

Book Reviews

ROBERT TROW-SMITH, *A History of British Livestock Husbandry to 1700*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957. x+286 pp. 32s.

This book is a notable contribution to the agrarian history of England. It brings together all the printed information—few items have escaped the author's notice—and a few unprinted documents, throwing light on English livestock husbandry from Paleolithic times to 1700. Its special value lies in its critical appraisal of past practice by a modern expert, for Mr Trow-Smith is on the editorial staff of the *Farmer and Stockbreeder*. There is evidently ample room for more research on the subject, but at the same time the amount already known about stock-keeping since about 1200 is impressive. Nor, it appears, was the practice of our ancestors always contemptibly inferior to our own. Considering their short commons in winter, the medieval pig and cow had a creditable progeny, while the medieval sheep was positively pampered. On the best-managed estates the flocks were housed in sheds in winter, a system of management which seems to have died out by the sixteenth century, and is only now being re-introduced. For these and other reasons, Mr Trow-Smith passes many sympathetic judgements on the skill and achievements of the stockmen and shepherds of the past. They learnt by example and observation, and, mercifully, did not read the textbooks, which lagged hopelessly behind current practice.

The author is wisely critical of those who attempt to trace back the pedigree of modern breeds of stock into the too remote past, for the scientist has no means as yet of putting any such theories to the test. Even though there is more evidence than usual to support the view that the white-flecked breeds of English cattle owe their high milk yields to imported Dutch stock, there was an indigenous breed with white markings in the Scottish islands from which this pied colouring may equally well be derived. As the author shows, there is plentiful testimony in medi-

eval and later sources that cattle and sheep travelled hundreds of miles from breeding to fattening grounds and thence to the butcher. In consequence, breeds were much inter-mixed. Undoubtedly, there were local herds and flocks with a reputation—a Chancery dispute in the 1530's, for example, refers to a contract for the sale of sheep "of the breed at Croft," in Lincolnshire. But this kind of celebrated local stock had none of the permanent characteristics of the modern pedigree.

Mr Trow-Smith's comprehensive study over a long period enables him to present a clear picture of the gradual change of values placed on different classes of stock and their various edible and marketable products. In the background lurks the problem, with which the author is naturally hardly concerned, of how this affected the Englishman's diet. For whereas Neolithic man fed his family on beef and particularly veal, the Anglo-Saxon built up a large herd of pigs to forage in the woodlands and supply him with pork and bacon, valuing his cattle for their powers of draught, and sheep for their milk and wool. The medieval peasant inherited the same scale of values, added manure but not meat high on the list, and did not kill his sheep and cattle unless they were weakling or too old to serve other purposes efficiently. It was not until the sixteenth century that much attention was devoted to the quality of meat of cattle and sheep. Until then the pig was the only domestic animal bred purely for food.

It is sometimes difficult for the modern historian to remember this list of priorities when interpreting the archaeological and documentary evidence of the past. When the sheep was introduced to Britain in the Bronze Age, its milk and its wool were the prizes. As soon as crop husbandry was established, the main purpose in breeding cattle was not to provide milk but to beget and maintain the plough-team. Hence, Mr Trow-Smith comes to the conclusion that the medieval vaccaries of Rossendale and Macclesfield were not large-

scale dairies but nurseries for young stock, and that the cheeses which appear in the accounts were made chiefly of ewes' milk. It was not until the sixteenth century that the cow was noticeably prized for her milk, and that the cheese and butter of counties like Suffolk became celebrated. Of course, in dating these developments we are to some extent misled by the topographers who first gave them publicity in the sixteenth century. There must have been a long period of slow growth preceding the fully-fledged specialization of the sixteenth century.

As for the pig, Mr Trow-Smith ventures the opinion, probably correctly, that it was numerically more important before 1066 than after that date when the woodland was gradually cleared. By 1500 pigs had probably declined in importance even more than he allows. It is true that the average peasant in Midland counties such as Leicestershire and Lincolnshire had about six pigs in the farm-yard in the Tudor period, but in counties like Lancashire and Yorkshire, and in West Glamorgan too (see F. V. Emery, 'West Glamorgan Farming, circa 1580-1620', *National Library of Wales Journal*, x, no. 1, Summer, 1957, p. 24) they appear to have been far less common. There were one or two at most on the average peasant's holding, while as many as a quarter or a third of peasants leaving wills in Lancashire had none. Evidently one pig was as much as most husbandmen could feed, and was sufficient for a family's needs. The six pigs of the average Leicestershire and Lincolnshire peasant were unusual, doubtless for the reason later given by John Mortimer in *The Whole Art of Husbandry* (1707), namely, that the clay counties like Leicestershire and Northamptonshire and thereabouts grew large quantities of peas and beans which enabled them to feed a singularly large number of pigs. Michael Ryder's recent analysis of animal bones found at the excavation of Kirkstall Abbey showed very few pig bones and led him to wonder whether pork was not something of a luxury in the monastic refectory (see 'Kirkstall Abbey Excavation, Seventh Report, 1956',

Publications of the Thoresby Society). The answer may be that the only pigs marketed in quantity came from the Midlands and did not reach the Kirkstall butchers.

Other problems concerning the use of the horse in the plough-team, the use of goats in Domesday times, and their almost complete disappearance by 1500, cannot be discussed here. Suffice it to say that Mr Trow-Smith attempts to say something of value on every aspect of management of cattle, sheep, horses, and pigs. Marketing is not his concern, though his book may well provoke others to investigate it.

There are one or two slips in text and footnotes. Mr Emmison appears as Emminson (p. 207), Driffield as Duffield (p. 241), footnote 1 on page 201 is wrongly attributed, footnote 2 on page 232 is embarrassed with two references in the text. Errors have crept into the transcription of Thorold Rogers's table of sheep densities in the mid-fourteenth century (p. 141). They occur in the number of sacks of wool contributed by each county, but fortunately do not invalidate the arguments constructed round the table. The number of sacks for Cambridge should be 543, not 774, Rutland 112, not 110, Westmorland 157, not 557, Devon 515, not 505, Surrey 383, not 392, Kent 1,274 not 543. A questionable generalization is the statement (p. 182) that in the Tudor and Stuart periods the stinting of stock was practised in nearly every village in England where enclosure was not complete. This remark fails to take account of the extensive pastoral areas of England, including the fens, where there were still few enclosures and no stints. But these are minor criticisms of a book that will become a standard reference work. We look forward to the promised second volume, which will encompass the period from 1700 to the present day.

JOAN THIRSK

JOAN THIRSK, *English Peasant Farming: the Agrarian History of Lincolnshire from Tudor to Recent Times*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957. xvi+350 pp. 40s.

It must be said at the very outset of this notice

that Mrs Thirsk's *English Peasant Farming* is a major achievement in the realm of agrarian history. As a pioneer in the new technique of the regional study of the development of British farming she reaps a full harvest from a corner of a field which hitherto has been only grazed over by an older generation of historians. The difference is that between intensive cultivation and dog-and-stick farming.

For a decade now this new school of rural history has insisted that the old random crop of inadequately substantiated generalizations and half-truths, the work of estimable but unscientific men, from Garnier and Ernle to their modern counterparts, must be replaced by a more exact discipline. To this end precise local studies must first be made, and only when these have been completed, gathered together, analysed, and interpreted, can an adequately substantiated and valid history be substituted for the historical semi-fiction which has hitherto paraded as real history.

The necessity for this destruction and reconstruction cannot be gainsaid. Ernle, if he may be used as a whipping-boy, refused to recognize that there was any agricultural history before 1066; presented his readers with a picture of medieval farming so generalized and so hedged about by the open fields of the English midlands as to be largely false; placed too much reliance upon the didactic writers, and used contemporary records so little, that the early modern period became in his hands theoretical, unreal, and sometimes absurd; and only when the work of Young, Marshall, Royal Commissions, and rural sociologists placed a profusion of facts at his disposal did he begin to write history. None the less, as Mrs Thirsk herself recognizes, Ernle's work—and that of some other writers of his category—was of sufficient merit to make it difficult of supersession, and indeed not yet superseded for the modern period. Not the least of its virtues lay, and lies, in its readability: his prose has a restrained force, an easy flow, and a vividness which place *English Farming* among the minor classics of history. His mind had the cultured humanism

of his age and class; and his background gave him a technical acquaintanceship with farm practice such as has been possessed only by Orwin and Scott Watson among historians of our own day, and without which one may perhaps write rural history but never agricultural history. With none of these qualities, one can still write history for the historian, as so many do; it may be very good history indeed—far more detailed, accurate, precise, and balanced than Ernle is—but it will lack the broad sweep, the acute technical perception, and the civilization of *English Farming*.

Mrs Thirsk has written very much of a historian's history. Where Ernle wrote passionately and vaguely of how "in the long winter evenings, farmers, their sons, and their servants carved the wooden spoons, the platters and the beechen bowls . . . or closed, in coarse fashion, the leaks in the leathern jugs," Mrs Thirsk writes dispassionately and precisely of the 'median' peasant farmer of the Lincolnshire uplands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one who had a statistical average of 26 acres sown to crops, a flock which averaged 34 sheep, a herd which averaged nine cattle of which 58 per cent were "dairy and breeding" animals, and 42 per cent "draught and meat" animals (can any such fine distinction be accepted for this period?), an average herd of six pigs, and an average of five horses for his plows. The difference between the subjective approach of *English Farming* and its spiritual successors and the objective analysis of *English Peasant Farming* need hardly be laboured further.

Mrs Thirsk takes for her subject the peasant farming of Lincolnshire from the sixteenth century to 1914, and divides it into four parts topographically—the fenland, the marshland, the chalk and limestone uplands, and the clay soils—and into three major periods chronologically—the sixteenth century, 1600 to 1740, and 1740 to 1870—with a tailpiece for 1870 to 1914 in which all four regions of the county are joined in one chapter. The result is that the bulk of the book is made up of a dozen separate historical studies. In each of these Mrs Thirsk draws

upon original sources to build up her analyses of the farming in each period and place, and these are presented in subsections dealing with population, stock, crops, enclosure, and such other particular aspects of time and area as drainage and reclamation which call for treatment. As a backcloth against which to set the supra-regional facets of each sectional economy she uses, for the earlier periods, Hoskins's work on Leicestershire; and only in the last period does she allow Ernle to enter in to tell a national story to which her local findings can be related.

The supreme merit of this book is that it provides, for the first time for any area, the complete gamut of rural data as it falls within the somewhat circumscribed boundary which Mrs Thirsk draws around the agrarian history of Lincolnshire (of the circumscription more will be said in a moment). There are contained here exact analyses of the agricultural statistics taken from her sources: probate inventories, State Papers Domestic, the muniments in the Lincolnshire Archives Office among others. The significance of the general run of this information cannot be usefully discussed until similar facts from other counties and regions become available, with which it can then be compared. In passing it may be remarked that the reader may well wonder what the value of the statistical averages here presented may be: the median farmer of the sixteenth-century Lincolnshire uplands would certainly have been as elusive in person as the "average farmer" is today. Farming is, and has been through the historic period, an industry of great diversity. In one village there may be one group of men each with about 50 dairy cows and a score of sheep for scavenging, and another group of men each with 400 sheep and half a dozen cows for multiple-suckling calves: to say that the median farmer here is one with 210 sheep and 28 cows is absurd. Mrs Thirsk, as far as one can judge, never falls into this sort of trap; but such a danger always exists where unweighted averages are used.

Of the new specific knowledge which emerges there may be cited such sample facts

as these: that tacking, or the agistment of stock, was to be found in the fenlands at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, and that at about the same time sheep were being taken at halves; that the letting of dairy cattle was practised before the end of the sixteenth century; that there is a suspicion, but not quite of the weight Mrs Thirsk believes, that selected grasses were being sown for leys as early as 1591.

The somewhat narrow framework into which Mrs Thirsk has fitted her findings gives rise to a feeling throughout the bulk of this book that, however precisely some aspects of Lincolnshire farming are here presented, the agrarian history of the county has been emasculated. Those who have worked, in however elementary a fashion, among inventories of "peasants' " goods will know of the great mass of incidental information they contain: the descriptions of farm implements, the lists of the buildings which housed them, the colours of the cattle, and the age ranges of the ewes and wethers in the flock, all of which, and much else, help to build up a full picture of the farm and farming of John Doe. There is little here of such things; and nothing, until modern times, of the local implements of husbandry, of the Lincolnshire hired labourers, of the farm buildings, of the regional types of stock kept. This is one important lacuna.

A second, and equally important cause for criticism, is the constant failure to follow the technical implications of the facts to their reasonable conclusions. There is, for instance, much information here on the gradual increase in acreage of fodder crops and on the rise in livestock populations, but no correlation of the two in particular cases; and while sizes of flocks are constantly quoted, there is no attempt to work out, say, lambing percentages from the figures in the inventories which so often make it possible for this to be done. The list of omissions of such most relevant facts and arguments could be made a long one.

From the point of view of the general reader—and Mrs Thirsk must have had this, to the scientific historian, unpopular person

in mind when she gave her book the title of *English Peasant Farming*—the greatest error of omission is the absence of all national background to this regional history through most of its length. The author would doubtless retort that the only national background yet available is of too dubious a worth to allow its admission here. That may very well be so, but none the less this book would have gained immensely from some carefully qualified national commentary—gained in readability; become more intelligible to a wider circle of readers; and, moreover, avoided a number of false impressions which the absence of such a commentary allows in. One example must suffice. Mrs Thirsk implies that the loss of one-third of the 4,201 beasts on the East and West Fens in Skirbeck Wapentake in 1747 was due to “distemper” engendered by the wetness of the fen; in fact, of course, it was merely a small, local manifestation of a nation-wide epidemic of rinderpest. Too often the scrupulous parochialism of treatment gives rise to such misconceptions.

Two final criticisms stem from the title of the book itself. *English Peasant Farming* suggests at first sight that this is in fact a history of peasant farming in England. It is nothing of the sort, as a sub-title on the title-page and the dust cover—but not on the spine—makes clear. No study of Lincolnshire farming can claim to mirror all English farming, despite Mrs Thirsk's disarming explanation that Lincolnshire is “in some degree a model or typical county”—typical of the Cornish moors or the vale of White Horse or the rolling hills of Northumberland? And no man sowing some scores of acres of cereals and pulses in the year, such as figures largely here, can properly be called a peasant: the word today has a contemptuous connotation; but one is at a loss to suggest an alternative.

Nevertheless Mrs Thirsk has written a book of much importance, both intrinsically and as a signpost to future historians of regional agriculture. Whether, in fact, the method of statistical analysis she has established is the best one is open to doubt. The opinion of agricultural economists might well

be sought; they themselves have devised methods of examination of current farm statistics which are giving wholly valid results. These, borrowed and adapted, might possibly be better than the methods which Mrs Thirsk uses. But the fact remains that *English Peasant Farming* is one of the first of the major theses which will eventually place the history of British farming on a sound basis. This sphere of history has long been the preserve of the gifted dilettante: his day is now over and that of the dedicated historian has begun.

R. TROW-SMITH

WILLIAM M. FINDLAY, *Oats: Their Cultivation and Use from Ancient Times to the Present Day*. Oliver and Boyd (for the University of Aberdeen), 1956. 207 pp. 21s.

The late William Findlay was one of the last of that generation—of which the *doyen*, Sir John Russell, is still with us—who fought a winning battle against poverty for a scientific education; and then went on to found or adorn a branch of agricultural science. Up to the age of 25 Findlay was a crofter and village miller; he then began to cycle 25 miles each morning to attend university classes, and 25 miles home each night. In due time, as University Lecturer in seeds and seed-testing, he established himself as a prime authority upon oat-growing in Scotland. With his deep practical knowledge, skill in the laboratory, and patience on the trial plot, he could have made himself eminent in the field of agricultural botany. But, devoid of personal ambition and driven only by twin passions for pure knowledge and his fellow Aberdeenshire farmers, he disdained the professional ladders of the committee and the conference room; and he was content to live and die plain Will Findlay, for whom every oat-growing Scots farmer had an immense trust and a great affection.

His book is the man—plain, factual, and, it is only honest to say, a little behind the thinking of the younger generation of botanists; and, therefore, out of date even before it was in print. Its introductory chapters on

oats in history express the scientific humanism of an earlier decade, when the classical sources were as familiar as the sight of the Potato oats through the window but Helbaek was yet barely heard of. The bulk of the book, upon the science and practice of oat-growing, is, up to a point, as sound as the author was himself, the work of a man who spent every day in his year growing oats; but it stops short where the great advances in variety, bold manuring, and weed control of recent years began.

R. TROW-SMITH

G. A. HOLMES, *The Estates of the Higher Nobility in Fourteenth-Century England*. Cambridge University Press, 1957. 180 pp. 22s. 6d.

In introducing this work, the author points out that most studies in medieval agrarian history so far have been based on materials derived from religious houses. He quite rightly insists on the disadvantages of this concentration, and devotes his attention to such great lay estates as those of Lancaster, Mortimer, Beauchamp, Clare, Bohun, and others.

The most original and valuable part of Mr Holmes's book is that which explores the legal and institutional side of these foundations of aristocratic power. That marriage was a means of accumulation in medieval society is a commonplace, but there is certainly a need for the detailed study of how such accumulation was planned, and the legal devices by which it was preserved for the landlord's posterity. Mr Holmes's account of forms of enfeoffment, of entails and trusts, is very illuminating and provides concrete illustrations in their full social context of practices which are rather less vividly illustrated by the legal historians. In the same way, the use of landed wealth to create the power which rested on the military and social force of indentured retainers is demonstrated by an analysis of the retainers of some half-dozen of the leading fourteenth-century magnates.

The latter part of the book deals with the economic aspect of these great estates. There

is less that is new here. Obviously the problems which faced big secular landowners resembled those that faced the monasteries, and the solutions were similar. There are a number of interesting points of detail, particularly from the documents of the Clare, Beauchamp, and Lancaster estates, but there is no general revision of existing interpretations of the crisis of the fourteenth-century landowners. The analysis of the economy of the lordship of Denbigh, and to a lesser extent of the lordship of Usk, is less satisfactory. But this is largely because there is not enough known about the Celtic society on which these lordships were imposed. Apart from this, however, Mr Holmes's book, although short, is a scholarly and satisfying piece of work.

R. H. HILTON

L. ELLIS TAVENER, *The Common Lands of Hampshire*. Hants. County Council, the Castle, Winchester, N. D. [1957]. viii+124 pp., illus. 21s.

This is a solid compilation undertaken at short notice at the request of the Hampshire County Council. Its objects are: to provide information regarding surviving common lands and common rights in Hampshire, the precise nature of "commons" today, details of recent legislation on the subject, and a glossary of archaic terms still in use in connection with them. It will no doubt serve the purposes for which it was designed, and students in search of legal definitions of common usages in the past and the forms they take today will find it valuable. But economic historians will wince at the loose use of terms and puzzle over ambiguities of expression. The word "severalty" for instance is used three times (pp. 1, 11, and in the Glossary) in the sense of land held separately in the common field, but on pages 7 and 9 as land no longer subject to common rights; the allocation of common rights was determined in one place by "the stock which [the householder] kept for the service of the common field" (presumably the common plough), in another in accordance with "the lands which were par-

celled out to him," and in another according to "the number (of cattle) he could maintain in the winter on the homestead;" there was a determined attack on the commons in the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI as an "outcome of the religious and social agitation which was fully expressed in the Reformation;" the Board of Agriculture was formed in 1793 "somewhat akin to the Chamber of Commerce;" balks were used for turning the plough and for moving from one strip to another, but headlands are not mentioned; and the four lines on enclosure on p. 11 are, to say the least, not very helpful. But on the acts relating to commons from 1865, and on the purely local problems of the Hampshire commons, this book appears to have achieved its object. The illustrations are excellent.

J. D. CHAMBERS

W. G. HOSKINS, *The Midland Peasant: the Economic and Social History of a Leicestershire Village*. Macmillan, 1957. xxii+322 pp., illus. 30s.

To compare this book with H. S. Bennett's *Life on the English Manor, 1150-1400*, first published just twenty years ago, is to measure in some sort the advance which has been made in English historical studies in the social and economic field. It seems more appropriate to compare Dr Hoskins's book with Mr Bennett's than with, say, the austerer monograph of Miss Davenport on the Norfolk manor of Forncett because both his book and Bennett's are, in a good (though not equally good) sense, works of popularization, and not addressed solely to specialist readers. The comparison of these books' character, let alone technique, cannot stand without qualification, for *The Midland Peasant* deals with its subject from the arrival of the Teutonic invaders up till 1901, not with two and a half centuries only. Nevertheless, the comparison is useful, because both authors are writing about village communities for a large class of readers which has happily been springing up in England, but which will not, for the most part, pursue its own researches into more technical monographs. The quality of the book in the light of

its own object, then, is the principal test to be applied.

By such a criterion it seems that its merits far outweigh its defects. Dr Hoskins has chosen a particular village, Wigston Magna, just south of Leicester, in a countryside familiar to him and amply documented, anyhow for the post-medieval period, and has shown that this village, *as a community*, has a life-history which covers an immense span. Limited in space, extended in time, these are the conditions of English social history as we are now learning to write it, and as it must be written until a future genius can compose a credible synthesis. Social history is about societies, of kinship and neighbourhood, and respectable scholars can no longer offer their readers national generalizations any more than they can accept 'social history' in its older uncritical meaning.

Dr Hoskins carries the story of his village from the age of Anglian settlement and Danish conquest, through a discussion of manorial structure, to a longer analysis of the medieval free tenants and their economy and family dealings. He is at his best in singling out particular examples, like the Balle family and its lands, to render immediate our understanding of the whole, in working out detailed analyses of evidence, like that of field lay-out (pp. 62-8) or of peasant fines (pp. 115-24), to deduce or infer conclusions in a scientific manner, and in providing flashes of sharp insight into some known phenomenon, like the existence of two manors within a single village (pp. 95-8), which constitutional historians can only partially portray. Where Wigston needs to be set against the wider background of Leicestershire he displays, needless to add, that hall-mark of the professional which is the competent use of other people's work.

The scale becomes rather larger as the history proceeds and the evidence becomes more abundant. In the sixteenth century the population of Wigston increased considerably and the march towards economic inequality was rapidly resumed. The land market became intensely active, but for all that the continuity of village society was maintained, the more so

as manorial organization disappeared at the end of the century and Wigston lived as a purely peasant community, in which true landlessness was rare and migration to and from the outside world not yet very frequent. Greater changes occurred in the seventeenth century, when over-population became a serious problem, absentee landlords having property in a number of parishes began to exploit the land through tenant farmers, and pauperism appeared. There seems to have been a sort of local "rise of the gentry," but the treatment of this subject suffers from an incomplete thinking out of the meanings of that difficult word. If the author's phrase "peasant gentry" is admissible, it needs some justification.

The most dramatic moment of the book, the parliamentary enclosure of 1764-6, only sets the seal upon an agrarian inequality which the reader has watched coming into existence, remotely since the thirteenth century, strongly and immediately since the earlier seventeenth.

With the graziers the community of peasant cultivators was broken. The last part of the book describes the industrialization of a still populous but more rootless Wigston, where now the portion of most inhabitants was more likely to be poor relief and bacterial disease than the share in the domestic pig enjoyed by abidingly rural communities like 'Lark Rise'. A significant term is set to this long development by the erection in 1883 of the "extensive and handsome engine sheds" which the author compares in its effect to the building of a great abbey in a small country town of the twelfth century.

In writing for non-specialists a line must always be drawn somewhere between the provision and omission of apparatus, between a rigidly economical exposition and a spacious flow of illustration. The main faults of the book seem to spring from the mistaken drawing of this line. The title itself is symptomatic. It is saved from misleading inaccuracy only by the subtitle, uttered as it were in an explanatory whisper. Nor is the book primarily about the peasant (singular),

but about the community (collective). Perhaps a striving for popular appeal has made the publisher a little defensive about that limitation of object which has given the book real excellence. The prose is often repetitive and slack, and sometimes even falls short of lucidity: for example, the relationship between the Winchester and Duchy manors (pp. 23-7) and the Oxford and Turville manors (pp. 95-108) is not clear, and is made more obscure by the habit of breaking up the subject-matter in order to achieve a stricter chronological sequence. Most seriously, however, the failure to describe or list the source material is a great deprivation for readers who may be historians in fact or in desire. What are the Farnham MSS.? Where and how can the rich collections of documents casually alluded to on pp. xviii or 194-5 be found? Even if full footnoting is withheld, it seems needlessly unhelpful to refuse a page or two of what the French call *orientation bibliographique*, whereby the intelligent reader may recognize the scope of the author's endeavour and add perhaps to the tools of his own craft.

F. R. H. DU BOULAY

JOHN SAVILLE, *Rural Depopulation in England and Wales, 1851-1951*. Dartington Hall Studies in Rural Sociology. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957. xvi+253 pp. 28s.

Mr Saville has here combined the results of two investigations into rural populations, one general and statistical, the other local. From the occupational volumes of the census of population over the last century, he has analysed the nature of the exodus from the rural parishes in England and Wales and shows that, broadly speaking, "the more rural a county, the greater relatively to total population will be the rural exodus." Agriculture ceased to expand its employment after the mid-years of the nineteenth century and contracted markedly in the last quarter; the numbers engaged in rural industries also fell as the products of urban industry undercut the use of local materials; the development of motor transport carried the process a stage further with the gradual concentration of ser-

vice trades in market towns. Women moved out of rural parishes in relatively greater numbers than men and at an earlier age, preferring to work in factories or shops rather than in the domestic service which was increasingly the only female occupation in the country. And the fall in rural population intensified the fall in the demand for services, until in many areas the building craftsmen, using largely imported materials, are the sole survivors of a host of rural tradesmen; the smaller parishes cease to be social units and fall apart into isolated households or hamlets, from which the young people are glad to escape.

In the second part of his book, Mr Saville shows the process at work in a group of parishes in south Devon. The accidents of bus services have converted some into dormitories for the seaside resorts; in others, local industries have failed, or are likely to fail, because they are unsupported by the appropriate public services—water, sewerage, rural housing, electricity. One small factory does not make for a stable and contented population, and Mr Saville rightly suggests that at some stage the relevant planning authority must decide to build up strategic villages, rather than to scatter its resources thinly, and ineffectively, over a wide area of decaying hamlets. Mr Saville has given us a painstaking analysis of the statistics and a well-written description of the basic facts of rural life in the twentieth century.

EDITH H. WHETHAM

W. BRANCH-JOHNSON, *The Carrington Diary*.
Christopher Johnson, 1956. 184 pp., illus.
18s.

In the words of Jethro Tull, "Ploughing and writing are two different talents," and it is perhaps for this reason that there are so few diaries extant that have been kept by working farmers. Of the many important diaries that have been published the majority have been written by educated men, and the result is that their pages do not reflect the conditions and affairs of the more ordinary sorts of people. Many farmers through the centuries

have kept accounts, and some of the few that have fortunately survived are to be found today in record offices, while others are still in private hands. Some of these are annotated while others are accompanied by memorandum books which make them even more useful source material for the agricultural historian. The average farmer has, however, had other things to do even if he was sufficiently educated to keep a record of his activities. (Even up to the last war the number of farmers who kept any serious account of their business was comparatively small.)

John Carrington, who wrote the diary under review, was born in 1726 and died in 1810. He farmed at Bacon's Farm, Bramfield, a village two or three miles north-west of Hertford. Although he lived through years of crucial importance to British farming he, regrettably, does not appear to have taken to writing a diary until his wife died when he was 71 in 1797. If he did keep a diary earlier, then it has been lost, but it seems more likely that the combination of his wife's death and the fact that by this time he had handed over the active running of his farm to his younger son gave him more opportunity to compile his "memorandums." The diary is written not in a book but horizontally, vertically, and diagonally on any odd scraps of paper that came to hand—licensing regulations, instructions to Tax Assessors, and so on. It is now lodged in the Hertfordshire County Record Office.

Mr Branch-Johnson's edition tells the history of John Carrington's activities during the years of the diary both by summarizing the original and by the use of extracts; his commentary is good and never obtrusive. It is disappointing that the diary, in fact, tells us so little about Carrington's actual farming methods, presumably because he was no longer so intimately concerned with the farm; but, this apart, it does give an extremely interesting picture of a respected tenant farmer's duties to the community as highway surveyor, poor-law overseer, tax assessor, chief constable, and general pillar of the neighbourhood. Not least in importance is

the picture we get of the English countryside during the French wars.

Carrington's comments on his many and varied duties throw an interesting and perhaps uncommon light on several important happenings of the time. For example in 1801 he was one of those responsible for taking the first census of population, a task which was concluded in the 'Grandison Arms' with dinner and the drinking of beer, port wine, brandy and water. In another capacity he is concerned with the collection of the newly introduced income-tax, and on one occasion at a time when country bank failures were common he recounts how the Receiver General for Hertfordshire refuses a "draught" for tax money and compels him to pay in cash.

The hardship brought on the countryside by the Napoleonic wars causes him continual concern, sometimes because of heavier taxation, on other occasions because of the need for more men for the forces. In addition to his tax-collecting responsibilities Carrington was, as chief constable, much involved in the raising of the militia. At one stage his younger son was, in fact, drawn for the supplementary militia, but a substitute was found to whom Carrington gave twenty shillings. In 1803 when invasion by "Bonipart" was hourly expected he notes, "So Nothing but Soldeiring three times a week." On another occasion four of his horses are pressed to draw "amonition." It is not only however with military preparation that he is concerned. The war makes itself felt in every aspect of life. After an unsuccessful visit to Hertford May Fair he notes: "Trade is bad, as so much Taxes to maintaine the War, for the Money is Wanting, all Sellers no buyers except Very Cheap."

But the troubles of his times apart, John Carrington emerges from the pages a happy, contented, genial, and generous character, the personification of a good John Bull. There is an infectious enthusiasm and robust simplicity about all that he does in life and there are times when one could wish that Mr Branch-Johnson had let him speak more for himself. The following quotations will

suffice to prove the point: "for no other reason than it being Mixs day Mr Bell was so minded to ask a few friends to partake of a Good Ghoose," or "... to Mr James Hankins burring at Tewin Church, he was brot from Brickendon in a Herse and Coach in pair & 2 little carts & buired about 3 clock, their was Leg, Shouldr of Mutton & pudings &c provided. . ." He was obviously a considerable character and a greatly respected local figure, he loved his food and his drink, and he was as much at home surveying highways or overseeing the poor as he was helping a neighbour out of difficulty or playing "rolely polley in the parler." It is small wonder that when he died a thousand people attended his funeral. Mr Branch-Johnson has provided us with a useful book which may encourage others to look in forgotten places for similar documents still remaining among family possessions.

J. W. Y. HIGGS

E. ESTYN EVANS, *Irish Folk Ways*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957. xvi+324 pp., illus. 35s.

Twenty years ago Conrad Arensberg produced a classic of social anthropology in *The Irish Countryman*. Estyn Evans in this book about the material culture of the Irish countryside has produced another equally penetrating and beautifully written study. Taking all the artefacts of man in Ireland within his scope, he is yet sensible of the influence on the tool, and on the tool user, of the meanings and beliefs which make up the social environment. *Irish Folk Ways* follows, in consequence, a complicated rhythm with artistry and grace; first, there are descriptions of the artefacts; second, regional variations are shown in maps and diagrams of the elemental forms such as the spade or the churn, and third, reconstructions of the possible place of this evidence are made against a historical sequence. Since most of the material has been sketched in the field, the historical scale is based as much upon archaeological evidence as on written records.

We begin with landscape and climate. Sub-

sequent chapters take us quickly from pre-historic settlement to the subsistence economy based on transhumance that medieval and Elizabethan English invaders found flourishing. Archaic forms surviving in this outpost isle may be primitive legacies from these epochs, but they are not simple. The one-storey, one-room-wide Irish cottage reveals its diverse origins as variations in wall, thatch, roof style, door, and internal furniture arrangement are described. In the gardens, and between the elaborate, but recent, field fences and gate pillars, native transport vehicles, such as the *slípe*, the *slide-car*, and the *wheel-car*, have persisted thanks to their unique suitability not only to the soils and slopes but also to the egalitarian and co-operative social system of the "mountainy men." Later chapters take us away from the single farm to the world of fairs and festivals and to the customs and values which have meaning for the users of the symbolic and useful articles drawn, photographed, and mapped in this book. Reading it, I recaptured the excitement which arose in the Geography

Department at Belfast when a new form of *slípe* was discovered, or when a variant of cottage building punctuated each subsequent field excursion with stops at ruined and near-ruined houses in a search for parallels.

By concentrating on survivals of the subsistence economy into the modern period, Professor Evans has made a significant contribution to agricultural history, for it is inevitable that most of this material will soon disappear. The fitting of the evidence into a coherent frame, using evidence from archaeology and from travellers' accounts, gives the text a richer life than any reconstruction from by-gones can ever have. This book is testimony to the need for studying material culture in the fields and farms and for using not only the faint light of folklore but also the inferences of the archaeologist and of the social scientist to place the tool and its user in a proper historical and social setting. It also testifies to the illumination that in skilled hands can come from such a synthesis.

JOHN MOGEY