

Book Reviews

English Ritual Drama: A Geographical Index, by E. C. Cawte, Alex Helm and N. Peacock. The Folk-Lore Society, London 1967. 30s.

This is the second part of a study of the geographical distribution of the ceremonial dance and associated customs in Great Britain; the first part, 'A Geographical Index of the Ceremonial Dance in Great Britain', was published in the *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 1960. This, the second part, attempts to list, by counties, every place in Britain known to have had a Folk Play. By Folk Play the compilers mean 'one or other of three types of Play in the English Language . . . which we believe to be a form of the ceremony of revitalisation'. The editors examine the material as 'a traditional ceremony rather than a series of literary texts', and classify the ceremonies in terms of their basic action, ignoring local names of performers and performances like Mummers, Morris Dancers, Pace Eggers, *etc.* On the basis of action they distinguish three main types of Folk Play—the Hero-Combat (H), the Wooing or Bridal (W), and the Sword Dance (S). The W plays usually end with an H sequence, such types being classified WH. Plays whose performance depends on outside influence are regarded as intrusive and omitted, but genuinely local revivals are included as valid traditional examples of the continuum of folk culture. There are brief introductory chapters on origins and distribution (the distribution maps could well have been much clearer), and appendices on old plays impossible to classify and representative examples of texts. There is an extensive and invaluable bibliography. The Index proper or Table of Locations furnishes by counties the location, grid reference, date of last performance, time of year when performed, survival of full, fragmentary or no text at all, class of play (H, W, S), and source. The editors modestly disclaim any exhaustion of sources, and appeal for co-operation in improving the continuing index. They are, however, to be warmly congratulated on a meticulous piece of work which places all students of the Folk Play deeply in their debt. Only on the basis of the source evidence here listed will it be possible in future to evaluate the Folk Play or enter into discussion of the many problems still concerned with it. In Scotland particularly a more concerted effort is needed to gather together the fast-disappearing evidence of the existence of the Folk Play. The following brief comments confine themselves to the Scottish material.

That the Mummers' Play is essentially of English provenance is borne out in several ways. Four locations only are recorded for Wales, where presumably the Tenby Play, which the editors cite from L. P. Barnaschone, 'Manners and Customs of the People of Tenby in the Eighteenth Century', *The Cambrian Journal* IV (1857), is the same as

that reproduced by R. Chambers in *The Book of Days* (1886, vol. 11, pp. 740-1) from what he calls *Tales and Traditions of Tenby*. Thirty-five instances only are recorded from Scotland, all from the Lowlands, a figure which is easily surpassed by a good many individual English counties, by, for example, Gloucestershire (54), Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (64), Lancashire (55, with a notable preference for Easter) and Yorkshire (122). The Scottish list of locations could be slightly extended by reference to Anna J. Mill, *Mediaeval Plays in Scotland* (St Andrews 1927, pp. 11-16), who provides the earliest Scottish evidence of folk plays and a list of known Scottish versions or references. She cites, from J. F. Leishman, *A Son of Knox* (pp. 109-16) an interesting Forfar (Angus) version (a location not included in the present Index) in which the giant Golishan is slain by Bol Bendo the Abbot of Fools, Sir Alexander (the normal Scottish champion corresponding to St George) appearing only in the presentation. She also cites a Stirlingshire version (*Stirling Antiquary* 1893, vol. 1, pp. 67-9) which may supplement the Stirlingshire references in the Index. Miss Mill herself collected 'several new versions from oral sources'; she gives no details, but these are presumably still available. All the Scottish versions in the Index are Hero Plays, the editors remarking (p. 14) that Sword Dance Plays are 'found in reasonably well-defined areas, and only in England'. Miss Mill, however, shows that the Sword Dance was formerly known in Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and gives illuminating details of costume and dance (pp. 11-12).

Though the Play of St George was known in Scotland, the usual hero was Alexander of Macedon, and his opponent Galatian (Goloshan *etc.*), whence the guisards are commonly called Galatians. The entry under Galatian in *The Scottish National Dictionary* also supplements the Index, adding the shires of Argyll (around Inveraray), Dumbarton and Peebles. David Irving (*The History of Scottish Poetry*, Edinburgh 1865, pp. 362-5) recalls the mummers or guisards from his own childhood in Langholm, Dumfries, a county not in the Index, and confirms the existence of the Play of St George beside the more usual Alexander.

Three periods seem especially significant in the decline of the Folk Play in Scotland—the Reformation, with its policy of suppression; the 1890s, probably linked with rapid industrialisation; and the First World War. The following is an account (unpublished) of a Mummers' Play performed at Hallowe'en in 1898 in the village of Hurlet, East Renfrewshire, near Barrhead; the informant's words are retained, with minor omissions: 'I was six years of age . . . There would only be about five of us and we were told that we would get in five houses including my own. We had to disguise ourselves as much as possible with clothes, also our manner of speaking, so as to deceive the people in the houses. On Hallowe'en night we all met in a little sort of harness room attached to Renfrew's Cartwright and Smithy . . . There we dressed, and in a little fire we burned a lot of corks which were used to colour our hands, legs and faces. Two big girls helped to dress us . . . We all had our wee part to play. Each of us began with the words "Here comes I"—Somebody. I only remember my own part:

Here comes I Sir Robert the Bruce,
 I've spent my life in English juice:
 English juice is Scotsman's glory,
 Who is the man who will stand before me?

Immediately another from the end of the queue stepped out armed with a frail wooden sword and challenged me to battle. From under my cape or cloak I pulled out a tattie champer and smashed it [opponent's sword] to smithereens. . . . The only other piece I remember was Wee Mickey Funny:

Here comes I Wee Micky Funny,
 I am the man that lifts the money.
 I've got pooches doon tae ma knees,
 An' we'd be thankful to take what you please.

As you would expect he was so funny with his very long coat and big sugar-bag pooches [*Anglice* pouches, pockets]. My dress by the way was a girl or a lady's red hat with all the rim cut off, an old cape over my shoulders, a girl's short skirt, and white tape wound round my legs. I should have stated that as we entered the houses we all shouted:

Hallowe'en, Hallowe'en,
 Three wee witches on the green,
 One black, one white,
 And the other dancing on the dyke.

Needless to say that with apples at 8 to 10 lbs. per 1/- and our pockets rattling wi' nuts and bawbees we had a happy time' [informant: Alexander Mackenzie, Barrhead]. The central incident of this play is the immortal story, known to every Scottish child from illustrated school history-books, of Bruce on his sheltie slaying de Bohun at Bannockburn. That other patriot Wallace is the hero of the version cited in Andrew Cheviot's *Proverbs, Proverbial Expressions and Popular Rhymes of Scotland* (Paisley 1896, p. 169, *sub* Hogmanay).

By the 1920s the Folk Play had receded almost irretrievably from Renfrewshire. At Johnstone in West Renfrewshire in the 1920s the reviewer as a child often went out as a Galoshie at Hallowe'en, face blackened with soot, disguised in women's finery. Accompanied by two or three others he did the rounds of neighbours' houses. The galoshies' plea was 'Please help the Galoshies'. If lucky they were rewarded with an apple, some nuts or a copper. When requested they sang or recited anything of their own choice, generally on the door-step. No memory whatever remained of any play or parts in a play.

J. BRAIDWOOD

Seálta ón mBlascaod, edited by Kenneth Jackson. An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann, Dublin 1968. Pp. 96. 7s. 6d.

This book is a reprint of an article which first appeared in *Béaloideas* 8 (1938), and was issued in book form in the following year, where Professor Jackson published nearly forty stories collected from Peig Sayers between the years 1932 and 1937. The editor has divided the stories into a number of categories—International Tales, Romantic Tales and Adventures, Anecdotes, Moral Tales, Saints and Miracles, Tales of the Supernatural and Ballads—and together they give some idea of the rich and varied repertoire of the good *seanchaí*—now fast disappearing from the *Gaeltacht*.

In the notes to the stories we are given English summaries of each together with extensive references to other published instances, some of which, however, could have been updated with this reprinting. For instance the question of other Irish occurrences of AT 712—the *Crescentia* story—can be answered by Ó Súilleabháin and Christiansen in the *Types of the Irish Folktale* where thirteen other instances are noted from manuscripts in the Irish Folklore Commission's archives. Similarly, stories 26 and 27 are dealt with in Máire MacNeill's *The Festival of Lughnasa*—legend type B and type H, respectively.

Turning to the text of the stories, we find that they were originally taken down in phonetic script. The orthography actually used is described as 'simplified Irish . . . based on the traditional spelling but adapted to the dialect . . . The aim is to give as closely as possible, within the limits of the orthography, exactly what the story-teller said, including all dialectisms, all individual peculiarities, and all instances of plain bad grammar. Individualisms are important, for recorders who know their dialect well have a natural tendency unconsciously to ignore these, and to substitute the usual local form. In these respects nothing has been altered.' It is difficult to take exception to most of these aims and the orthography which Professor Jackson has devised seems to fulfil its purpose well, although obviously, without using the full resources of the International Phonetic Alphabet, there will be a number of aspects of the pronunciation which cannot be conveniently or adequately handled. The editor seems to have picked for representation those phonetic features of the dialect which he considered most important and, although at times the script may read oddly to one used to the more traditional spelling, the result is a highly readable and clear text (there are only seventeen short footnotes in 85 pages), with the discussion on the orthography and dialect peculiarities confined to the notes at the end.

One might take issue, however, on the question of whether it is important, or even useful, to include individualisms and 'plain bad grammar' in the texts. If the stories are to be used as illustrations of folktales without regard to the dialect in which they were told then the traditional Irish orthography would have done very well. If the aim of the editor was to show up phonetic and phonological features of a dialect-speaker (as presumably was his intention in originally using the I.P.A.) then phonetic symbolisation should have been used in publication. To use an orthography which is

legible to most students of Irish and to include individual features of pronunciation and 'bad grammar' which would be of interest only to the specialist in dialectology seems to be a mistake. Presumably the editor was caught between a desire to give a phonological description of the dialect and the need to provide material for *Béaloideas*—he must be said to have succeeded very well in his task of *freastal an dá thrá*.

On a more general note, it must be admitted that this reviewer finds difficulty at times in understanding the form in which certain folktales in *Béaloideas* have been published. I have in mind stories such as those in the present book, in *Seanchas Ghleann Ghaibhle* by Éamonn Ó Tuathail (*Béaloideas* 4, 1934 suppl.), or *Sgéaltaí ó Thír Eoghain* by Seán Mac Airt (*Béaloideas* 20, 1950 pp. 3–48) where folklore material in Irish is given in a non-standard orthography and usually accompanied by notes on the dialect. Are these intended for the student of folklore, interested in Irish occurrences of particular stories; for the dialectologist, interested in illustrative material; or for the general reader of Irish, interested in the literary value of the material? The editors of *Béaloideas* do not seem to be able to decide and the reader also is often left in doubt. A similar problem occurs with the reprinting of this particular article and the audience for which it is intended. If it is meant to be read as literature by the average student of Irish then the spelling could occasionally cause difficulty, especially to a speaker of Ulster Irish; if intended for students of folklore, most will in any case have access to the original article in *Béaloideas*, from the plates of which this book would seem to be taken without any alterations apart from minor corrections. (A misprint occurs in the anonymous introduction, where for 25 read 35—see notes on p. 85.) Professor Jackson refers to a collection of Peig's stories made by Dr Robin Flower who was hoping to publish them along with the present collection as the complete 'Tales of Peig Sayers'. It is a pity that the Irish Folklore Commission has not attempted to obtain, transcribe and publish this collection rather than bring out a book which cannot by its nature do full justice to one of the greatest story-tellers and *seanchaithe* in Ireland in our time.

CATHAIR Ó DOCHARTAIGH

The Lime Industry in the Lothians, by B. C. Skinner. Edinburgh University Extra-mural Association. Studies in Local History. Edinburgh 1969. Pp. vii+64, 4 figs., 4 pls.

Lime-burning is a rural industry of a kind that economic historians have too often overlooked, perhaps because the units of production were generally small and scattered and the technology unsophisticated. Yet it was a trade of considerable significance in agrarian life until the railways and the lorry enabled production to be concentrated in a few large and highly capitalised units at the expense of the small country kiln. In the seventeenth century the judicious application of lime to plough and pasture

was first discovered to have dramatic results in increasing yields. It was practised in Ayrshire and the Forth area, but careless use too often ruined the ground and prevented it from being more widely adopted. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, there was a very considerable expansion based on constantly growing demand from farmers undertaking large scale reclamation, enclosure and improvement of acid soils, and on builders needing lime for housing and factory construction in an increasingly urban and industrial society. This was the period of the Earl of Elgin's remarkable venture at Limekilns in Fife where in 1777 he invested £14,000 in laying out the largest limeworks in Britain (the sum involved was two or three times as much as the fixed capital necessary for even the largest of the new cotton factories in the following decade). This is also the heyday of the country kilns in the Lothians to which Basil Skinner devotes this excellent booklet.

It comes in two parts. The first twenty-four pages are an essay on the history of the industry and the last twenty an industrial archaeologist's gazetteer of the sites of the kilns. As to the essay, the only regret is that it is not longer. He traces the Lothian industry from its origins—the first record is a mid-sixteenth century reference to building lime from Cousland—through its phase of great expansion after 1750, to its eventual decline and fall in the 1920s. He shows how the technology changed from the small and impermanent clamp-kilns of the seventeenth century to the draw-kilns whose monumental remains we still see in so many places. He indicates the scale of employment (usually about ten people to a works) and gives an indication of wages received. He has something to say about output, prices and the capital costs (in the region of £3-400 apiece at the beginning of the nineteenth century or four or five times as much as a rural horsemill or a watermill). He touches on limestone mining: the illustrations include an interesting one of the levels at Gilmerton Quarry. He discusses the scope of the market: the Lothians were among the few areas of Scotland rich in limestone, and did a considerable trade outwith the three counties where the site was favourable for shipment by sea or canal. The research is the work not merely of Mr Skinner himself but of an enthusiastic extramural class which scoured the records and marched over the countryside discovering, measuring and recording the sites. It is a remarkable demonstration of what can be achieved by a devoted band of amateurs with a skilful leader and guide.

How important is local history? Its main pitfall is that local historians will emphasise antiquarian facts as opposed to historically significant facts. An antiquarian fact is one that cannot be used to explain anything else about the past. For example, an article recording the main sites associated with the Jacobites before Prestonpans would be of no importance, for it could not be used as a tool to explain anything else. A historically significant fact is one that can be used to throw light on a series of other facts in order to build up an integrated picture of society, or politics, or trade and industry, and to help in the explanation of the processes of historical change. Thus an article dealing with the wages of farm labourers in East Lothian over fifty years would be significant

because it would explain the affluence or poverty of a group of workers, which itself would throw light on their relationship to other classes and thus fit into an organic picture of society and of the conflicts and tensions within it which could lead to social change. Is a booklet like this significant or antiquarian? The greater part of it is certainly significant, since it explains the dynamics of an industry that no-one had looked at before and which had important bearings on the agricultural revolution and the provision of raw materials for building in the first period of urbanisation. Mr Skinner's earlier project on Cramond Iron Works, the vigorous part he has played in the local societies of East and West Lothian and many other activities in his department at Edinburgh University show how concerned and successful he has been in making local history in the East of Scotland a revitalised and significant study.

It may therefore seem churlish to complain that much in the gazetteer of the sites in this study cannot fully escape the charge of antiquarianism. For instance

the stone work of the south kiln passes behind the north kiln indicating probably an earlier date; south kiln partly infilled, north kiln almost entirely so. Frontages 29 ft. and 30 ft., projections 19 ft. and 20 ft., vents 10 ft. wide, kilns 12 ft. diameter.

Now this is perfectly respectable industrial archaeology. But is it historically significant? What does it explain, and for whom? Is it more meaningful than, say, the measurement of any old paving stones in any old street? It is a sad fact that, despite all the energy and enthusiasm expended upon it, the measuring tape has not yet told us anything about the industrial history of the last three centuries that is both worth knowing and not more easily available in libraries and archives. Of course, as a teaching tool it is valuable for involving strangers in history's intrinsic fascinations: those who would not feel inclined to sit in Register House or the National Library will gladly track down sites outside at the weekend and then perhaps become gripped by the documentary problems of discovering what the industry was really like. But means are not ends. In the last resort the academic value of local history (and therefore the intrinsic satisfactions of studying it) will be in direct proportion to its ability to deal in significant fact.

Industrial archaeology, then, is not much more valuable than the hunt for Jacobite memorials and the genealogies that kept our predecessors entombed. It is only an anxiety not to see local history disappear once again down the blind alleys from which Mr Skinner has already done so much to rescue it that prompts this grumpy conclusion, at odds with the admiration the booklet otherwise inspires.

T. C. SMOUT

Reader's Guide to Scotland. A Bibliography. The National Book League, London 1968. Pp. 127. 21s.

This work brings up to date the National Book League's *Scotland. A Select Bibliography* [1950], and will be welcomed by all lovers of Scotland. Like its predecessor it is a select list, but as it contains over 1,200 titles it presents a daunting problem to the reviewer who has over the years read only a handful of these, referred to a few more and viewed most only from the outside. Casting about in his desperate quest for some useful comment he may perhaps be excused if he is at times reduced to the more niggling type of criticism. The work is a necessary and authoritative one and nothing said here affects its basic usefulness.

The titles are grouped under the same main categories as in the earlier list: 1 General, 2 History, 3 Tourism (previously Description and Travel), 4 Arts and Crafts, 5 Language and Literature, 6 Philosophy, 7 Education, 8 Law, 9 Administration, 10 Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, 11 Food and Drink, and 12 Sport. Added refinements in the *Guide* are introductions to sections explaining the principles of selection, *etc.*, and an index of personal names. The typographical arrangements are also changed, but not for the better either in clarity or compactness. In the old list authors' names were in small Roman capitals, the titles in italic and the imprints within square brackets, so that editorial comment could follow straight on in ordinary type without danger of confusion. In the *Guide* only the main part of the title is distinguished in small capitals, the sub-title being in ordinary type. Annotation follows on a separate line and is only distinguished from blocks of more general comment by its being slightly indented. This is only likely to cause momentary confusion, but something tidier might have been devised. These annotations call attention to some important feature in the work or give warning of bias in the author. Occasionally the succinct comment 'Controversial' is applied, but a good number of entries are devoid of any annotation, in some cases where it exists in the older list, *e.g.* Andrew Lang's *Sir George Mackenzie, King's Advocate of Rosehaugh: his Life and Times* where even the title is abbreviated, unnecessarily one would have thought in view of the rather lavish use of space in the book at large. Books on Mary, Queen of Scots, have fortunately been kept under control. The subsection Local History of the 1950 *List* has been abolished in the *Guide* so that no place has been found for P. D. Hancock's indispensable *Bibliography of Works relating to Scotland, 1916-1950*, 2 vols [Edinburgh University Press, 1959], a supplement to Sir A. Mitchell and C. O. Cash, *A Contribution to the Bibliography of Scottish Topography* [1917], which does get a passing mention under 'Tourism'. This seems an almost unpardonable omission for there is no country in which local characteristics are stronger or more diverse.

Under Literature there is some imbalance in the Poetry section. Modern poets of recognised stature like Norman MacCaig and George Mackay Brown are merely shown to exist, whereas vintage minor poets like William Drummond get the full

treatment. Sorley Maclean, the modern Gaelic poet, comes off better however with a proper entry and annotation. A number of famous Scottish writers are barred because they are outside the 'native tradition', though that sometimes seems to contain as many different threads as a bit of tartan. People anyway will continue to come to Scotland to see the places associated with such men, and it might have been useful to mention J. M. Sloan's *The Carlyle Country* [1903] and other similar works for their benefit.

Under Education, Edinburgh University fares badly in the subsection Records and Documents where its *Catalogue of the Graduates in the Faculties of Arts, Divinity and Law . . . since its Foundation* [Edinburgh, Neill, 1858], its *List of the Graduates in Medicine . . . from 1705 to 1866* [Edinburgh, Neill, 1867] and its *Alphabetical List of Graduates . . . from 1859 to 1888* [Edinburgh, Thin, n.d.] are ignored, though the similar lists of the other Universities are duly recorded.

The Scottish interest in self-education through the printed page is a long-standing one, and Andrew Carnegie's money, though earned abroad, has left its mark on many Scottish towns and made Scotland one of the countries best supplied with free libraries in the world. K. Fidler's biography, *The Man who gave away Millions* [1955] might have been worth mentioning while Scotland's very early interest in the subject is brought out in *Early Scottish Libraries* by J. Durkan and A. Ross [1961].

In the Sport section it is sad to find no mention of personalities who have made Scotland's name 'revered abroad'. Motor racing, for which the Scots have a special flair, could have been represented by the autobiography *Jim Clark at the Wheel* [1964] and D. Murray, *Ecurie Ecosse* [1962], and boxing, in which Scotland's great little men are a match for the world's best, by P. MacInnes's life of Benny Lynch, *Ten and Out* [1961]. There are of course a lot of hills in Scotland and consequently a lot of entries under Mountaineering. Climbers it seems are strong but not silent men. There is also a good representation of books on Stalking (deer shooting) and other forms of gunning, a minority sport one would have thought nowadays. It is hard too to be deprived of Eric Liddell, the flying Scot, though born in China (biography by D. P. Thomson, 1952), and James Braid, golfer and five times winner of the 'Open' (biography by B. R. M. Darwin, 1952). It is true that the scenes of their triumphs were often necessarily outside Scotland, yet they are part of the Scottish saga nonetheless. A. M. Dunnett's *Quest by canoe; Glasgow to Skye* [1951] would have called attention to a sport that is becoming increasingly popular.

Nearly every Scot has fancied himself as a bit of a comic at times. The staid, scholarly George Buchanan wielded a grim, sardonic variety of humour and his pupil, James VI, liked to play the clown and stars in history as the 'wisest fool in Christendom'. Perhaps one of Sir Harry Lauder's books of reminiscences might have represented this side of the Scottish character.

There is no specific mention of the 'little people', a dangerous omission, one would have thought, that could have been made good by R. B. Cunningham Graham's edition

of the Rev. Robert Kirk's *Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies* [1933]. Under Music something on Scotland's traditional style of fiddle-playing might also have been worth including. W. C. Honeyman's *The Strathspey, Reel and Hornpipe Tutor* [Edinburgh, Köhler, n.d.] which describes the technique as far as it can be conveyed verbally, and J. Scott Skinner, *The Scottish Violinist* [Bailey etc. n.d.] would have been useful reminders of this ancient branch of Scottish music. In the Arts and Crafts section, H. Schwarz's *David Octavius Hill, Master of Photography* [1932] might have merited a place.

Scotland's massive achievements in medicine, technology and science get somewhat scant attention. It is true that there are one or two general works under History (Industry and Commerce) and that J. D. Comrie's *History of Scottish Medicine* [1927] receives a mention under Public Health but one misses the great names. Good biographies convey even to the layman some of the romance of the successes of Sir James Young Simpson, discover of anaesthesia, Sir Alexander Fleming, discoverer of penicillin, James Watt, inventor of the steam engine, Joseph Black, founder of quantitative analysis, John Loudon Macadam, the road builder, James Telford, builder of bridges, many of them in Scotland, John Boyd Dunlop, inventor of the pneumatic tyre, James Clerk Maxwell, pioneer in the study of electro-magnetic waves, John Logie Baird, pioneer in television, Sir Robert A. Watson Watt, inventor of radar, and others. In a scientific age there are many scientific pilgrims who seek detailed local information about such men, and though science is international even here a Scottish 'way of doing' can often be detected. There is something Scottish in the thoroughness of the efforts of such 'enlightened' Scots as David Hume, the philosopher, to rid their English of Scotticisms.

Speaking of Hume, Professor E. C. Mossner's *Life* is probably the only single work to get a double mention and indeed richly deserves the encore, but the danger in human repetition is underlined by the fact that the date of publication comes out differently on each occasion, 1955 on page 61 and 1954 (correct this time) on page 82. But the general standard of accuracy is high and you can't please everyone in a selection. On the whole this is a good *Guide* and well worth the money.

C. P. FINLAYSON