

# THE EVOLUTION OF RURAL SETTLEMENT IN SCOTLAND

## AN INTRODUCTION

In 1961, the School of Scottish Studies in the University of Edinburgh invited a number of scholars to take part in what was termed "an intercultural Symposium of historians, archæologists, geographers and ethnologists" on the subject of *The Evolution of Rural Settlement in Scotland and Beyond*. This gathering, which was held in the School from October 3rd-6th, was the third in a series of meetings dealing with subjects within the scope of this research institute, earlier ones having been devoted to *Material Culture Research* (1959) and *Place-Name Studies* (1960).<sup>1</sup> The circle of persons invited was more or less restricted to scholars from Great Britain and Ireland actively engaged in academic research in the central subject, or working on such aspects of adjacent disciplines as had some bearing, or could throw some light, upon it. Special invitations were extended to Mrs. R. Frimannslund Holmsen of Oslo (Norway) and Professor H. Uhlig of Giessen (Germany) because of their expert knowledge and experience in this specialised field of study. Although figures varied from session to session, the whole Symposium was attended by about forty to fifty people.

The conference was divided into three main sub-sections. On October 4th, lectures and discussions centred around the theme "Rural Settlement in Scotland", with the following papers being read: Professor G. W. S. Barrow (Newcastle), "Rural Settlement in Central and Eastern Scotland: The Medieval Evidence"; Dr. Betty Cay (Edinburgh), "The Lowlands before the Improvers"; Dr. R. A. Gailey, "The Highlands before the Improvers"; and a joint contribution by Dr. A. B. Taylor and Mr. H. Pálsson (Edinburgh) on "The Scandinavian Settlements in the North and West". On October 5th, speakers read papers on evidence from "beyond" Scotland under the heading of "Rural Settlement in Britain and Ireland": Mr. Peter Sawyer (Birmingham) dealt with "England, with special reference to the North"; Mr. Glanville R. J. Jones (Leeds) with "Wales"; Mr. Kevin Danaher

(Dublin) with "Ireland"; Dr. Elwyn Davies (Cardiff) with "The Land System of the Isle of Man" (read in the lecturer's absence by Mr. B. R. S. Megaw, Director of the School); and Mr. Charles Thomas (Edinburgh) with "Cornwall". The final day was devoted to the subject of "Current Research and the Future", with contributions from Mr. Malcolm Gray (Aberdeen) and Mr. Cyril Halstead (Glasgow) on "Documentary Research", and from Dr. Bruce Proudfoot (Durham) and Mr. B. R. S. Megaw (Edinburgh) on "Research in the Field". The Symposium was brought to a close by Professor J. Wreford Watson, Convenor of the Advisory Committee of the School of Scottish Studies.

Although most speakers at this Symposium which was the first gathering of its kind in these islands, kindly offered their papers for publication in the School's journal, it was with great regret that those not falling within the geographical limitations of *Scottish Studies* had to be declined. The papers presented here—three long articles and two shorter contributions—are therefore to be regarded as a selection from a much wider range of lectures given at the Symposium; they are not even the entire Scottish contribution to the meeting. A word about their nature also seems necessary. Whereas Prof. Barrow's, Mr. Gray's and Dr. Gailey's articles are based on full-length papers, Dr. Taylor's contribution is meant to be a summary of research already done, and Prof. Uhlig's note stems from a valuable contribution he made to one of the many lively discussions and which he was subsequently asked to put into writing.

Much of this expanded issue of *Scottish Studies*, then, is a direct result of the School's Symposium of October 1961 and must be seen against the background of that first pioneering meeting on the subject of *Rural Settlement in Scotland (and Beyond)*. This, and the common theme, however, are their only loose links, and each article is published on its own merits and in its own right.

#### NOTE

- <sup>1</sup> Reports on these two meetings are to be found in *Scottish Studies* 4 (1960) 120, and 5 (1961) 111-12, respectively.

EDITOR