Book Reviews

Three Centuries of Scottish Posts by A. R. B. Haldane. Edinburgh University Press 1971. Pp. 336. £3.75.

In this book, Dr A. R. B. Haldane, well-known for his *Drove Roads of Scotland* and *New Ways Through the Glens*, opens up for us a new aspect of communications in Scotland. Postal services have not, superficially at any rate, the same romantic attraction as Highland drove roads, but they are a basic feature of modern civilisation and the story of their development in Scotland reveals considerable interest in the hands of so skilled a historian as Dr Haldane. Virtually nothing has been written on the subject before, so that the author has had to quarry his material from a variety of original sources. The most important of these are the Post Office's own archives. Dr. Haldane marshals an impressive amount of unpublished material with a discerning eye for what is important to his subject, and presents it in a lucid and very readable fashion.

The author traces the history of the postal services in Scotland from its beginnings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the introduction of the Penny Post in 1840. By this time the modern postal service had in effect been created, embracing the whole country in a regular and frequent national system of collections and deliveries. This national system had been anticipated, at a local level, by the private posts maintained by merchants and noblemen in earlier times, and by the public posts managed by the more important Scottish burghs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Aberdeen was prominent in the development of the postal services. As early as 1595 the town employed an official messenger to carry its posts. He wore 'a livery of blue cloth with the city's arms emblazoned on the left sleeve'. This town post continued until the late seventeenth century, and, like the posts of other burghs, had regular links with its neighbours. Universities like St. Andrews also enjoyed the privilege of a post wearing their badge of office.

Such private and local posts survived long where the state made no provision, but in general they were absorbed by the growing national system in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The postal service as we know it originated in the system of stages for providing horses for royal messengers which the State maintained in the sixteenth century in England, and later extended to Edinburgh. It was not at first in any sense a public service but an arm of government, geared to the necessities and emergencies of the State. Even when, later in the seventeenth century, the earlier system of 'posts' gave way to the conveyance of letters and carried a growing volume of public mails, its original function was apparent. Royal messengers were given

priority. Careful watch was kept for traitorous correspondence and conspiracies. Letters were liable to examination and postmasters and riders were chosen with care (Cromwell debarred Scots in this capacity on the route from Edinburgh to Berwick). And into modern times the close identification of the mail service with the state has continued to influence events. The speed and urgency with which the mails have traditionally (till of late) been conveyed, originated no doubt in the haste required of the early couriers carrying royal despatches. And in recent times ferocious sentences, reminiscent of the age of Judge Jeffreys, have been visited on those who dared to rob the royal mails, compounding robbery with treason.

By the end of the seventeenth century a postal service had emerged, very different from the earlier posting stages designed purely for royal couriers. The main artery of this service continued to be from Edinburgh to London, with stages and changes of horses at Haddington, Cockburnspath and Berwick (the whole journey took a horse-rider four to five days), but now over a thousand letters a week were conveyed north and south. Edinburgh, moreover, had become the centre of a modest network of postal links, extending to the major Lowland towns and to Aberdeen in the north. Scotland had its Postmaster-General, who farmed the office, and a schedule of postal charges—two shillings Scots for distances up to fifty miles, three shillings for between fifty and a hundred miles, and four shillings for over a hundred miles.

Most of Scotland's postal expansion lay in the future and followed the Act of 1711, which transferred control from Edinburgh to London. But in this expansion there is a paradox, which Dr Haldane expounds. From the beginning the Post Office sought primarily to meet not the public's needs but the requirements of the Treasury for revenue. Its one great stimulus was profit. It operated, however, not as a business tycoon, sowing generously so as to reap abundantly. It advanced with cautious steps, venturing forward only when profits seemed assured. It showed no sign of intelligent anticipation of demand, nor aimed deliberately to encourage trade and industry. If Scotland's posts grew and proliferated in the eighteenth century, it was because the social and economic development had already created the conditions which would assure the Post Office of its revenue, and because individuals and public bodies maintained a constant pressure on the Post Office.

Most of this postal expansion occurred in the last half of the eighteenth century, when so much else was happening, not least a notable improvement in Scotland's system of roads and communications. By the seventeen eighties there existed some hundred and forty postal towns. Revenue had swollen from £1,194 in 1707 to £40,000 in 1783. Beginning in 1786, mail coaches, capable of an average of nine miles an hour, would convey mail between the principal centres, whilst horse-riders and foot-runners ensured a regular service in the more accessible rural areas of the mainland. In 1793 a direct postal link was established between Perth and Stirling, a significant step in lessening the centralisation of postal links in Edinburgh. By the end of the century Edinburgh and Glasgow enjoyed a penny post, delivering mail to addresses well beyond

the city boundaries. It remained, in the next forty or so years, to bring the more remote areas and the islands within the postal system, to regularise and speed deliveries and establish a more satisfactory basis for charging than by the number of sheets in a letter and the distance conveyed. The end-maps which reproduce contemporary illustrations, are illuminating in showing the extent of postal links in 1813 and 1838 respectively, and the modes of conveyance of mail.

Dr Haldane's treatment of this complex subject achieves a nice balance of analysis and description. We are kept aware of the general tides of events, but are free to explore the backwaters and creeks and to view the whirlpools. Much of the book's interest is due to such pleasant excursions. We learn of the varied transactions of the merchant, Colin Campbell of Inveresregan, who ran the Loch Etive Trading Company from 1733 to 1744 and dealt in anything from candy to coffins; of the smuggling of letters from Aberdeen to Edinburgh in packets of 'Findhorn haddocks'; of the remarkable career of Peter Williamson, who in 1774 established a penny post in Edinburgh and maintained it for twenty years from his coffee-house in Parliament House; of the protracted quarrels in Scotland between the Post Office and the turnpike trustees over the vexed question of tolls, and of the pay, duties and conditions of the Post Office's servants.

Features that were specifically Scottish emerge from this study. For longer than in the south the postal system remained centralised at one focal point, in this case Edinburgh, and the development of 'cross-posts' between quite major postal towns was long retarded. (Even after the direct link between Perth and Stirling was effected in 1793, mail from the north destined for the west continued to go via Edinburgh.) Again, a system of free postal deliveries, achieved in England fairly generally in the late eighteenth century, was not conceded in Scotland for several decades more. Postmasters were less often in Scotland recruited from among inn-keepers than in England, and their rate of failure in the eighteenth century seems to have been especially high. The mail coach experienced a fast development in Scotland, once the Turnpike roads began to be built, but subsequent to the loss of its exemption from tolls in 1813, every advance was carefully scrutinised. With a terrain so rugged as Scotland's, and a climate so harsh, the purely physical obstacles to the spread of postal services were greater than those met in England. There was inevitably more recourse to foot-runners and to packet boats. It would appear too, that heavy financial demands were made on land-owners in rural areas to act as guarantors for postmasters and underwrite the costs of new postal services and those whose returns were uncertain. The Post Office never took risks and never laid out a ha'penny without the certainty of a profit.

After 1711, when control over posts passed from Edinburgh to London, the postal destinies of the Northern Kingdom were in the hands of men not only physically but mentally remote. Their ignorance of Scottish conditions was often only equalled by their lack of sympathy with the Scots. Francis Freeling, Secretary to the Post Office from 1797 to 1836, whilst an excellent and conscientious public servant, resented

the slightest stirrings of independence in his Scottish officials. He wrote angrily in 1823, 'Perhaps there is not a single point of duty connected with that department which has not been infringed', and again, 'I trust we shall at last reform the irregularities in our system in Scotland'. If the Scots gained some share in the great expansion of postal services at this period, it was not without effort and agitation on their own part and on the part of the Scottish postal staff. The petitions from island lairds (reproduced in the appendix) witness the sort of pressure which the more vocal sections of the community kept up. Even so, the development of postal services in the north and west Highlands in the early nineteenth century would hardly have occurred had the government not been afraid of widespread emigration. Telford's roads, too, were an essential pre-condition of an efficient postal system in the Highlands.

The Post Office high command was served by a body of servants in Scotland who one cannot but feel were better than it deserved. Postmasters, like runners, were underpaid but subject more to financial risks than physical dangers, though the execution of the Kirkwall postmaster in 1796 for petty pilfering was a stern reminder of the standards expected by the Post Office of its servants. Riders and runners were exposed to exceptional risks and fatigues. As late as the 1820s the runner at Inveraray carried his heavy bag thrice weekly to Dalmally and back, most of the journey being at night, whilst his colleague further north, on his journey from Bonawe to Appin, regularly travelled the length of Glen Falach, described by the postal surveyor as 'the wildest Pass in the Highlands', following in the footsteps of his father and mother, who had preceded him in the job. Ponies might be the answer to rough tracks and a growing burden of mail, but there were districts where the humble jogger was at an advantage. The contractor of the mails from Arrochar to Inveraray went bankrupt in 1824 after the loss of all his horses, caused by the constant fatigues of traversing Glen Croe and The Rest and Be Thankful pass.

Much of the credit for the extension of the rural posts in the early decade of the nineteenth century must go to those energetic and admirable men, the postal surveyors, who combined a thorough knowledge of their districts with a sense of fairness and high moral courage. By daring to press strong and often unpalatable advice upon their superiors in London, they courted rebuke and risked being dismissed. Men such as Ronaldson, Reeves and Shearer have an honourable place in the history of the Scottish posts. In the London office Scotland tended to be viewed as an irritating thorn in the flesh, but Dr Haldane shows that 'the expenses of management of the Scottish Post Office, in marked contrast to the position in England, amounted to only about one quarter of the gross receipts'. In many ways, this sober and dispassionate survey of the history of the postal services in Scotland makes, in its total impact, a stronger case for political—or at least administrative—devolution than most books written from an avowedly nationalist position.

The maps, illustrations and appendices all add to the value of this study, which is undoubtedly a major contribution to the social and economic history of Scotland.

Edinburgh University Press is to be congratulated also on having produced, though after a somewhat tedious delay, a most handsome volume.

E. R. CREGEEN

Folk Music and Dances of Ireland by Breandán Breathnach. The Talbot Press, Dublin, 1971. Pp. 152. £1.50. Accompanying tape (5 in. twin track, 3¾ i.p.s.) or cassette available from publishers.

As a recent comprehensive introduction to a nation's traditional music, this book inevitably invites comparison with Francis Collinson's *Traditional and National Music of Scotland*. Each reflects the author's personality. Collinson diffidently threw open the footnotes as a forum in which colleagues were allowed to modify and even flatly contradict his conclusions. Breathnach, trained in the tougher school of Irish controversy, dispenses with footnotes and defers to nobody, apart from a general acknowledgement of 'knowledge gained in discussion with other practitioners'. Certainly his book was commissioned with the classroom rather than the coffee-table in view, and there is little room for qualification: but the mandarin nature of some of the definitions offered may reflect the author's long years drafting papers and regulations for the Irish Department of Agriculture—'Seven bars, each containing two triplets of quavers, and an eighth or concluding bar containing a triplet of quavers followed by a crotchet, is the usual form of the double jig.'

The initial definition of the book's subject excludes 'National Music' such as Moore's Melodies by insisting on the criterion of anonymous authorship. (Collinson included it because it was unavoidable, with so many dance-tunes ascribed to named composers such as Gow and Marshall. Breathnach would be the first to admit that versions of many of these same tunes are to be found in Ireland, but the ascriptions have been lost and the tunes changed by oral transmission so far that the present forms can reasonably be claimed as anonymous. Less consistent but also inevitable are the many references to songs with words by known Gaelic poets.) At the other end of the scale the book ignores the many modern singers and groups who choose to accompany Anglo-Irish songs, mostly adequately anonymous, with such untraditional or recently revived instruments as guitar, banjo-mandoline and *bodhrán*. Less reasonable than these exclusions is the slanting of the contents. Not one whole chapter out of ten is given to songs in the two languages of Ireland, and in the chapter on musical instruments over ten pages are devoted to the pipes and little more than one to the fiddle. Even without reading the jacket note anyone could deduce that the author is a piper himself and primarily interested in instrumental music. Naturally he writes best on what he knows best, but a book on the folk music of Ireland in general should really take its proportions from the subject, not from the author.

One more personal touch falls to be criticised. The paucity of the sources on the subject is such that the author has visibly relied in several cases on information previously published in a journal which he edits, *Ceol*. Thus the list of Scots and English tunes to which Irish songs have been written largely depends on a series by Proinnsias Ó Ceallaigh, 'The Tunes of the Munster Poets' (*Ceol*, vol. 1, nos. 1–4). One curious error borrowed from this may be corrected here. Ó Ceallaigh states that *The White Cockade* derives from a Scots tune called 'My Gallant Braw John Hielan' (*sic*). In fact Burns's song 'A Highland lad my love was born', in which the line 'My gallant braw John Highlandman' recurs in several verses (not the refrain), is *now* usually sung to *The White Cockade*, but when it first appeared in the posthumous 'cantata' *The Jolly Beggars* (published 1799) the tune specified by Burns was *O, an ye were Dead, Guidman*. The tune of *The White Cockade* first appears under that title, I am told by the Music Room of the National Library of Scotland, in Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum*, vol. 3 (1790): but the words are older and probably the tune is too.

Despite these idiosyncracies the book is a better introduction to the subject as a whole than there has yet been, both for its accounts of present-day traditional performance and the assiduous combing of written sources for evidence of earlier practice. As far as Old Irish sources go there is little to quote but the traditional triad of *suantraige*, *gentraige* and *goltraige*, sleep-music, joy-music and sorrow-music, and a number of names of instruments which can rarely be precisely identified. (I doubt the bald statement—following Galpin?—that 'the Irish *timpán* was, in fact, a stringed instrument which was sounded with a bow'; I have seen nothing to show that it did not mean a plucked psaltery, as *tympanum* most often did in mediaeval Europe.) From the sixteenth century on, however, evidence is fairly plentiful. The chapters on Dances and The Dancing Master are particularly good and apparently largely original: they could well be expanded to a separate handbook as authoritative if not as exhaustive as the Fletts' work on Scottish dances. As it is there is no space to bring out, for instance, the difference between the sword dance described *c.* 1600 by Fynes Moryson and the modern *Rince an Chlaidhimh*. The first, 'with naked swords, which they make to meet in divers comely postures', is evidently the English Danelaw type with handheld swords finally interlaced in a 'knot'; the second, where . . . 'sticks, chalked lines, or even a bow laid across a fiddle replace the swords', must be like the Highland solo dance over crossed swords.

Those who know Scottish Gaelic music will be especially interested in the transcription of the only sung Fenian lay recorded by the Irish Folklore Commission. They will be disappointed to find that, presumably because of the 'pitiably corrupt' text, the music is a composite from several stanzas, 'from phrases as sung by informant but not in the order in which he sang them', that it does not fit the text given below from another source, and so can give no indication whether, as with some Scottish performers, the stress varies from verse to verse to fit the words of the syllabic lines. They may be surprised to hear that *porta béil* means lilting or diddling rather than the singing of meaningful words to dance tunes like Scottish Gaelic *puirt a beul*. Irish Gaelic songs to dance

tunes do exist, even if, like Scottish *puirt* in most cases today, they are not used for dancing to: some, such as *Connla* and *Cailleach an Airgid*, are quoted in the notes to the same author's *Ceol Rince na hÉireann*, and *Is trua gan peata 'n mhaoir agam* is given with words and an instrumental version of the tune in the present book. The words are quoted to illustrate the mediaeval *carole* verse form of a line three times repeated before the fourth line, and it is noted that 'the transcription on page 146' [No. 21—the title is unfortunately transposed with the next item] 'shows that the chorus preceded the verse, a not unusual feature in this type of song'. Both these features are well-known in Scottish Gaelic, the first in *puirt a beul* and pibroch songs, the second in almost all songs with a refrain.

The book contains interesting, though perhaps not exhaustive, descriptions of the usual ornaments in instrumental music, mentions the practice of holding stressed notes slightly longer than others, and outlines briefly some regional differences of style on the principal instruments (not, alas, in singing). There is little mention of tempo, also a matter governed partly by regional preference as well as changing fashions, and only the song transcriptions have metronome marks; but no doubt listening to recordings if not live music provides a better guide on this subject than any written description. The description of the modes might be disputed—the tune I know to *Cití na gCumann* is basically Lydian, a mode not mentioned at all—but it is probably more to the point to commend the stress laid on the distinction between the modal final 'on which the melody can be fittingly brought to a close—to the ear of the traditional player' and the last note of the tune. Collinson, while making the distinction, seemed prone to bring in some doubtful cases to illustrate the rarer modes.

The last two chapters—an account of early collectors from Bunting to O'Neill, and a conclusion in the form of an appeal for more Irish people to get to know their traditional music by ear, for better broadcasts and for the recording of the tradition while it is still alive—need no criticism. Some minor points elsewhere may be raised. The transcription of *Callino* (*Cailín ó Chois tSiúire mé*) from the Ballet lute book on page 20 is unduly pianistic: the reader should not be made to skip from one stave to another to find the tune. *Druimín Donn Dílis* (p. 24) for *Druimfhionn* is a simplification of spelling which even the *Caighdeán* would hardly allow. The Scottish National Dictionary associates *reel* not with O.E. *rulla*, to whirl (p. 38) but with *hrēol*, a reel for winding yarn, and as the term basically applies to the twisting 'figure eight' movement this seems reasonable. On page 60, the quotation on dancing jigs from 1674 is described as being 'before the birth of Carolan (1670)', and it is dangerous to assume that scarcely any Irish jigs were borrowed from the Scots since Scottish composers from an early date observed a convention of giving pseudo-Irish titles to the jigs they composed. The *Fairy Dance* (p. 63) was composed by Nathaniel, not Niel Gow. In the reference on page 65 to titles 'suggested by the rhythm of the last bar' of a tune, including *What the Devil ails You*, the author doubts whether these 'represent the endings of songs or refrains now forgotten'. But it may be worth noting that 'What the Devil ails ye?' is the

last line of the Scots mouth tune 'Bonnie lass come ower the burn' (see Jeannie Robertson's record *The Cuckoo's Nest*). On page 84 it seems to be implied that the violin 'emerged' in Ireland in the middle of the sixteenth century, which is very doubtful, and 'the fact that relatively few tunes descend to the fourth string' of the fiddle does not really show that 'the pipes had a dominating influence in the creation of this music', for much the same could be said of Scots reels, in whose creation the fiddle undoubtedly dominated. Space does not allow the enumeration of mere misprints, but attention may be drawn to the misplaced numbering on the tables of ornaments on page 100 and the delightful mutation of Giraldus's Topography (p. 71) to *Typographia Hiberniae*.

One may reasonably expect a degree of nationalism in a work of this sort, especially one designed to circulate chiefly within the Irish Republic. Readers who have not learned Irish will find no translations of the modern Irish song texts quoted (except on p. 54), still less of tune titles: many may fail to recognise the song they know as 'The Shan Van Vought' in the *Seanbhean Bhocht*. The only unjustified boast in the work is on page 127, when the Irish are urged to support their folk music because 'in its variety it is startling'. Anyone acquainted with, say, Romanian or indeed Scottish Gaelic music would laugh this out of court, taken in conjunction with such passages as page 15 where it is stated that nearly all song tunes are made up of four phrases, the most usual patterns for these being AABA and ABBA, and 'airs on other models, *e.g.*, AAAB, ABAB, ABCD are rare'. Elsewhere the author is readier than many of his compatriots would be to admit that 'when we compare our music to the related music of Gaelic Scotland. . . we are . . . singularly poor in labour songs', or that 'many of our great reels are undoubtedly Scottish'. He can surely be forgiven for getting carried away once, and we can admit that Irish musicians have a real genius for breathing life into relatively drab foursquare tunes by free variation and ornamentation.

This being so, every reader should try to get a copy of the accompanying tape. The items on it are transcribed as Appendix I to the book, but the transcriptions of the songs only give an approximation of the rhythms and cannot show the variations in each verse, while one would need to be an experienced traditional player of the instrument concerned to interpret the tunes. The tape is very well produced (considering its speed and the slight crosstalk inevitable in commercial copying) and forms a better introduction to Irish music than any single disc yet produced. Once again songs are underrepresented—three of them take up little over a quarter of the tape—but the reader may be able to make up for this with the help of the discs recommended in Appendix II, to which one might add Hugh Shields's recent Leader record *Folk Ballads from Donegal and Derry* and one or two Gael-Linn E.P.s of Gaelic singers. The tape has two songs in Irish from the Connemara singer Seán 'ac Donncha, the lament *Úna Bhán* sung in a fine decorative style and a lighter convict's complaint, *Sé* Oakum *mo Phríosún*, and a fascinating *Lord Baker* (Child 53) from John Reilly, the remarkable Roscommon traveller discovered by Tom Munnelly not very long before his death in 1969. Two verses of this are transcribed in the book, but it is not made clear that the tune of the song varies

greatly from verse to verse only at the beginning: after roaming about in the first five verses, Reilly settles on the second version transcribed and keeps to it fairly closely for the remaining twelve. In any case it is a remarkable performance, and given that only one Anglo-Irish song could be included, it would be hard to find a more interesting one.

Twenty-seven dance-tunes, in fifteen selections, are given on the tape, illustrating the principal forms—single, double and slip jigs, reels, hornpipes and set dances—and the principal instruments—pipes, fiddle, flute, whistle, (button) accordion and concertina. Like the songs they are unaccompanied, and the two last-named instruments play few chords. The players are all from Dublin—alas that Sonny Brogan was not alive to be the accordionist!—but not all of them were born there, and there is the opportunity to compare two fiddle styles. The note on Nos. 4 and 5 should surely read that the lower two strings of the fiddle were tuned up to give the tuning a e^{1} a^{1} e^{11}, as one would expect in Scotland, not 'D G D_{1} G_{1}' as stated. Ideally one would, I suppose, have wanted an example of each type of tune played on each instrument, and illustrations of regional style on flute and pipes as well as fiddle, but within reason and the limits of one short tape this is as good as can be expected.

To sum up, the book is inadequate as a guide to Irish traditional singing but a pretty fair guide to dances and dance music. Unlike much earlier writing on the subject it eschews high-flown talk of 'ancient' tunes, and is based instead on the practice of good contemporary players and information from reliable early documents. There are still faults to be found, but like Collinson's work, this book by its mere existence provides a focus for criticism and constructive scholarship which was lacking before. And accompanied by the tape it should make an enjoyable introduction to Irish traditional music for those who know nothing of it.

ALAN BRUFORD

The Isle of Mull by P. A. Macnab. David & Charles, Newton Abbot 1970. Pp. 246+ illus. £2.50.

This book is one of the most recent of David & Charles 'Island Series' which covers the history and development of islands as far apart as Fiji and Orkney. Ostensibly, writing about an island is a much more simple task than tracing the development of a city or of, say, a mainland county, since the boundaries are clear-cut, and one can visualise an island as a single physical unit, having only tenuous links with neighbouring land-masses. Yet, the interplay of external influences on an island such as Mull can be extremely complex and subtle. The peopling of the island, its economic development, and its subsequent social decline all depended on factors which ultimately express themselves in terms of such basics as geology, physical location, climate, and so on.

The writer has presented this volume in a compact form, using short chapters on

practically every aspect of Mull life, from the structure of the island to such aspects as oral tradition, industry, the social services, and public transport. This gives one the feeling that this book is aimed at the Geography student. Indeed, its format is reminiscent of many Regional Geography text-books for undergraduates, and it would in fact be ideal for this purpose. Nevertheless, the book is intended for the general reader rather than the student, and it certainly comes into the category of books which one would read before setting out on a holiday in order to gain some idea of the nature of the place one is about to visit. Despite this, it is a book of much value. The author has obviously spent a good deal of time on the island, and he has been able to get across a certain amount of sympathy, both for the people and for their environment. This takes time and experience, and it is exactly what one requires for a work of this kind. He has therefore concentrated less on a bald account of statistics of population and industry (although they are included) and more on the human aspects of these. For the student of folk tradition, there are two short chapters dealing with this particular aspect of Mull life. 'The Island Culture' (chapter 9) and 'Myths, Folk-Lore and Customs' (chapter 12) might have been more suitably linked together, yet they are surprisingly separated by chapters on 'Farms and Forests' and 'Industries Past and Present'. Place-name elements form a useful appendix.

It is always extremely difficult to produce a balanced work of this kind. Mr Macnab's powers of description are particularly striking, sometimes poetic: 'Autumn brings the purple of the heather, blending with the rich hues of wide expanses of bracken. The eye is caught by the rich colorations of birch leaves against the silver of the trunks, backed by the autumn tones of woodlands and plantations' (p. 51). Certainly the format of a series of volumes, produced for the general reader, requires a certain uniformity, which restricts the writer to some extent. One gets the impression that in chapter 2, headed 'Climate, Plants and Animals', meteorological data are regarded by the publishers as necessary inclusions. Since these temperature and sunshine tables refer to Tiree rather than Mull, this would seem to be carrying the standardisation of volume formats a bit too far. Mull, of course, has no meteorological station.

As regards the writer's reproduction of Gaelic place-names, there are some mistakes in spelling, like 'Allt Airidh nan C*h*aisteal' (p. 15) and '*Tom-a* Mhuillin' (p. 194), but on the whole, the volume is free from inaccuracies as far as tradition and names are concerned.

To sum up, this book is a welcome addition to *The Island Series*. As the author states in his chapter on Bibliography (p. 235), most of the literature about Mull is descriptive and was published before the First World War, and there are scarcely any books available which attempt to interpret the changing social and economic conditions through which the island has passed. The bibliography is comprehensive, and the illustrations are relevant and of good quality. At £2.50, this book is certainly good value for money, and should enjoy much success.

IAN FRASER

An Atlas of Anglesey, edited by Melville Richards. Anglesey Community Council, Llangefni 1972. Pp. 160. £2.00.

We tend to think of an atlas as an attempt to illustrate the world, or a part thereof, on a fairly small scale. As an aid to the geographer, the atlas is invaluable. It acts as a reference, a standard work. It tends to be utilitarian, since only in recent years have atlases branched out to specialise in aspects of spacial representation formerly outwith their province. One thinks, in particular, of publications like the Readers' Digest Atlas of Great Britain (1966) and the Oxford Economic Atlas, which have made the public realise that there is much more to the work of the atlas-maker than the representation of land masses, oceans, rivers and cities.

The Atlas of Britain, though by no means unique, was specialised in that it represented a single country. The clarity with which one is able to see a trend or a distribution is one of the most valuable aspects of such a work. The Atlas of Anglesey takes this approach a good deal further down the scale, in that it deals with a very small area (approximately 250 square miles). It is an attempt to illustrate the history of this island community from the earliest times, in simple terms. The Atlas covers a wide variety of subjects. Relief, geology, soils and climate are basics which no atlas neglects, but the work includes chapters on early settlement, the development of religion, education, local government, industry, tourism, and even short chapters on Bardic Patronage, as well as the Angelsey Submissions of 1406. A short list of the more important place-names, giving reliable spellings and explanations, forms the concluding section. Thus, for such a modest volume, the variety of subject matter is very large.

There is nothing particularly revolutionary about the style of this work, nor can it be said to be in any way sophisticated. With one exception, the maps are simple monotone outlines, such as one might find in a Ph.D. thesis, yet this is sufficient to display the necessary information. One or two of the maps seem a little unnecessary in that the amount of data which they contain is so small as to render the use of the map less effective as a tool. This is the case with the map on page 44 in the chapter on 'The Norsemen'. A few of the photo illustrations, like that of the River Menai on page 13 seem intended to fill space rather than to be relevant to the text, but on the whole these are clear and of much value.

The Atlas of Anglesey is obviously directed at a wide public. This seems to be the case when we examine the text, which is simple and may be clearly understood by the layman. It should be particularly welcomed in schools, since for regional geography, local history, and other aspects of local studies, this is an invaluable study aid. Indeed it could form the basis of many other aspects of research at school level in a wide variety of subjects. It is in this context, then, that the Atlas is of interest to us in Scotland. It would obviously be a large and complex task to produce such a work for the whole country, but there is much that could be done on a smaller scale. This kind of Atlas format is highly suitable for a unit of county size. An island, however, is an entity in

itself, and as such lends itself very readily to mapping projects of this kind. An Atlas of Arran, Islay, Mull, Skye or Lewis would be an ideal means not only of presenting historical and geographical information, but of doing so at an elementary level, within a simple and unsophisticated format, yet at the same time using the resources of the most qualified scholars to achieve it.

There is currently a dearth of publications like this in Scotland, as well as south of the Border. The data is there, and the scholarship, but the emphasis these days tends to be on the costly, complex publication. This is a pity, since teachers of history, geography and local studies are crying out for books of this kind, easily assimilated by young people, and produced in an attractive lay-out. At the same time, such a volume should have a wide appeal outside the classroom both as a reference book and as a document of genuine historical and geographical interest. The Anglesey Community Council is to be congratulated on this attractive Atlas.* Let us hope that in the not too distant future we shall see similar publications appearing in Scotland.

IAN FRASER

*As this goes to press, we are told that the *Atlas Môn*, on similar lines, but covering the whole of Wales, is shortly to be released.

Books Received

The Hugh MacDiarmid Anthology: Poems in Scots and English, edited by Michael Grieve and Alexander Scott. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1972. Pp. 116. £3.25.

The Celtic Church in Britain by Leslie Hardinge. SPCK, London 1972. Pp. 265. £3.50.

Sir Walter Scott: Selected Poems, edited by Thomas Crawford. Oxford Paperback English Texts. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press 1972. Pp. 302. £1.30.

The Ballad and the Folk by David Buchan. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London and Boston 1972. Pp. 326. £4.50.

Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland in the Middle Ages by Kenneth Nicholls. The Gill History of Ireland 4. Gill & MacMillan, Dublin 1972. Pp. 197. 80p.

Thomas Carlyle: Reminiscences, edited by Charles Eliot Norton (Introduction by Ian Campbell). Everyman's University Paperback. Dent, London 1972. Pp. 400. 95p. (Hardback £1.50).

The Royal Visit of 1822 by James N. M. MacLean and Basil Skinner. University of Edinburgh Department of Educational Studies 1972. Pp. 38. 40p.

Lord Kames and the Scotland of his Day by Ian Simpson Ross. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press 1972. Pp. 420 + 9 plates. £6.00.

Shetland by James P. Nicolson (Island Series) David & Charles, Newton Abbot 1972. Pp. 246. £3.25.

Tradition and Folk Life: A Welsh View. Iorwerth C. Peate. Faber & Faber, London 1972. Pp. 148. £3.50.

James Hogg. Memoirs of the Author's Life and Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott, edited by Douglas S. Mack. Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh & London 1972. Pp. 145. £2.50.

Music and Society in Lowland Scotland in the 18th Century by David Johnson. Oxford University Press 1972. Pp. 223. £3.30.

Scotland: Church and Nation through sixteen centuries by Gordon Donaldson. Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh & London 1972. Pp. 128. £1.50.

The Three Perils of Man: War, Women and Witchcraft by James Hogg, with introduction, textual notes and glossary by Douglas Gifford. Scottish Academic Press, for the Association of Scottish Literary Studies, Edinburgh & London 1972. Pp. 494. £3.50.

A Thousand Years of Aberdeen by Alexander Keith. Aberdeen University Press. Pp. 582. £4.

Douglas by John Home, edited by Gerald D. Parker. Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh 1972. Pp. 86. £2 (hardback). 75p. (paperback).

New Towns: The British Experience. Essays introduced by Peter Self. Charles Knight, for the Town & Country Planning Association, London 1972. Pp. 196 + 56 photographs. £4.50 (hardback). £2.80 (paperback).

Aberdeen Shore Work Accounts 1596–1670. Edited by Louise B. Taylor. Aberdeen University Press 1972. Pp. 668 + 4 plates and map. £10.

A Hundred Years in the Highlands by Osgood MacKenzie. Geoffrey Bles, London 1972. (10th impression) Pp. 222 + illus. £1.75.

Gaelic Words and Expressions from South Uist and Eriskay, collected by Rev. Fr. Allan McDonald of Eriskay (1859–1905) edited by J. L. Campbell. Oxford University Press 1972. 2nd edn. with supplement. Pp. 318. £1.

The Book of Settlements: Landnáma bók, translated by Herman Pálsson and Paul Edwards. University of Manitoba Icelandic Studies vol. 1. University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg 1972. Pp. 160 + plates (15 coloured photographs, 1 black & white, 13 maps).

Hugh MacDiarmid: A Critical Survey, edited by Duncan Glen. Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh & London 1972. Pp. 242. £2.25.

Bardachd Shilis na Ceapaich: Poems and Songs by Sileas MacDonald, edited by Colm O'Baoill, Scottish Academic Press, for the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, Edinburgh 1972. Pp. 272. £3.50.

The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads: With Their Texts, According to the Extant Records of Great Britain and America, vol. iv, by Bertrand Harris Bronson. Pp. 576. £20.