

Book Reviews

ROBERT REDFIELD, *Peasant Society and Culture*. University of Chicago Press, 1956.

viii+164 pp. 21s.

We in Britain readily apply the word peasantry to the cultivators of Monsoon Asia and parts of Europe, but would exclude, for the most part, those of the New World. It may cause surprise, therefore, to find an analysis of peasant society appearing from the capital city of the Corn Belt. But it must be remembered that American anthropologists have long turned to Central America to study rural communities, that it was there that "anthropology moved from tribe to peasantry," and that Robert Redfield was one of the most distinguished social anthropologists in the New World.

He points out that anthropology, having begun by studying culture in the abstract, went on to pile up analyses of specific cultures ranging from primitive isolates to urban minorities and peasant communities in Europe, Asia, and Latin America, and is now ready to return to levels of abstraction remote from the terrain of particular research. His definition of a peasantry will be generally accepted: subsistence cultivators, deeply attached to the land by sentiment as well as use, for whom agriculture is a way of life, not a business for profit. Peasant values include a reverent disposition towards ancestral ways, a restraint on individual self-seeking as against family and community, a suspicion of urban life. He goes on to define a peasantry as a part-society, necessarily associated with an élite—gentry and townfolk—with whom its relations are of three kinds. First there are territorial links composed of units of area building up to a region or nation; secondly there are economic links working through markets and fairs; thirdly there is the network of kinship and friendship linking village with village. In these three ways the primitive isolate is transformed into a peasantry. But we need to know also what causes the transformation. Does it always follow the use of manure or fallowing

and the fixity of agricultural settlement?

It is implied that villages are the characteristic form of peasant settlement, and it is not clear whether a peasantry can survive dispersion. Nor is there discussion of the small joint-family settlement-unit of Celtic lands, though I imagine Redfield would include it in his definition. Essentially, "the peasant has given his heritage to the fortunes of a society and mode of life that is both like his and yet alien to it." The Old World peasantries, he thinks, arose as towns spread into tribal territories, but this is to deny the status of peasant to the pre-Roman population of France or to the pre-medieval population of Ireland. Presumably Redfield would allow a pre-urban élite to act in the same way. He is cautious of generalizations and wisely concludes that the relations with 'a great tradition' take different forms in different times and places. It is useful to have this thoughtful survey of peasant society to which the local student of rural life can turn for stimulating ideas.

E. E. EVANS

A. L. POOLE (ed.), *Medieval England*. Oxford University Press, 1958. xxviii+xiv+662 pp. in 2 volumes, illustrated. 70s.

These two handsome volumes are the third and newest embodiment of a work which appeared first in 1902 under the title *Companion to English History*. Re-edited in 1924, it has now again been almost completely rewritten. Dr A. L. Poole has assembled a team of eighteen experts to deal with as many different subjects, and himself rounds off the performance with a fascinating chapter on Recreations.

As Professor Carus-Wilson remarks in her fine paper on Towns and Trade, England throughout the centuries covered by these volumes seemed to foreign visitors "incorrigibly rural." And although London claimed the respect even of those who knew Venice and Florence, there was justification for this view. Hence one might reasonably expect to

find at least as much space devoted to rural economy as has been allotted to Military Architecture, for example, or Heraldry. Crops and field systems are surely of more fundamental importance than either of these themes. Yet arable and pastoral husbandry are, if not totally neglected, at any rate dismissed with only incidental references. What little is said about them will be found mostly in the opening chapter, entitled *The English Landscape*. This is contributed by Dr W. G. Hoskins, who in thirty-four masterly pages distils the essence of what he and others have written elsewhere on the changing aspects of our countryside. But even Dr Hoskins has not altogether shaken off the habit—a convenient one, admittedly, for the historian—of implying that the Anglo-Saxons colonized an empty land. We are left with the impression that there was a period of roughly a hundred years before their coming, during which the inhabitants of Britain, if there were any, subsisted mainly on grass and acorns. Dr Hoskins is prepared to admit that the English settlers may sometimes have laid out their open fields on the derelict ploughland of Roman-British villa estates, but he concludes: "It yet remains to be proved that any English village has had a continuous existence since Romano-British times." How, one may ask, would he himself *prove* the continuous existence of a village which appears for the first time in a Saxon charter of the eighth century, reappears in Domesday Book three hundred years later, and is then again lost to view until the thirteenth century?

H. P. R. FINBERG

G. R. ELTON (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History*. Vol. II: *The Reformation*. Cambridge University Press, 1958. 686 pp. 37s. 6d.

In the general introduction to the first volume of the *New Cambridge Modern History* Sir G. N. Clark said that the series had been planned not as "an abstract or scale-reduction of all our knowledge of the period, but as a coherent body of judgement true to the facts." Since space is so extremely cramped that in-

terpretation is given precedence over facts if there is not room for both, most of these volumes will be consulted as guides to the present state of various historical questions rather than as repositories of historical facts clearly organized and indexed, which made the old *Cambridge Modern* so invaluable. The usefulness of the present series has been further lessened by the decision to omit bibliographies, references, and footnotes. Readers of the AGRICULTURAL HISTORY REVIEW should therefore be warned that they may expect to be told that peasant clearances in Devon and Lincolnshire have been studied, but not by whom, or be given the latest report on the change-over to agricultural production for the market in the words: "Ashley already pointed out—and the more recent researches of Hoskins, Hallam, Beresford, Finberg, Rawson, Chapman, and others have developed more firmly."

Each volume of the new series has been entrusted to an independent editor who is responsible for an introductory chapter. Here Dr Elton has given a masterly opening survey, asking whether the "Age of the Reformation" can be said to represent any coherent period, and coming to the conclusion that the years 1520–60 may still be regarded as a time of decisive significance in European history. With this established, the volume moves on to its more specialized chapters, and it is a sign of the importance now attached to economic history that the first should deal with economic change, before coming to studies of Luther and the Swiss reformers, sections on doctrinal controversy, the rise of the new religious orders, the empire of Charles V, the Habsburg-Valois struggle. These are followed by the less central, but by no means less enthralling, themes: intellectual tendencies, changes in political thought, developments in armies and the art of war, and finally short surveys of the Ottoman Empire, Russia, the New World, and the Orient.

The 46 pages which have been allocated to the chapter entitled 'Economic Change' have been divided between Friedrich Lutge, Professor of Economic History and Economics

in the University of Munich, who deals with agriculture, and Professor S. T. Bindoff of London who writes on the greatness of Antwerp. Since nothing appeared on agriculture in the first volume it was thought advisable to make this a general introductory survey of changes in agrarian structure, and the greater part of the space is therefore taken up with extremely general discussion (which at times devolves into such clichés as "the soil is not only an economic medium, it is also man's living space") or with a survey of the emancipation of serfs or the development of a money economy from Carolingian times to the fifteenth century. The seven pages devoted to English agriculture suffer like deprivation, for about half the space available is spent discussing commutation, the Black Death, "the dissolution of the feudal system which of course stood in the way of a rational economy." Since the price rise was dealt with in the previous volume, the growing importance of market production or the investment of merchants and industrialists in land are considered without reference to it. Nothing of importance is said concerning such burning topics as the disposal of monastic property, or the rising or declining fortunes of the gentry. We can only hope, as Dr Elton promises us in one of those rare footnotes to which he alone as editor is entitled, that social and economic changes will receive more adequate treatment in the appropriate sections of the *Cambridge Economic History*.

E. A. L. MOIR

R. CUNLIFFE SHAW, *The Royal Forest of Lancaster*. The Guardian Press, 127 Fishergate, Preston, 1956. 550 pp. £6 6s. "The forests and chases of Lancashire and Bowland have been depicted as a barren and inhospitable waste occupied by a few herdsmen and foresters; a wilderness over which the deer roamed at large, a region remote from organized medieval society. This impression is soon dispelled when we consider the complex system of instauration with its precise methods of accountancy to include the smallest items of revenue and expenditure. . . From

the twelfth century onwards there emerges the pattern of a well-organized and competent agricultural community." These sentences from the concluding paragraphs of Dr Shaw's book indicate the theme of his work. It is concerned with every aspect of the history of the Lancashire forest from late Saxon times to the end of the nineteenth century, the last two centuries being dealt with more briefly. But its most valuable contribution to agrarian history is to put the beasts of the forest in their proper place, to define the relatively small areas in which they were preserved for the pleasures of the chase, and to examine the economy of the other larger areas over which forest law prevailed, but where the ordinary business of farming was carried on despite it.

The Norman concept of the forest as a jealously guarded preserve for the recreation of the court is a concept so alien to our own experience that it is difficult to grasp all its implications. Was it not equally alien to the communities already inhabiting the forest region, and if so, by what methods was the law, in its simple early form, imposed upon them? These are not just idle speculations, for as Dr Shaw shows in one of the most thought-provoking chapters in the book ("The Pre-Conquest Origins of Husbandry in the Forest Zone of Lancashire") there were communities in the forest area with their village fields and meadows long before the Norman Conquest. Did the law as it was enforced in the early years of Norman rule encroach but little on existing rights? Was it only later, as population grew, and the law was more effectively enforced, that the restrictions proved so irksome?

Dr Shaw accepts as a fact without question that the Celtic communities of Lancashire survived the Roman occupation and the Anglo-Saxon and Norse invasions, and he attempts to trace the way in which Celtic forms of land allotment gradually took on their medieval pattern of selions and furlongs. Much of this account, of course, is guesswork; not all of it is crystal clear; some of it is definitely wrong (Dr Shaw seems to think

that in the open fields of the Anglo-Saxons the strips were re-allotted annually. I do not think there is any certain proof of this); some of it is hotly debatable. But there are some fascinating comparisons between Welsh, Irish, Manx, and Scottish arrangements and those of Lancashire which make as good a starting-point as any for fresh reflections on the origin of English field systems. In certain elementary particulars, Lancashire field arrangements in the Middle Ages were reminiscent of the Midland open-field system. But they were also subtly different. There were scattered strips but they lay in many smallish fields, not in two or three large ones. There were closes, but they too were often divided into strips and held by different tenants. These two peculiarities are found in other counties besides Lancashire. Do they perhaps suggest that the custom of partible inheritance has worked its effects on formerly consolidated farms, and has produced a collection of small pieces of land (or strips) lying in former fields (or furlongs)? The nomenclature may well have submitted itself finally to Anglo-Saxon influence. The crucial test, which would differentiate the Lancashire from the Midland field system, is whether the tenants had common rights over all the arable land. Dr Shaw does not pursue the problem far enough to settle this question. He seems to take for granted a custom of partible inheritance but without considering its practical consequences. And the full extent of common rights is not discussed, perhaps for lack of definite evidence. What is quite certain is that the existence of selions and furlongs in the medieval fields of Lancashire is not alone enough to prove that a Midland-type open-field system was practised here. Indeed, if Dr Shaw is right, and the land allotment derives from Celtic origins, then it would be surprising if the medieval pattern were not much more complicated than the Midland one.

The remainder of the book, which is concerned with gradual changes in the use of forest land, reveals interesting regional differences in the farming of the county: vaccaries

or cattle stations in the uplands, sheep-keeping on the marshes, corn-growing in the south-east of the county. The administration of the forest is also explained in detail.

This is a mammoth book with over five hundred large pages of text. Some may criticize its great length, for the sharpness of its conclusions are blurred by excessive detail. On the other hand, there will be others who will find the abundance of documents mentioned in the text of great value, provided they can interpret correctly the very brief and often very carelessly constructed footnote references. But no one will begrudge Dr Shaw—one of a small but distinguished group of medical men who take their leisure in archive offices—thanks and praise for a thorough and in many ways stimulating piece of local history.

JOAN THIRSK

LORD RENNELL OF RODD, *Valley on the March.*

A History of a Group of Manors on the Herefordshire March of Wales. Oxford University Press, 1958. xvi+298 pp., illus. 42s.

Lord Rennell, who is a geographer and a farmer, writes in this book that "the study of geography and topography can . . . contribute a great deal to history" but that "without detailed local knowledge of fields, hedges, paths, even trees and soil, a great deal of historical information may be missed by students who have not the opportunities which a farmer in the course of his daily work can glean." Those of us who try to be agrarian historians without being farmers are only too acutely aware of our inadequacies, and that is why we eagerly read what the practitioners have to say.

The valley about which Lord Rennell writes is that of the Hindwell, a tributary of the Lugg, and the manors comprise a group of small valley settlements, one of which is his own home of Rodd. He considers the development of the manors, the settlements, and the principal landowners from pre-Conquest times until the seventeenth century, with a separate disquisition on some aspects of the ecclesiastical history of the valley. There is an immense amount of detailed information

about persons and places, and the photographic illustrations, most of them taken from the air, are excellent, apt, and give the reader a good impression of the country.

It must be said, however, that the book is disappointing to the agrarian historian, and this is because Lord Rennell does not follow up the promise that he makes at the beginning. The earlier part of the book consists of a detailed study of the pre-Conquest and Domesday topography. This is something that is worth doing for any area and can best be done by historians with Lord Rennell's local knowledge. Apart from the necessary identification of places and estates, this part contains an interesting discussion of Offa's Dyke in relation to the problem of early Anglo-Welsh relations. The greater part of the book however deals very little with agrarian matters, and very much with genealogies and manorial descents. While recognizing the large place that such studies have traditionally had in local histories, it must all the same be said that one had hoped that an author whose real interests are so obviously in the land and the people at work would have spent less space on this type of family history, whose appeal is bound to be very narrow.

The most interesting chapter in the book is that entitled 'Of Tracks and Fields', and this (about one-seventh of the whole) is really the only part in which the author does what we hope he can do better than the document-bound professional historian. In it he strips off the modern additions to the Hindwell landscape and reconstructs the medieval, even pre-medieval, road and field lay-out. Using his practical knowledge of the soil-pattern and land-use of the valley, he shows which pairs of fields were those which must have been the original nucleus of arable cultivation in all the old settlements, and which were the subsequent extensions. A comparison of the dimensions of these original fields is most suggestive, and Lord Rennell's method here might very profitably be used elsewhere.

In this important section the author puts many problems. It is to be regretted that he is unable, probably by the limitation of the evi-

dence, to relate agrarian practice to local social structure. The relation of demesne land to tenant land is hardly dealt with, still less agrarian custom, which in an area so close to Wales must surely have been worth studying. And with all respect to Lord Rennell's own expert knowledge, one wonders if the geographical characteristics of an area place quite such rigid and permanent restrictions on possible land-use as he suggests.

R. H. HILTON

B. C. REDWOOD and A. E. WILSON (eds.), *Custumals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishop of Canterbury*. Sussex Record Society, Vol. LVII, 1958. xl+162 pp.

The manuscript of which a translated portion fills most of this volume is a good, late-medieval copy of a now-lost custumal and rental covering the greater part of the lands belonging to the medieval archbishopric of Canterbury. The inquisitions through which the rental was made were held on the estates between 1283 and 1285. Although most of the archbishopric lands were in Kent, numbers of the manors lay in Sussex. Of these there were two main groups: those in the west, near Bognor, included Pagham, Lavant, Tangmere, and Slindon; in the east, near Lewes, was the vast manor of South Malling with its members "within and without the wood." The portion of the document dealing with Pagham was privately printed in 1949 by Mr Lindsay Fleming in his *History of Pagham* (I, xxxi-lx). The remainder of the Sussex folios are published here, together with two Appendices, containing a rental of South Malling for 1305-6, and a sixteenth-century custumal of South Malling purporting to be derived from one confirmed in 1330.

Students of rural history, especially those interested in the south-east of England, will be grateful for the work which has here been done by the editors and their team of transcribers and translators from the Local History Seminar of Brighton Technical College. It is an important text, and the work has been on the whole well done. There are a few inconsistencies and slips in the text which

suggest a not quite perfect co-ordination between the translators: e.g., the translation of *tradita* on p. 117 departs from the norm, *aperto* is misread on p. 13, *metere* is translated as 'to sow' on p. 78, the translation of *caruca iuncta* as 'joint plough' on p. 26 is misleading, for it means a completely yoked plough in the possession of one tenant in distinction to the tenant who owned part of a team only. These small matters are mentioned to remind future scholars that the manuscript itself is accessible for consultation.

This deeply interesting document will repay the further work on it which is contemplated by more than one person. Tenurial analysis of the complete manuscript, and comparison with extant accounts and 'charter' material like the Lambeth MS. 1212, should help towards a much-needed understanding of south-eastern England in the middle ages. At the moment, three topics which the document illuminates will be singled out for the brief attention of present readers: demesne structure, tenurial structure, and forest customs.

The demesnes of the West Sussex manors are described in their parcels, and in the case of Tangmere and Lavant with the number of *londes* in each field of a given number of acres. (The Pagham demesne fields are described according to the number of acres and *sellones* in each.) Demesnes are not given on the East Sussex manors, but an account of the oxherds of Malling, who were in effect full-time *famuli* and used the lord's plough on their own pieces, says that the tenements of some of them "lay in the middle of the demesne." The productivity of this demesne could be reckoned from the Vacancy Rolls and ministers' accounts such as the fine archbishopric 'pipe roll' of 1273-4 (Brit. Mus. Addit. MS. 29,794) where very many correspondences and amplifications of the present document are to be found.

The rental lists holders of knightly and free land, of unfree land, of cotland, and of various other kinds of holding, including fulling mills, together with their areal holdings, rents, and services. The continuance of assarting, es-

pecially in the woodlands, right up to the moment of the inquisition is notable. The classes of free and neif (*nativus* or *villanus*) seem in theory clear enough (pp. 90, 101), but their holdings are much confused. Numbers of those described in Mayfield as free tenants are a few pages further on called neifs; one of them, Robert le Rede, is called *liber natus*, which gives the clue to a third category or possibility. Neifs are also found in considerable numbers leasing land to freemen, and sometimes raising a mortgage upon their land, so that we look for the regular passage of money from free to unfree. Yet legal bondage on the Sussex manors continued far into the fifteenth century according to the acts of manumission found in archiepiscopal registers.

The woodlands of South Malling, and of Slindon away in the west, supported freemen and bondmen who alike were busy assarting, building on their portions, and commoning in a *boscagium* through which only the local inhabitants were certain of finding the way (p. 31). The custom of *danger* was paid at Slindon and Tarring and not only in Kent, and is correctly annotated by the editors, as against the interpretation of the late Professor Neilson. Some of the agrarian customs described as due from forest tenants appear commuted in the accounts of the time, but bond and free owed a variety of other services, not least to the organization of the archbishop's hunting.

The Introduction could only allude to a scattering of topics, but contains a few omissions and mis-statements which might have been remedied. Attention was called in print to the present document by Mary Holgate in *Sussex Archaeological Collections* LXVIII (1927). This Introduction is an improvement upon previous work in the field, but is markedly economical of acknowledgements. The Hayes alluded to on p. xxv is in Middlesex, where the archbishop had property, not in Kent. The inquisition of 1283-5 was based upon the written rolls, then extant, of a previous one conducted by Elias of Dereham, steward of the archbishop's lands in the second decade of

the thirteenth century, as is quite clear from certain portions of the Kentish text. It is questionable whether the estates of the See were grouped into bailiwicks until a few years after the date of the present rental, so it is not surprising that the West Sussex manors were treated as separate units, as the editors remark (p. xxxii). Of course, the *Ballive* headings could have been written in by the later copyist. Nor do I find receivers in existence on the estates until the very beginning of the fifteenth century (p. xxix); the most usual thirteenth-century recipient of the cash liveries was the treasurer of the archbishop, direct from local ministers.

A random check on the index revealed the omission of Daniel, William, p. 10; Sweyne, William, p. 10, and page errors against Megwyk and Osselin. This unfortunately saps confidence in what should be an important part of such an edition. Used with care, however, this volume will be of great use to investigators, and deserves their thanks.

F. R. H. DU BOULAY

W. M. WILLIAMS, *The Country Craftsman: A Study of some Rural Crafts and the Rural Industries Organisation in England*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958. xviii + 214 pp. 25s.

Mr Williams's book appears as one of the Dartington Hall Studies in Rural Sociology. It is largely concerned with the small rural industries of Devon, with some comparative material from the west midlands. Devon has between 1,300 and 1,500 rural workshops, probably more than any other county in England, and about thirty different rural crafts. The "decline of the rural crafts" is a well-worn lament, but little is known even about the basic facts. How many rural craftsmen are there? How quickly are they decreasing in numbers? How many young men are entering rural industries annually?

Mr Williams begins by studying the work of the rural industries organization in general, and then proceeds to an analysis of the problems of a wide range of crafts in Devon and

three midland counties. The business problems of the craftsmen are examined, with much detailed reportage which the historian finds rather tedious and too long-drawn out; but it appears to be a fundamental part of modern sociology. Nevertheless, despite their present tedium, these conversations will have the same value and flavour in a hundred years' time, as a picture of rural life in the mid-twentieth century, as the minutes of evidence before the assistant poor law commissioners have for village life in the early 1830's. There are many remarkable potted biographies, illustrating the strength of the family and above all of the father in the family business, for which the historian several generations hence will be grateful.

The Country Craftsman is a valuable study as far as it goes, but again one misses the historical approach to the problem. The craftsman-farmer was an extremely interesting social type in England between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, quite misunderstood by modern academic historians and regarded as "ekeing out a living" at two or three different trades because he could not make a success of one. This is pure nonsense. An economy which allowed a man to be proficient in several different trades is well worth serious study. Mr Williams evidently feels that the historical approach has something to offer, as he discusses some of his difficulties in this respect in an appendix; but a limited use of Kelly's *Directories* is not the way to set about it. No wonder he regarded his results as "disappointing." The census schedules of 1851 would have given him a complete picture of the rural craftsmen in the villages and parishes a hundred years ago, and enabled him to make some fruitful comparisons with the position today, and to answer some of the questions he asks on page 205. He would have had some very interesting distribution maps for saddlers, thatchers, and farriers in 1851 to put beside those for the 1950's in his book. One does not ask the sociologist to carry his historical researches far back—a hundred years or so is sufficient for most of his problems—but some historical depth is absolutely

necessary for a great range of sociological inquiry.

W. G. HOSKINS

DAVID GREEN, *Gardener to Queen Anne: Henry Wise and the Formal Garden*. Oxford University Press, 1956. xx+232 pp., illus. 70s.

This is a slightly ponderous book which sets out to tell the story of Henry Wise's career as gardener to Queen Anne and the gentry of the period. In fact, it goes further and gives a sketch of the rise and decline of the grand formal garden in England. True it is that Wise and his partner George London and their nurseries at Brompton Park (now the site of the South Kensington Museums) played no small part in this movement. But far from being a clear-cut biography it dashes all over the formal garden from parterre to *potager* and on to the great landscapes of William Kent and Capability Brown, stopping to digress on the way on the influence of Le Nôtre, John Evelyn, Pope, and Addison.

In other words, it is more than it sets out to be and as a result rather falls into the ha-ha. It is the work of an enthusiast, and, more than that, a green-fingered one who knows his subject well, but Mr Green is so bound up in his task that he often loses perspective and the narrative becomes more important than the subject. It is none the less a fascinating work.

Once the reader has become immersed in the mammoth activities of the partners at Brompton Park—of the continual stream of "Espalliers of Elms, jessamines, flaming maple of Virginia, Powdred Holly, Pyramid Sweedish junipers, cedars of Libanus, Quinces, Ffillbeards and Barberry's," that poured out of Brompton to destinations all over the kingdom, or absorbed in Wise's removal of 403 thirty-year-old lime-trees for ten shillings each at Hampton Court or his "making ye Bason"—the four-hundred-foot pool for the fountain of Diana, which yielded Wise's diggers twenty-one thousand and five solid yards of earth, he will not readily put it down.

A considerable section of the book is concerned with Wise's great work for the Marlboroughs at Blenheim, and it is a salutary reminder of the transitoriness of the works of man that within a few years of Wise's death Lancelot Brown would obliterate most of Wise's works for ever.

Despite its faults the book is an enjoyable one which tells for the first time much of the story of the brief period of formal glory that our gardens enjoyed between the influence of Le Nôtre and the coming of the landscapers. It is difficult to know why the publishers have chosen to present it in so lavish and sumptuous a format and at a price which will be beyond the reach of most would-be readers.

J. W. Y. HIGGS