

Book Reviews

L. F. SALZMAN (ed.), *Ministers' Accounts of the Manor of Petworth, 1347-53*. Sussex Record Society, Barbican House, Lewes, 1955. xxxiv+100 pp.

The annual accounts presented by reeves and bailiffs of manors are perhaps the most valuable source for the history of English rural economy during the period for which they are extant: that is, from the thirteenth century to the sixteenth. They supply particulars of the demesne husbandry with a fullness unsurpassed by any documents of the early 'modern' period. A beginner unacquainted with the structure of these accounts and the formulae used in accounting would find in the volume under notice an excellent approach to the subject. Five rolls of account for Petworth, translated into English, are printed here with a valuable introduction by the editor. These accounts are of particular interest because they cover the period of the Black Death. Moreover, they deal with a manor in lay hands, not one of those ecclesiastical properties which have so largely engaged the attention of historians. Mr Salzman calculates that the total death roll at Petworth at the height of the plague must have been near 300, an astounding figure, as he justly remarks, for a single manor and parish. How soon were the vacant holdings filled and the lord's receipts brought up to their earlier level? This is a question which cannot be answered from the material before us. A study of other manors suggests that recovery may have been more rapid than we might expect after so heavy a death-rate.

The husbandry of the Petworth demesne, as revealed in these accounts, has several points of interest. No wheat was grown, and very little barley. Some 45 acres carried rye, but 75 per cent of the arable was under oats, mostly "small oats," though a few acres of "large oats" were also grown. Mr Salzman is at a loss to explain this term. The bailiffs' accounts for the earldom of Devon, however, show that the large black oat was already, in

1287, being regularly grown alongside the older and smaller variety, which, in Devon at any rate, seems to have been identical with that known to botanists as *avena nuda*.

H. P. R. FINBERG

AXEL STEENBERG, *In Crackling Flames*. Arbog for Jysk Arkæologisk Selskab, 1955, pp. 65-130 (in Danish with English summary).

The place of 'burning' techniques in primitive agriculture is of interest to the historian, the archaeologist, and the natural scientist. In this paper Dr Steensberg has collected together many examples of burning in connection with cultivation from all parts of the world. He points out that the aims of burning are as numerous as the methods employed. A varied selection of burning techniques and the type of cultivation following them is described, and illustrated by photographs and diagrams; and written accounts of burning techniques as old as the late Iron Age are discussed.

Steensberg's appreciation of the problems presenting themselves to the cultivators, and the way in which they have adapted the burning technique, is well shown in the following passage. "In Esthonia burning was most suitably practised on areas of good loose soil with a high humus content, and where there was not too much grass in the undergrowth. Where it was desired that the trees should shoot up quickly again, care had to be taken not to destroy the roots. Too severe burning would also prevent the growth of grass, and if too large an area was thoroughly burnt off, the trees were prevented from sowing their seed and the wood thereby from regenerating. There was therefore a risk of the area becoming heathland. The same was true if the topsoil was burnt to death."

The theory that grain cultivation arose in the Middle East is proposed, and it is shown how the use of burning techniques could have led to this type of cultivation. The theory

is to some extent supported by the findings of botanists working on the systematics of the cereal grasses.

Steensberg makes no attempt in this paper to trace the origins of these burning techniques beyond the limits of written record; but he points out that this enquiry already has been taken up by archaeologists and botanists.

The paper includes a comprehensive bibliography, and forms a valuable contribution to the study of burning techniques, gathering together as it does a large volume of information in a readable and accessible form.

J. W. FRANKS

Materialy po istorii zemledeliya SSSR.

Akademii nauk SSSR. Sbornik I, 1952, 631 pp. Sbornik II, 1956, 748 pp. 25 rubles 25 kopeks, and 30 rubles 35 kopeks respectively.

These are the first two collections of *Materials on the History of the Agriculture of the USSR*, a series which is intended to form a basis for a great general work covering the history of agriculture in the area which is now the USSR from the earliest times to the present day. This task is being undertaken by the Institute of History with the collaboration of other institutes of the USSR Academy of Sciences. The area to be dealt with, extending from the Baltic to the Pacific, from northern tundra to Central Asian deserts, accommodates a vast range of agricultural activity: semi-nomadic reindeer herding, dairy farming, mechanized grain-growing on an immense scale, cotton-growing, tea planting, and the cultivation of subtropical fruits. The time-scale is equally huge: from some of the earliest known cereals in Turkestan to the introduction of the tung tree in the 1920's.

The first volume, edited by Professor B. D. Grekov, deals with agriculture in the pre-feudal and feudal periods of Russian history, from perhaps 3000 B.C. to the first half of the nineteenth century A.D. For the most part, therefore, this volume has to be based on

archaeological material, since written sources on Russian agriculture only become at all abundant from the second half of the eighteenth century. The volume opens with a survey of the systems of farming which existed, mainly in southern European Russia and in parts of Central Asia, from the advent of agriculture to the first millennium A.D. Certain aspects of this survey are dealt with in more detail by articles on Scythian agriculture, that of the northern Black Sea coast during the existence of the classical Greek colonies, and that of the eastern Slavs in the period down to the fall of Kiev Rus' (about A.D. 1200). A group of articles on farming in Siberia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that is from the period of extensive Russian colonization, rely almost entirely on written sources.

The first volume also deals with sixteenth-seventeenth-century agriculture in Belorussia, Lithuania, and the Ukraine, and the emergence of some increase in the marketing of grain in the eighteenth century. At this time the efforts to overcome Russia's backwardness, developed especially under Peter the Great, involved an increase in the non-agricultural population and so created some further internal demand for grain. At the same time, in some areas, such as parts of Poland and Volhynia, where it was economically advantageous, some grain went for export, though most of it continued to be consumed locally; for instance, well over half the grain obtained by the gentry was consumed in the form of spirits. The opinions on agricultural policy of eighteenth-century thinkers and writers, such as the physiocrat Volynskii, Tatishchev, who supported the gentry's viewpoint, the mercantilist Pososhkov, and others, are also touched on; the revolutionary developments in other European farming, in fact, found some reflection in Russia, where however serfdom meant that innovations in policy took different forms and had different results from those in western Europe. The publication in this volume of documents about a novel threshing machine invented in 1822 shows that, nevertheless,

individual Russians were not behind in inventiveness.

The second volume, edited by Professor P. M. Zhukovskii after Grekov's death, deals mainly with the history of certain crops in the USSR and obviously owes a great deal to the members of the All-Union Institute of Crops (*VIR*). Professor M. M. Yakubtsiner contributes a lengthy article (the equivalent of about 50,000 words) on wheat in various regions of the USSR. An article by V. S. Lekhnovich of similar length (although the editor excluded four chapters and cut the rest) deals with the potato from its first gradual introduction into Russia mainly through the Baltic seaboard, and its intentional development by the authorities in the 1760's, down to the present. Other crops whose history in the USSR is dealt with are barley, flax, clover, tomatoes, cotton, sub-tropical plants, and tea. The question of the origin of crops in East Siberia also receives attention and one article is devoted to the development of viticulture in seventeenth-century Russia due to the demands of the court.

In both volumes there are gaps which will no doubt be at least partially filled by future issues. Thus, in the foreword to Volume I Professor Grekov mentioned that agriculture in the periods of "feudal dismemberment" (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) and of the "formation of the centralized Russian state" (fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), as well as that of the various nationalities of the USSR, needed to be dealt with. In the foreword to Volume II Professor Zhukovskii mentions that articles on such important crops as rye, oats, and beet will appear in the next volume and that more attention will be given to the Soviet period of the history of crops. By disclosing such gaps in our knowledge, however, this series is doing a useful service and will help to focus attention where further research is needed.

In a short review of such varied matter it is not possible to make a detailed criticism, but, in general, the *Materials* so far published are uneven in quality, and are less useful to the

historian than they might be. Neither volume has an index. This is a common fault in Soviet books, but in this case it is particularly regrettable owing to the great variety of subject-matter. Moreover, an index would probably have helped to eliminate some duplication of effort by the authors and have enabled some points of difference to be made explicit. The maps are clear; many of the drawings give real pleasure, but few of them indicate the scale. The photographs also for the most part fail to indicate the scale and are so badly reproduced that they add nothing to one's knowledge, but detract from the appearance of an otherwise well-produced book. The system of reporting pre-revolutionary harvest figures in *poods* per *desyatina* and post-revolutionary figures in *centners* per hectare hinders immediate comparison. These all seem to be technical matters which could quite easily be dealt with. But, in addition, the authors themselves have evidently not been clear whether to supply materials or to write finished essays on their particular subject.

The great wealth and variety of material in these two volumes well illustrate the immensity of the task which Soviet historians have undertaken. It is a promising beginning despite certain faults, but a clearer editorial policy might make future volumes of even greater use and interest.

R. E. F. SMITH

C. S. MARTIN, *Irrigation and Closer Settlement in the Shepparton District, 1836-1906*. Melbourne University Press, 1955. 94 pp. 12s. 6d.

This little study is a posthumous edition of the work of a young research student who was killed in a motor accident in 1946 at the age of twenty-six. The affectionate recollections of his editor and of his university are to be commended. But the book has glaring defects.

Martin was the son of a judge, and the grandson of Swinburne, a prominent nineteenth-century political leader who played an active part in promoting irrigation agriculture in Victoria. He was a history scholar

of Melbourne University, and according to his biographer, a prizewinner in economics *at school*, but he shows no evidence of having studied the subject since. Out of his lack of knowledge of economics, and his desire to do credit to his grandfather, he has produced a book which, while it gives quite an interesting account of the political events associated with the development of irrigation agriculture in Victoria, completely misses the main point. This is that irrigation agriculture in Victoria and elsewhere in Australia, except for very modest projects based on small-scale pumping, is and always has been utterly uneconomic. The large irrigation projects which are now being discussed for Australia are uneconomic to quite a fantastic degree. Irrigation has succeeded in other countries, where the river flows are fed by snow-covered mountain ranges, and where there is a lack of farm land endowed with natural rainfall. In Australia neither of these conditions holds. Australian farmers will not pay water rents that will cover even the maintenance cost, let alone the capital cost of irrigation, for the simple reason that there is plenty of good rainfall land elsewhere. Every irrigation project therefore has had to be continuously sub-

sidized by the taxpayers. This was true even in the nineteenth century, as this book clearly shows.

However, besides seeking to do honour to his grandfather, Martin is concerned with the still more prominent name in Australian history, Deakin. Deakin was mainly responsible for getting irrigation started in Victoria, and every Australian historian treats his actions with unquestioned deference.

The whole study is a sad object-lesson in that destruction of the critical sense which appears to arise from studying economics at school, when a student's mind cannot possibly be mature enough to grasp the reasoning involved, but he nevertheless comes away with a dangerous conviction that he understands economics.

It is however not the author but the Melbourne University Press who are responsible for the statement on the dust cover that this chronic drain of economic resources, which could have been so much better used in the development of other parts of Australia, constitutes "the intelligent use of natural resources."

COLIN CLARK

Letter to the Editor

MR BERESFORD AND MR GOULD

SIR,—Readers might assume from Mr Cooper's letter (IV, p. 121) that the argument of my book rests heavily on Dr Bowden's index of wool prices: they would be surprised to turn to my book and find that only twelve lines (p. 183) are concerned with this index, and that my argument for the profitability of wool at the time of depopulation rests on contemporary statements rather than on modern price-indices whose inadequacies (pp. 177, 183, 184) I bemoaned quite as loudly as Mr Cooper.

Dr Bowden's own thesis (Leeds, 1952) answers some of the questions about the effect of the local cloth industries on the sixteenth-century wool supply which Mr

Cooper poses, and Dr K. J. Allison's recent thesis (Leeds, 1956) will tell him more about wool and animal prices in the region from which the Norwich and Norfolk markets were supplied.

Mr Gould has had to wait some time for my comments on his *Comment* (III, pp. 107-13), but his critique deserves a more constructive context than a further instalment in the "I didn't say what you said I said" vein, and I hope to produce a general survey of the attitude of the State to enclosure during the seventeenth century in which I can touch on Mr Gould's suggestions.

Yours truly,

MAURICE BERESFORD

The University, Leeds.