Lincolnshire (p. 171). The 583 cases of depopulation heard in the Exchequer are given a covering date of 1518-68 on p. 114, 1517-65 on p. 218, and 1518-65 on p. 115. The reader would like to know where Mr Beresford published the modern Ordnance map of Wotton Underwood, Bucks. (p. 333), and where, or if, all the excavations listed on p. 415 were reported in print.

JOAN THIRSK

C. S. and C. S. ORWIN, *The Open Fields*.

Second edition. Oxford University Press, 1954. xiv + 190 pp. 30s.

In preparing a new edition of this well-known work for press, the authors have made a laudable effort to secure economy of production and thus to keep the price down. One way of doing this would have been to omit Part I, the general discussion of open-field agriculture and its history, which to many critics has always appeared the weakest part of the book, and to leave Part II intact as a monograph on the interesting survival of open fields at Laxton. But this course has not commended itself to Dr and Mrs Orwin. Instead they have chosen to omit the Laxton Terrier, and to retain Part I with a certain amount of revision, taking account—but hardly sufficient account—of research carried out by other scholars since 1938.

A discussion of some of the points arising from the revision will be found elsewhere in this issue. Here it is only necessary to mention that the chapter on the former extent of the open fields is no longer illustrated by an inaccurate map and its text has been considerably modified. Even so, it is ambiguous to say that farming in open fields was practised "in

various parts" of Devon "where the topography permitted" (p. 65), for this obscures the fact that traces of such agriculture are found on steep hillsides and on the tops of downs, as well as on comparatively level sites.

The date of the report cited on p. 169 is surely 1952, not 1852. An article in *Antiquity* is quoted with the wrong date on p. 50 and with the correct one on p. 65. Dr J. D. Chambers is not a professor (pp. v, ix), and Miss Audrey Beecham may be a little surprised to find her name spelt Beauchamp (p. v).

H. P. R. FINBERG

REX WAILES, *The English Windmill*, with sixty-four drawings by Vincent Lines. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 246 pp. + 32 plates. 35s. Life in rural England would have been the duller if there had been no miller to bear the brunt of country humour. To the old question, "What is the most honest thing in the world?" the answer "A miller's shirt, for it clasps a thief by the throat daily" immediately establishes the miller's position in society. Mr Rex Wailes has much to say about millers good and bad. One of his most delightful stories is from the late sixteenth century; it relates how Long Meg of Westminster plagued "the sawcie Miller of Epping." With little provocation she put the miller in a sack and left him hanging in mid-air on the sack lift, "where the poore miller cried out for helpe, and if his wife had not been coming, himselfe had been almost kill'd and the Mill for want of corne set on fire." However much millers deserved their reputation, rustic humour, if humour it can be called, saw to it that they paid dearly for their sins.

Today few windmills (or water-mills for that matter) remain in use. It is only a few years since the landscape of at least the eastern part of England presented a very different sight from that which it presents today. Mr Wailes illustrates this vividly with a passage from Cobbett. "The windmills on the hills in the vicinage are so numerous that I counted, whilst standing in one place, no less than seventeen. They are all painted or washed white, the sails are black; it was a fair morn-

ing, the wind was brisk, and their twirling altogether added greatly to the beauty of the scene . . ." Even in more recent times, at any rate up to the early part of this century, the windmill was a common feature of the landscape, and it is a matter for universal regret that something which has for many centuries been a part of the English scene is in danger of disappearing completely.

Mr Wailes has produced an excellent book which, without indulging in over-much nostalgia, blends his unique knowledge of the mechanism of mills with lucid powers of description. In fact the main strength of the book lies in its very clear exposition of the construction and working of mills. With the aid of Mr Vincent Lines's excellent drawings the reader is able to gain a very clear impression of mills and their operation. The book sets out to provide something both for the expert and the merely interested. It has done this without either becoming too technical or writing down, and the result is very satisfying. Its weakness is perhaps its lack of historical background prior to about 1800. Mr Wailes has relied in the main on the wealth of material, both documentary and spoken, with which millwrights and others have provided him. It would have given a more balanced picture if there had been more historical detail and a little more definite attempt to relate the rise and fall of the windmill to the economic background.

There is one other minor point of criticism, and that is that the publishers might have fitted Mr Lines's excellent drawings more comfortably into the format; spreading in a sprawling fashion, as many of them do, over the edges of the type area, they give a clumsy appearance in a book which is otherwise very pleasingly produced. But these are small points in a book which is likely to remain a standard work of reference.

Mr Wailes makes a right and proper plea for the collection of more material about mills before it is too late. He is anxious, too, that sufficient examples of the various types shall be preserved. It is a pity that other things of utility which are passing from the twentieth-

century scene cannot in like manner find their chroniclers; one might mention the traction engine or the farm horse. But to Mr Wailes the windmill is clearly more than a thing of utility, it is also a thing of beauty. More is the pity that economic circumstances will not permit it to be a joy for ever.

J. W. Y. HIGGS

ADAM COLLIER, *The Crofting Problem*.
Cambridge University Press, 1954. 190 pp.
25s.

Given an area nearly half the land area of Scotland, containing one-twentieth of its inhabitants and one in ten of its arable acres with practically no coal or other workable mineral, and few industries, all sorts of problems are bound to arise. Add to that a romantic history, and the legacy of bitter remembrance of brutal clearances from the glens, and you have the Highland problem, which is seldom discussed without emotion and usually with passion. And although there are only seven constituencies in the Highlands and Islands, politicians help to distort the facts and darken counsel. Adam Collier's book is to be welcomed because, although the Highlands and Islands cast their spell over him, as over other city-bred lads, he made a serious effort to produce a comprehensive study before death cut him off untimely leaving an uncompleted manuscript, which has now been prepared for publication by Professor Cairncross.

The crofter problem is the toughest problem of the Highlands, and more particularly of the Islands. The recent report of the Crofting Commission (Cmd. 9091) declares that the crofting system, as now organized, "is fighting a losing battle against the social and economic forces of the day." Collier set out to explain how the crofting system came about, the efforts to keep it going by statutory and other means, and how it was faring before the last war when he made his survey. Professor Cairncross has edited and annotated Collier's work to take account of more recent changes. Collier found that on "many fundamental points it is difficult to speak with

any pretension to actual knowledge". There is no register of crofters, and we have no reliable means of measuring their output. We have only a general idea of what other sources of income are open to them, or what part these sources play in the standard of living. There are plenty of opinions, assertions, and contradictions, but a lack of reliable data. What there are Collier sifted and analysed objectively and where he had to rely on estimates, he tested them as far as that could be done. He gave enough of the history, geography, and topography of the area to show how the problems of administration and communication condition the social and economic life of the people. His chapter on natural limitations brings out the soil and climatic conditions which handicap cultivation. He makes a careful study of the depopulation of the area and relates it to the general depopulation of rural districts, and he discusses the standard of living of the crofter in comparison with that of the industrial worker. He concludes with a chapter in which he discusses what might be done to stem the rot. This is the weakest chapter of the book, for he was not equipped to evaluate projects of land use and agricultural development. But there he is in line with most advocates of Highland development. The value of his book is that it brings together the facts, as far as they can be ascertained, submits them to analysis, and sets them in relation to the general problems of the area; and it does so without any effort, or distortion, to make a case. It sets a new and much needed standard for the endless discussions of the Highlands and Islands.

J. F. DUNCAN

J. WENTWORTH DAY, *A History of the Fens*.
Harrap, 1954. 272 pp. 15s.

If one accepts Carlyle's definition of history as the biography of great men, and Mr Wentworth Day's implied inclusion of bibulous squires and fenland "sportsmen" in this class, then the author of this book may perhaps be allowed its title, *A History of the Fens*.

The genesis of this "history" was a sugges-

tion made to Mr Day at a shooting party at which "ambassadors and cabinet ministers" were among the guests, that he should write of the Fen as it was "in our great-granddad's time." He has, he says, tried to make it human, which intention has led him to avoid "tedious excursions into geology, botany, entomology, prehistory, ecclesiastical history, and drainage." (What, it may be asked, can then remain of fenland history?) True to his word, Mr Day dismisses prehistory in a few ingenuous paragraphs: the ancient Britons were the slaves who dug the Roman Banks, and the ancestors of some old Fen character "like enough came over with the raiding Jutes when the Vikings sailed . . . their galleys up the slow Fenland rivers." He then skips forward from several pages on Guthlac to a brief account of Vermuyden (whom he praises for draining some thousands of acres, while he damns the bureaucrats of the Second World War for draining a few hundreds). There is little or nothing here of the work of the Fenland Research Committee, of Miller on Ely or Page on Crowland or Thirsk on the sixteenth-century fen; and the name of Darby does not even appear in the bibliography.

Thereafter the quiddities of fenland lore—some of them new and many of them entertaining—are sandwiched between reminiscences of lethal bird-lovers. Mr Day quotes proudly the achievement of a friend who killed 68 green plover with three shots.

The agricultural history is largely contained in the four pages of the chapter on "Fen Farming of Old."

This book, Mr Day says in his preface, does not pretend to be a complete history of the fens. That seems a fair enough assessment of it.

R. TROW-SMITH

ARTHUR E. KIRKBY, *Humberstone . . . the Story of a Village*. A. E. Kirkby, 1953. 196 pp. 17s. 6d.

This village history is compiled from printed, manuscript, and oral sources by a geography teacher living in Humberstone, Lincolnshire. The author attributes his interest in local history to the youthful fascination which he felt for secret passages, monkish ghosts, and haunted churchyards. Fortunately, the book is made of more substantial stuff. It contains a good description of the village as it is today, an account of its geographical and geological situation, the history of the manor, the fields, the church, abbey, and school, and some notable families. But an opportunity has been missed of investigating the changes in the coastline in this parish. The author makes a brief reference to the marshland reclaimed in recent years, but fails to realize that this is part of a much older story that could be traced among the documents of the Public Record Office.

JOAN THIRSK