

Book Reviews

V. BONHAM-CARTER, *Dartington Hall: the history of an experiment*. Phoenix House, 1958. 224 pp., illus. 30s.

The varied human activities which have from time to time comprised the Dartington Hall community (the unscientific use of the word "experiment" in the title and the blurb is to be deplored, as it is of the nature of experiments that they can be repeated indefinitely if necessary) are well chronicled in this attractively produced and persuasive book. In 1924 Mr and Mrs Elmhirst bought the somewhat dilapidated remains of the ancient estate of Dartington in Devon, then comprising 820 acres, and proceeded not merely to reorganize, extend, and modernize it agriculturally, but also to make it socially and culturally a kind of Owenite colony without the peculiar doctrines associated with Robert Owen. Dartington possessed other advantages over Orbiston, Ralahine, and Harmony Hall. Whereas the Owenite experiments usually suffered from inadequate capital resources, Mrs Elmhirst, being the daughter of one American banker and the widow of a second, was well able to finance not only those communal activities which could hardly be expected to produce a profit, but also those which brought in either inadequate profits or losses. By 1958 the estate had expanded to about 4,000 acres. Unfortunately few details about the finances of the estate are given, although W. E. Hiley's *Examinations* of the financial accounts of Dartington Woodlands Ltd from 1947 to 1955 are noted as being available to any interested researcher. There can be no doubt, however, that the fulfilment of the Elmhirsts' policy of rural reconstruction and enlightened landlordism has been rendered easier by the fact that they purchased most of the estate in a period of agricultural depression and that they have benefited greatly from the revival in British agriculture which has taken place since the 1930's. Nevertheless it should not be forgotten that the research carried out

and the rehabilitation techniques employed at Dartington itself have contributed to this revival and to the growth of world interest in the problems of scientific agriculture, symbolized, for example, by the International Conference of Agricultural Economists. Nearly one-third of the book is taken up by an account of the Dartington Hall school by W. B. Curry, an account redolent of the libertarian idealism of the inter-war period and remarkable for its bland assumptions that boarding schools are best and that the State system of education is almost beneath contempt.

W. H. CHALONER

V. C. FOWKE, *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy*. University of Toronto Press. London: Oxford University Press, 1957. viii+312 pp. 45s.

This is the seventh study to be published under the sponsorship of the Canadian Social Science Research Council in the series on 'Social Credit in Alberta: Its background and development'.

Professor Fowke sets out the results of many years of devoted, painstaking research, and the book can be highly recommended to all careful students of Canadian history. It can also be recommended as useful in extending the horizons and sharpening the judgments of many of those who are now concerned with agricultural development in the poorer countries. Canada's circumstances have been unique in many respects and unlikely to be repeated, but within them basic socio-economic interests and conflicts have been similar to those in many other areas now developing agricultural surpluses.

Professor Fowke's general thesis is that the complex of policies directed towards the creation of a transcontinental Canadian nation required effective occupation of the prairies. This, in turn, required capital and so led to the provision of a "frontier of investment opportunity" without which the

earlier political and territorial dreams would have proved empty. But by 1930 the first phase of "national policy" was about concluded. Titles had been granted by Government to some 120 million acres of land, 58 million of them under free-homestead or grant systems, and the rest by or for sale. That more might well have been granted as free-homestead land is commonly argued, but Professor Fowke emphasizes the difficulties of settlers on free-homestead lands. Initial claims on 99 million acres were made by such settlers, but four out of ten of these claims could not be sustained over the three-year period as required for the granting of full title. And on the 58 million acres of homestead lands on which full titles were granted human sufferings were often severe, not only because of heavy debts and major changes in the money value of farm products, but also because there had been "failure to base the settlement of the prairies on anything in the way of land or climatic surveys." Settlement on the basis of 160-acre farms was also a serious handicap, although the mixture of "free homestead" and "for-sale" arrangements contributed to the "enlargement . . . so essential to sound development of the wheat economy."

Professor Fowke also emphasizes "persistent disregard of the competitive inferiority of agriculture within the price system." He feels impelled to recognize the effectiveness of the concept of parity price in United States farm policy as a unifying force of "great tenacity and a substantial measure of consistency." And he doubts whether Canadian agricultural policy has now any real sense of direction because it lacks "theoretical or conceptual content." But the worst difficulties arising from imperfect competition at the point of first purchase of grains from farmers appear to have been overcome in Canada, and the ablest analysts of U.S. agricultural policies now have weighty arguments against them, not least that they tend to retard the outflow of people from farming. The "competitive inferiority of agriculture" cannot in the long run be removed by State pricing of products, but it could be minimized by encouraging,

through education, training, and appropriate credit arrangements, a greater mobility of farmers and farm workers out of farming, and particularly out of areas with chancy rainfall or infertile soils.

The style is almost throughout clear and attractive, and the index and bibliography are excellent.

J. R. RAEBURN

NORMAN McCORD, *The Anti-Corn Law League, 1838-1846*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1958. 226 pp. 25s.

The Victorians wrote copious memoranda and innumerable letters about the events in which they were participants, and it will be a long time before historians will have exhausted their searches therein. The author of this scholarly monograph on The Anti-Corn League has drawn on papers—notably those of George Wilson, President of the League for most of its life—not previously used.

The main interest of the book is as a study in political history, for Dr McCord is concerned with giving a full and absorbing account of the origins, personalities, structure, and tactics of "one of the first examples of a recurring feature of modern political life, the highly organized political pressure group with its centralized administration and its formidable propaganda apparatus."

This emphasis on the political has, understandably enough, resulted in little mention being made of the contemporary economic background. All the same, the agricultural historian will find some matters of specific interest, more especially the references to the League's attempt to convert the agricultural interests. There were two phases to this attempt.

First, in 1839, when the "Leaguers" thought they could win on the plane of economic and social argument, a series of lecturing tours in the agricultural districts was "designed to bring the farmers to realize that they could be better off without the Corn Laws." The lecturers made no impression, and were often given very rough receptions. For example, "the impudent James Acland

was badly manhandled at Saxmundham . . . and at Arundel one farmer provided a bushel of corn to anyone throwing the lecturer into the river." The costly failure of this first attempt to woo the farmers by economic argument was not due only to the farmers' obstinate refusal "to see the League as an association of their true friends," it was also due to the poor quality of the paid agents entrusted with the work.

In the second determined attempt, which began in 1843, it was the leaders and not the agents who took to the stumps to wean the farmers from protection. Not only did they strive to prove that the Corn Laws were injurious to agriculture, they also sought to drive a wedge between farmer and landlord. Cobden, for example, drew attention to "the broad distinction which exists between the landed and the agricultural interest," while Bright aimed his shafts at the hated Game Laws. But it was all to little avail, for "the English farmers declined to see in an organization dominated by the manufacturing interest a better friend to agriculture than the old leaders of the landed interest."

Two powerful weapons in the armoury of the League were the manipulation of electoral rolls and the circulation of propaganda tracts. Both have an interest to the agricultural historian.

As one means of increasing their electoral strength the League actively helped in the buying of the freehold qualification "which made a man equal at the polls to the greatest territorial magnate in the county." One example given by Dr McCord has a distinct agricultural flavour. In October 1845 Cobden and Bright seriously considered buying at a price of about £60,000 to £80,000 a landed estate in Bucks with a view to creating 1,000 county votes. It was to be put out, however, that the purpose was "to establish a model farm with a model lease, model offices and model cottages with gardens, to prove our faith in our principles that the soil is as capable of as great a profitable development as manufacturers." What a pity that nothing seems to have come of this pioneering idea in land settlement.

In the war of pamphlets which reached "millions in numbers and tons in weight" a great deal of effort was expended on the "enlightenment" of the rural mind. In keeping with the League's usual practice of employing experts, the team of pamphleteers included several farmers who wrote on agriculture and supplied the orators with ammunition. In a letter to one of them Cobden admits that he was "profoundly ignorant of the practices of agriculture, all I know I learn from you and others." Alexander Sommerville was an influential scribe, but he, at least, wished to keep his connection with the League a secret, and, signing his articles as by 'Whistler at the Plough', he preferred to pose as "a disinterested observer of the rural scene."

One would have liked to hear more about the League's supporters amongst the farmers. Is it too much to hope that some agricultural historian will soon do for agriculture what Miss Lucy Brown has done for the secret supporters of the League at the Board of Trade in her book which has appeared since the publication of Dr McCord's admirable study?

EDGAR THOMAS

R. P. DORE, *Land Reform in Japan*. Published for the Royal Institute of International Affairs by Oxford University Press, 1959. xviii + 510 pp. 55s.

The author is a Canadian university teacher who acquired a knowledge of the Japanese language and then spent a year, not among officials and professors, but actually living in Japanese villages. A reviewer whose knowledge of Japan is confined to that obtained from reading economic and statistical documents, and a two weeks' visit, would indeed require considerable hardihood to criticize him. After searching the text in an *exigeant* manner for economic or statistical errors, and finding none, the reviewer then considered himself entitled to sit back and thoroughly enjoy the rest of the book, which gives a most vivid and down-to-earth account of what Japanese villagers are really like, how they organize their work, their local politics,

their many virtues, and their very human failings.

The opening chapter gives a tantalizingly brief account of a land nationalization proposal which was enacted, but which soon broke down, in the seventh century A.D. After some centuries of bloody baronial wars Japan, about 1600, entered the peaceful, but rigid and unprogressive, Tokugawa Period which lasted until the Revolution of 1868. Tokugawa society showed many of the characteristics—in a more extreme form—of Bourbon France. Some half of the peasants' crops was taken in rents, nominally due to the Emperor, but in fact used to support the nobility and a great number of functionless *samurai*. There was some coinage, but rice formed a *de facto* currency for most transactions. Even under these rigid conditions, however, a considerable urban population grew up. Cunning rice merchants acted as money-lenders, and many of them, like their European counterparts, eventually bought or married their way into noble families.

Tokugawa Japan is interesting enough, but modern Japan, with which this book is principally concerned, really does demand the attention of historians. Nowhere in the world is there such an interesting 'laboratory' of rapid economic growth. Japan at the time of the Meiji Revolution of 1868 was far more backward, illiterate, and isolated than Russia. The Emperor Meiji, a statesman of genius, disbanded the *samurai* and told them to go and do some useful work, and established an Army under his direct control. To pay for the modernization of the country he established land taxes, taking approximately 35 per cent of the crop (reduced to about 25 per cent in 1878).

But it did not occur to this otherwise far-seeing statesman that a silver currency, under world trading conditions of the late nineteenth century, might rapidly lose its purchasing power. Land taxes had been fixed in money. The real return from them steadily fell. The public revenues were supplemented by other forms of taxation. With the fall in the real burden of land tax, the price of land

rose, and it became attractive to urban investors. The private agricultural landowners of Japan were thus a comparatively recent development, not the descendants of the ancient feudal nobility. Much of the land remained peasant-owned throughout.

Meiji taught his simple people that they owed him three duties, namely to pay their taxes, to educate their children, and to serve in the Army. The author argues very trenchantly that these have been the real equalizing forces in Japanese life. The suffrage became universal in 1925; but this was of secondary importance compared with these other factors. Unlike his English counterpart, the son of a Japanese landowning family studied at the village school (primary education was made universal as early as 1886) and served in the ranks in the Army. When General MacArthur directed the Japanese Government to introduce legislation for buying out the landowners in 1946, public opinion was quite prepared for the change—though most Japanese seem to have thought, as does the author, that the compensation should have been reasonable and not nugatory.

The book is full of fascinating glimpses of Japanese rural life. Many nineteenth-century landlords were as zealous as our own Victorians to improve the moral tone of their villages. One landlord told his tenants that they ought to start work at 3 a.m. during the summer, got up and walked around the village to see how far his instructions were obeyed, and placed a signboard bearing the legend "Commendable Household" outside the houses of the obedient, until the whole village was shamed into conformity.

But apart from such efforts, the landlords did not have a good record for encouraging agricultural progress; on the whole they discouraged the use of chemical fertilizers, which the independent peasants favoured.

Most of the agricultural work in Japan, to this day, is done with hand tools. Horses and draught oxen are rare; and indeed would be of doubtful economic value in Japan's tiny rice-plots. The hand-tool cultivator never-

theless makes intelligent use of fertilizers, insecticides, weed killers, etc. and now small five-h.p. tractors, worked by contractors, are rapidly coming into use.

During the years of grave agricultural impoverishment in the 1930's the Nohon-Shugi (literally "Agriculture-is-the-base") Movement sprang up rapidly, teaching that agriculture, pursued in the traditional manner, was the base alike of wealth and of virtue. This movement had much following among army officers, and must carry some of the blame for the insurrection of 1936 (when the Prime Minister was murdered), and also for the Army's aggressive external policy.

The later chapters give a full, frank, and earthy account of how democratic politics work in a Japanese village. Contributions to party funds in return for services rendered, and 'jobs for the boys', are not phenomena confined to Western democracies. But the author much prefers modern Japan, with all its faults, to Japan as it was a generation ago.

COLIN CLARK

PETER MICHELSEN, *Danish Wheel Ploughs, an illustrated catalogue*. International Secretariat for Research on the History of Agricultural Implements, Copenhagen, 1959. No price stated.

This is a catalogue which provides a photograph of all known specimens of wheel ploughs in Danish museums. It is the result of a survey carried out by Mr Michelsen to provide in a readily available form source material which may be of use to research workers. In addition to the photographs, which number 192, there is a map showing the distribution of the ploughs throughout Denmark. The terminology adopted follows closely that used by F. G. Payne in 'The Plough in Ancient Britain', *Archaeological Journal*, 1947, and Branimir Bratanić, 'On the Antiquity of the One-Sided Plough in Europe', *Laos*, 11, 1952. It is a welcome attempt to provide a catalogue, which as a result of standardized terminology can be used by workers in other countries and which has the added attraction of being printed in English.

H. L. GRAY, *English Field Systems*. The Merlin Press, 112 Whitfield Street, London, W.1, 1959. x+568 pp. 63s.

Although a standard work, containing much material of permanent value, Gray's book has been out of print for some years. A new edition is therefore welcome, but as agrarian history has not stood still since 1915, it would have been well if some competent scholar had been asked to state briefly where Gray's findings have been modified by later research. This has not been done. We have here a photographic reprint of the 1915 edition, with no new matter except a copyright notice (in which there is a glaring misprint) on the back of the title-page. It is bound in a quite astonishingly repellent black cloth, on which, and on the jacket, the title of the book is printed incorrectly.

H. P. R. FINBERG

W. G. HOSKINS, *Local History in England*.

Longmans, 1959. x+208 pp., illus. 21s.

Dr Hoskins and his publications need no introduction to readers of this journal who will know that this book will be both interesting and useful. Its main purpose is to help the amateur local historian. Methods of work, the publication of results, and the differences between local history and antiquarianism are discussed, especially in chapters entitled 'The Local Historian Today' and 'Writing and Publishing'. Some neglected fields of investigation are also considered, in particular the local community as an organic entity, and fieldwork in both rural and urban areas. These give rise to chapters on The Old Community, Parish, Manor, and Land, Church, Chapel, and School, the Topography of Towns, their Social and Economic History, Fieldwork on Landscape and Buildings, and Health, Disease, and Population. The author is often original and always informative, practical, and stimulating.

Few criticisms are provoked. Selective in content, the book is not meant to provide a comprehensive introduction to sources, but guide books (p. 26), civil parish records (c. 4), Land Utilisation Survey Reports (p. 59), and

Geological Survey *Memoirs* might have been mentioned, and the value of museum material should have been stressed. 'English Local Historians' (c. 2) is most interesting but, except for the last section, seems out of place. Advice on the technique of note-making would have been helpful. Finally, if we remember Dr Hoskins's own criteria, is Nathan's *Annals of West Coker* really an example to be followed (p. 170)?

The minor nature of these criticisms speaks for itself. This is a most valuable book. Leland was driven mad by his studies. Certainly careful reading of *Local History in England* should save both amateur and professional investigators, as well as their readers, from this fate.

ROBERT DOUCH

JAMES R. BARCLAY and ALEXANDER KEITH,
The Aberdeen-Angus Breed—a History.
The Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society, 1958.
xvi+744 pp., illus. No price stated.

This is less a straightforward history of the breed than a detailed and valuable collection of facts and information about it. It is fifty years since a history of the Aberdeen-Angus last appeared. The present work was begun by the late James Barclay, who was for thirty-six years secretary of the Society. It has been completed by Alexander Keith who succeeded him as secretary.

Much of the book is devoted to summaries of show successes at home and abroad over the years; but there are also useful chapters on the early pioneers and notable early herds. The book concludes with a survey of the export trade which has been of such importance to Angus breeders, and notes on the more important modern herds. It is well illustrated and will provide a most useful source-book for all those interested not only in Angus history, but in the history of British livestock.

R. TROW-SMITH, *A History of British Livestock Husbandry, 1700–1900*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959. x+352 pp., illus. 40s. In this volume Mr Trow-Smith contributes a sequel to his earlier *History of British Livestock Husbandry to 1700* and thus brings the

story up to the end of the nineteenth century. On the completion of this work he deserves congratulations, for we at last possess a valuable, modern, and well written work on the development of British livestock. This volume provides a worthy successor to the first and may even find a wider market, as it deals with a period of more immediate interest to those concerned with modern livestock.

A lot of what Mr Trow-Smith has to say will already be familiar to historians as he draws widely on published sources, but it is none the less valuable for this, particularly as he has gathered together contemporary and modern material on many controversies and re-valued them. The stature of Bakewell, for example, does not diminish in his account, but at the same time the contribution of lesser men, such as Webster of Canley, who have never had their due, is made clearer. There is a useful analysis, too, of the spread and importance of winter feed crops in the eighteenth century.

The author is at his best when telling the story of the development of the breeds. When he moves to other subjects he sometimes proves weaker. The nine lines devoted to transhumance contribute little, the material on marketing could have been strengthened, the whole subject of horses gets rather slight treatment, and the three pages on the veterinary revolution in the nineteenth century merely leave the reader anxious for more. It is perhaps also a valid conclusion to say that as the sources become more prolific in the late nineteenth century, the result seems less satisfactory, but it would be wrong to seem ungrateful for the great task which Mr Trow-Smith has undertaken. The two volumes now form a work which will be a standard one for many years to come.

J. W. Y. HIGGS

REGINALD LENNARD, *Rural England, 1086–1135. A Study of Social and Agrarian Conditions*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959. viii+410 pp. 45s.

This learned and original work is described by the author, formerly Reader in Economic

History in the university of Oxford, as "an attempt to describe the economic conditions of rural life in England during the Norman period." It is a study not of agricultural techniques, for which the evidence is wanting, but of agrarian history, of the great feudal estates and the holdings of the peasants, of the methods by which the land was exploited, and of the various classes of men who dwelt on and worked the land. The book deals with five major topics: the make-up and distribution of the estates of the Church and of the greater feudal lords; the management of these estates; the relation between manor and village; the economic and social condition of the peasants; and, finally, the parish churches, their endowments and their clergy. The evidence, largely derived from Domesday and the surveys of the next half-century, is complex and often confusing, and, as the author insists, does not lend itself to easy generalization. It is, indeed, a major purpose of the present work to re-examine and revise the conclusions of earlier workers in this same field.

The England which the Normans conquered was already an "old country," a country long settled. It was also, after the Norman occupation, a country of vast agricultural estates, in which less than 200 tenants-in-chief held rather more than half the total value of the land. The manors of which these estates were composed were, for the most part, widely dispersed and of very varying value. How then were they exploited? Mr Lennard shows that farming-out of estates was a much more common practice than has hitherto been suspected, that many manors described as "in demesne" were in fact put to farm, that most farms were held on leases for cash payments, and that stock and land leases were frequent. The obligations of the lessees, the conditions of tenure, and the relations between the farmers and the manorial tenants are discussed in detail.

Domesday Book was compiled on the assumption that the country was more or less fully manorialized. The implied identity between manor and village has long been known to be an illusion, and the author shows that

the 'normal' village is a conception closer to reality than the 'typical' manor, and that the contrast between the relatively unmanorialized Danelaw and some parts of the north, and the rest of the country, is not to be exaggerated. A wide variety of tenurial arrangements was matched by considerable variety in the agrarian economy. If agriculture held pride of place, mining and milling, pig and sheep farming, and other minor industries played an important part in the national economy. The same wide variety is again apparent in the social conditions of the peasants. Men who were, from the legal point of view, of the same status, differed greatly in their economic conditions, and, as the author insists, the peasants of England did not form a single class. Local and regional differences, at times of a bewildering complexity, once again emphasize the danger for the historian of accepting at their face value the classifications of the Domesday commissioners.

The student of English ecclesiastical history will be grateful to Mr Lennard for a long and admirable discussion of the parish churches and clergy of Norman England, and in particular for his account of the decline and disintegration of the minsters of the late Old English period. On this, as on so many other matters, his work is clearly destined to be for many years to come a standard authority, and it is much to be desired that later editions will be supplied with a rather more adequate index.

GERARD CULKIN

HILDA GRIEVE, *The Great Tide*. xii+884 pp., illus. Essex County Council, 1959. 30s.

Presumably the purpose of the Essex County Council in publishing this book was to have some record for the benefit of future generations lest such a disaster as the tidal flood of 1953 should recur. Fortunately they entrusted the work to Miss Hilda Grieve, and they are to be congratulated on their judgement. It is not too much to say that she has produced a masterpiece. This is not merely an account of an administrative achievement. We are given an accurate history of the drainage system in Essex and an account of the meteor-

logical and oceanic conditions favourable to tidal surges. This account is not only accurate but interestingly written. As for the description of the actual flood as it progressed from Harwich to Barking Creek, this is not only interesting but exciting.

The disaster was not altogether unexpected, but certainly it was greater than those acquainted with tidal conditions would have supposed. It is clear from the account given that much able and devoted work was done by the local authorities, and it is fitting that special mention should be made of the Local Authority principally concerned, the Essex Rivers Board, and in particular to its vice-chairman who was in charge of the operations, and its clerk and engineer.

J. E. MAHER

BASIL E. CRACKNELL, *Canvey Island: The History of a Marshland Community*. Department of English Local History, University of Leicester, Occasional Paper No. 12. Leicester: The University Press, 1959. 48 pp., illus. 12s.

On the night of 31 January 1953 a large area of the east coast of England suffered severe inundation. Amongst the more seriously flooded areas was Canvey Island on the Essex shore of the Thames estuary. This was no new experience for the island. The first phase of its history in the Romano-British period, during which it was occupied by a community of salt-makers, was brought to an end by a great submergence towards the end of the second century. In the middle ages it produced sheep and cheese, but this settlement of shepherds was threatened towards the end of the sixteenth century by the sea. Accordingly Dutch engineers and workmen were called in to strengthen the island's defences. When this work was done a number of the Dutch workmen remained as farmers, forming a Netherlandish community. They stayed till the end of the seventeenth century and then unaccountably disappeared. Their place was taken by English farmers who flourished till they became victims of the agricultural depression of the late nineteenth century. In

1881 and in 1897 the sea walls were breached again. In recent years the island has been settled by an urban community, who have now to struggle not only against the sea but also against the threatening tide of industrialism. In this prize essay Dr Cracknell has outlined the story neatly and succinctly, though those wishing to pursue the subject further would have welcomed more bibliographical assistance. Once again the John Nichols Prize has evoked a most useful contribution to local history.

W. E. MINCHINTON

A. K. ASTBURY, *The Black Fens*. Golden Head Press, 1958. xii + 218 pp., illus. 42s.

This is a comprehensive account of the fens of the Isle of Ely. The author has devoted much study to the subject and it is clear from the acknowledgements in the preface that he has consulted those best able to give him information.

The book is not, as one might expect, a mere account of the drainage system. Much emphasis has been placed on what is the most difficult problem of peat sinkage, and there is an interesting account of the difficulties of building on a peat foundation. The passage on Rodhams and the Old Fen Meres throws light on a less well-known aspect of the subject. Indeed it tends to make one regret the success of fen drainage, as in the case of Winchelsea Mere. There is a considerable discussion on the old course of the rivers and on work carried out in Roman times. This, while bound to be speculative, considerably adds to the interest of the book.

J. E. MAHER

HANS-HELMUT WÄCHTER, *Ostpreussische Domänenvorwerke im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Beiheft zum Jahrbuch der Albertus Universität, Königsberg/Pr., xix. Holzner Verlag, Würzburg, 1958. 186 + xxiv pp. DM 12. This is a study of farming and administration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on a group of farms belonging to the Teutonic Knights in East Prussia. It was presented by the author as a thesis at the Georg-August

University, Göttingen, in 1957 under the supervision of Professor W. Abel, already well known to English readers for his studies of the agrarian depression in the later Middle Ages.

East Prussia was first colonized in the thirteenth century by the Teutonic Knights, but by the fifteenth century the great estates carved out in the first period of settlement had been broken down into smaller and smaller units until the country consisted of small peasant farms, many of which had been completely abandoned as a result of the depression. Rising prosperity in the sixteenth century caused the Teutonic Knights to take into their own hands again the farms which they had let on lease in the previous century, and this new policy gave rise to a collection of farm records on which Dr Wächter's work is based. They enable him to estimate the numbers of stock on the farms of the Order (rising to a peak in the early years of the seventeenth century and declining thereafter), and to calculate seeding rates and the yield of crops. Sharp fluctuations in yields from year to year he attributes to the uncertain labour supply and secondly to the varying efficiency with which the farms were administered at different times.

All farms were organized for the production of grain for the market, rye being the chief crop, barley second in importance, and oats third. In the sixteenth century East Prussia became the corn supplier of Holland, England, and Germany. And as demand increased, so cattle and sheep numbers were increased in order to maintain the fertility of the fields. But the weakness of farm organization lay in the uncertainty of the labour supply. For whereas in England by this time nearly all farm labour was rendered by wage

workers, the farms of the Teutonic Knights still depended to a large extent on the labour services of the peasantry. Shepherds, hop cultivators, and some other skilled workers were engaged on special contracts, sharing their expenses and profits with their employers, and some work was done by cottagers (Gärtner) who, in return for a house and some land, undertook a certain number of days' work on the farm each year and were paid wages for additional work. But labour services were indispensable, and when the farming boom of the sixteenth century gave way to depression in the seventeenth, landlords who attempted to increase their demands for services from the peasantry found themselves clutching in distress at a straw. The peasants, already hard pressed by bad harvest, plague, and deepening poverty, fled to Poland or to the towns. Dr Wächter's story ends, therefore, on the same melancholy note on which it begins. In 1508 over 45 per cent of the holdings in three districts near Königsberg were deserted. At the end of the seventeenth century 55 per cent of the peasant holdings on twenty-eight estates of the Order were empty.

Dr Wächter makes much of the effects of war and associated bad harvests and plague in accounting for the seventeenth-century depression in East Prussia. But he brings forward no evidence to show their precise effect upon the individual farms which he has studied. The seventeenth-century depression was not an exclusively Prussian phenomenon. It seems to have affected the whole of Europe in varying degrees, as war did not. Hence, scholars interested in economic trends in the seventeenth century will find much in this book to strengthen the argument for a "general check to economic development" in this period.

JOAN THIRSK

Books Received

- V. BONHAM-CARTER, *Farming the Land*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959. 162 pp., illus. 15s.
- N. M. DRUZHININ, V. K. SIVKOV, V. K. YATSUNSKII, and A. M. ANFIMOV (eds.), *Material on the History of Agriculture and Peasantry of the U.S.S.R.*, Volume III. Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., Institute of History, Moscow, 1959. 494 pp. 19p. 30k.
- R. H. HANCOCK, *The Rôle of the Bracero in the Economic and Cultural Dynamics of Mexico*. Hispanic American Society, Stanford, California, 1959. 146 pp. No price stated.
- A. HARRIS, *The Open Fields of East Yorkshire*. East Yorkshire Local History Series, No. 9. The East Yorkshire Local History Society, 2 St Martin's Lane, Micklegate, York, 1959. 26 pp. 3s.
- ALLAN JOBSON, *An Hour-Glass on the Run*. Michael Joseph, 1959. 184 pp., illus. 18s.
- L. S. PROKOFJEVA, *The Patrimonial Estate in the Seventeenth Century from the Materials of the Spaso-Prilufsky Monastery*. Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., Moscow. 178 pp. 8p. 90k.
- M. G. SERGEENKO, *Sketches on the Agriculture of Ancient Italy*. Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., Moscow, 1958. 246 pp., illus. 12p. 40k.
- AXEL STEENSBERG, *Bonder*. G.E.C. Gads Forlag, Copenhagen. 94 pp., illus. No price stated.
- S. I. VOLKOV, *Peasants of the Estates Cognizable in the Palace Court in Moscow District in the Middle of the Eighteenth Century (30th to 70th years)*. Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., Institute of History, Moscow, 1959. 262 pp. 9p. 40k.
- N. A. YEGIZAROVA, *Agrarian Crisis by the End of the Nineteenth Century in Russia*. Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., 1959. 192 pp. 7p.

NOTES AND COMMENTS (continued from page 46)

Prehistoric Archaeology. Professor Piggott also read a short paper by Mr R. B. K. Stevenson, Keeper of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, who was unfortunately unable to attend. After lunch in the University Union, the afternoon session opened with a paper by Mr Malcolm MacSween on A Geographer's Approach to Agrarian Change in Scotland after 1700, and he was followed by Mr J. A. Symon, who spoke on the Boom and Slump in Scottish Agriculture in the Early Nineteenth Century. The conference concluded with a visit to the School of Scottish Studies during which tea was served.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR BINDING

Messrs Hill & Pavier, of 47 Ouseley Close,

Marston, Oxford (telephone number Oxford 49343), have been appointed binders of the AGRICULTURAL HISTORY REVIEW. They will bind Volumes I-V in one case and Volumes VI and VII in one case. In the future the Society will issue a title-page with every second volume in order that they may be bound in units of two volumes. The case will be green cloth board embossed with 22-carat gold and bearing the words "The Agricultural History Review" at the top and the volume numbers and date at the bottom. There will be a line of gold decoration at the top and bottom. The cost per binding will be 24s. plus postage. Members who wish to take advantage of this arrangement should send their copies of the REVIEW direct to Messrs Hill & Pavier, together with the title-pages.