

## Book Reviews

*Along a Highland Road* by I. F. Grant. Shephard-Walwyn, London 1980. 198 pp. £6.95

This latest work from the tireless pen of Dr Isobel Grant marks a departure from much of her earlier historical writing. Here this distinguished scholar, at ninety-three years of age, is concerned, as she modestly puts it, 'to set down the fugitive recollections of old age'. The focus of her recollections and family traditions is Strathdearn in the north-east Highlands, and the road which links her story together is a stretch of General Wade's road, improved by later engineers, as it crosses the wide valley of the Findhorn. This is Macintosh country, the land of the author's maternal ancestors and her pride in the clan shows in the handsome book-jacket, which reproduces the glowing colours of a tartan woven in Strathdearn.

In the relative isolation of earlier times the strath developed its distinctive character. Dr Grant describes its features with the insight and expert knowledge of one whose roots are in the soil. The mingling of personal recollection, local and family tradition and the gleanings of wide reading gives the book much of its charm. There are vivid descriptions of weddings and funerals, seasonal customs and agricultural practices, and racy accounts of some of the native families and personalities. The text is admirably complemented by maps, photographs and other illustrations, including one of Dr Grant's own drawings (one wishes there were more of these).

Even in the distant past Strathdearn had its visitors. They served to link its communities with the wider world. Packmen and travelling folk brought news and useful articles and sometimes wove fresh strands into the poetry and stories of the strath. It is evident from local traditions which Dr Grant found surviving among the inhabitants that some of them are variants of widely known tales. Other visitors were not so welcome—Strathdearn was a natural route for west Highland reivers on their way to and from plundering the richer east.

Other influences helped to draw the strath out of its isolation. Cadets of the Macintosh clan gained a footing here as early as the thirteenth century and their presence embroiled the people of the strath in the conflicts of the greater clans. The changing fortunes of the Macintosh chiefs and principal families forms one of the main themes of this study, connecting the currents of local life with major events and movements in the Highlands. Through the history of particular families, including her own, Dr Grant illuminates such topics as the growth of the cattle trade in the seventeenth century, the impact of Jacobitism and the Risings, and the rapid progress

of Lowland and English influences in the aftermath of the 'Forty-five. The whole process of social change was speeded up by the arrival of Wade's road c. 1730 and was later reinforced by the development of faster means of communications—the stage-coach, the railway and the motor-car.

It is fortunate that Dr Grant was in time to gather such traditions as survived in the strath into her day. Even so, as she explains, they were only fragments of a lively culture that was fast disappearing. She heard Gaelic spoken there in her early days but the outstanding dancing and fiddling which had been the boast of the natives had gone. Emigration had helped to drain away the vitality of the strath, though Dr Grant points out that clearance played only a minor part. The gentry were in general aware of their social responsibilities even though they were often in financial straits themselves. Many of the old lairds had to sell up, leaving the strath to new owners, to sheep-farmers and, later, to grouse-shooting tenants.

Some of the most interesting material in the book is to be found in the chapter in which the author traces the development of the new sporting industry and recalls the life-style of the gentry and the shooting tenants. One could have wished, indeed, that more of the book had been devoted to her reminiscences. The prose style, always direct and lucid, achieves periods of quite outstanding quality. One would search far to equal her simple but dramatic description of a shoot on page 98.

Dr Grant has been concerned with the history of the Highlands for over sixty years. Her published works have contributed to the creation of a new kind of Highland history, social and economic in its approach and occupied with the daily life and work of the inhabitants rather than the exploits of romantic figures. Her writings have been only one part of her life activities; before folk-culture became recognised as a topic for serious study in Scotland this remarkable woman brought into being, unaided, the museum of Highland folk-life at Kingussie. These achievements have been inspired by a deep attachment to her ancestral 'duthchas', and it is fitting that in her latest book Dr Grant should return to this source and remind us again that much of the real story of Scotland is to be found in the study of family, community and region.

E. R. CREGEEN

*Alexander Lindsay, A Rutter of the Scottish Seas*, an abridged version of a manuscript by the late Dr A. B. Taylor, former Registrar-General for Scotland, edited by I. H. Adams and George Fortune. Maritime Monographs and Reports no. 44, 1980. National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London 1981. 64 pp. [No price stated.]

This monograph is an abridged version of a manuscript intended for publication by the late Dr A. B. Taylor, whose work on place-names and early Scottish maps will be

well known to established readers of this journal.\* As Taylor's colleague and collaborator, George Fortune has been instrumental in preparing the manuscript with the help of Dr Ian Adams of the Geography Department of Edinburgh University, himself well-known for his work on Scottish Estate plans and early Scottish maps. A *rutter* was a sixteenth-century name for a set of sailing directions used by a pilot in coastal navigation. The word originates in the French *routier*, a derivative of *route*. This is the earliest known rutter for Scottish waters, and dates from c.1540, the work of a distinguished Scottish pilot of his day, Alexander Lindsay. This particular version of Lindsay's rutter was discovered by Taylor hidden among a number of blank sheets at the end of a volume of manuscripts in the Balfour Collection in the National Library of Scotland. There are six known versions of the Scottish rutter—three in Scots English, and three in French. The monograph gives a brief account of Lindsay's rutter and the six extant texts, a note on its authorship, and the part played by the French geographer Nicolas de Nicolay (1517–83) who published the rutter in 1583. Also included is a note on James V's Expedition to the Western Isles in 1540, where Lindsay's rutter was probably, in the opinion of the editors, put to one of its first operational tests.

To the scholar of place-names, the rutter is of much interest, since it contains nearly 200 items of information and advice about tidal streams, times of high water, havens, soundings and the like. The directions are most detailed for the East Coast, as one might expect in a sixteenth-century document: for example: 'Iff ye will enter to Tayne of Dornoch tak heid of a sand bed whiche lyethe on the north syd of the Fyrth west from Tarbetnes and est from Dornoch iij milis.' However, the dangerous Pentland Firth, with its 'contrary tydes' is well covered with entries like '. . . there is a great daunger causit be nepe tydis whiche is called the Boir. To avoid the daunger ye sall mak your cours from Dungisbe northwest till you come north to est from Stroma.' Most of the place-names mentioned in the text are readily identifiable, but for many of the sea-rocks, reefs and danger-points, they provide useful early spelling forms.

Lindsay's Rutter gives relatively few soundings, compared with its contemporaries. However, they are given for the more important anchorages, like Leith, St Andrews, Strome Castle, Aros Castle in Mull, and various others, and the reader is informed that 'iff ye lye at the castell of Dewar (Duart) ye sall find xxviiij fadomes'.

The monograph is attractively presented, and contains six maps identifying the places mentioned in the texts, not only around the Scottish coasts, but a section from the Humber estuary to the Scottish border. One of the most fascinating sections is devoted to the charts which accompanied three of the six extant rutter texts. In addition, the monograph illustrates the kind of ships which were used in Scottish waters in the sixteenth century, together with a brief chapter on instruments for coastal navigation.

\* 'The Name St. Kilda', *Scottish Studies* 13:147–58; and 'Cape Wrath and its Various Names', *Scottish Studies* 17:61–9.

Taken as a whole, this monograph is a very fitting tribute both to Lindsay and to Taylor. It would, however, be good to see in the future a more detailed study of Lindsay and his rutters, since this sixteenth-century Scot undoubtedly left his mark on the European navigation scene, and like many of his kind, his achievements have, until the advent of this publication at least, been largely unsung.

IAN A. FRASER

*A Bibliography of Bagpipe Music* by Roderick D. Cannon. John Donald, Edinburgh 1980. 295 pp. £15.00

The literature of the bagpipe, especially that relating to Scottish bagpipes, is sadly lacking in reliable scholarship. This volume is an exception, a most welcome addition to the subject and an invaluable research tool for scholars and pipers alike. Described in the preface as a descriptive bibliography relating to the music of each type of bagpipe played in the British Isles, it discusses altogether some 113 items, including 99 Scottish titles—some of them multi-volume compendia like the collections of pibrochs published by the *Piobaireachd Society* and the many editions of Logan's *Tutor* or David Glen's *Collection of Highland Bagpipe Music*.

The main part (205 pages) of the book discusses in turn printed music for the Irish Union pipes, the Northumbrian pipes, the Scottish Highland pipes and the Irish warpipes or Brien Boru pipes. Each section is arranged chronologically and for each edition of a book we are given its title, imprint, other publication data, pagination and contents, location and description of individual copies consulted, and, finally, an informative discussion. For what constitutes a new 'edition' of a book Dr Cannon sensibly uses as his yardstick any printing which he can distinguish from its predecessors. As he points out, even if an edition shows no distinguishable change in its contents, a change of publisher or evidence of frequent reprints all help, among other things, in gauging the popularity of a book and its probable influence on a piping tradition. Such details are of great value to anyone attempting to assess the impact of printed collections and tutors on what was, until well into the nineteenth century, essentially an orally transmitted art. Of the four review essays that precede the four bibliographies, that on printed Scottish music is predictably the longest, though the first major Scottish collection of pipe music—that of Donald MacDonald (1812)—appeared over sixty years after Geoghegan's *Compleat Tutor* for the Irish Union pipes. The essay combines the insights of a scholar who devoted nearly twenty years of his leisure time to the work and those of a piper who has played over most of the material in his attempts to assess the developments in composing and playing styles and the differing notation conventions of the authors. He sorts out clearly and

thoroughly the many contributions of the two families of Glen in Edinburgh, whose publishing activities began about 1840 and whose material was still on sale in 1961. A wealth of other well-documented information is included in this essay. Perhaps not unwittingly he also points to further directions for research when referring to, but not endorsing, the as yet untested opinions of writers like Archibald Campbell of Kilberry (in his preface to *The Kilberry Book of Ceol Mor*) on the status of Angus MacKay's *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd*. In another instance he quotes an anonymous contributor to *The Piping Times* (Feb. 1969) who suggested that Colin Cameron, piper to the Earl of Fife—and son of Donald Cameron the 'supreme authority' on *piobaireachd* 'after the death of his teacher Angus MacKay'—assisted David Glen in preparing his *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd* (1880). If this was true one wonders why Glen's book did not follow the notation conventions of Angus MacKay, particularly in the way of notating those formulae called 'double beats'. Did Cameron or Glen or both feel that MacKay's conventions were misleading to pipers at a time when oral transmission was being progressively weakened (as pipers relied more and more on learning their music from the printed page)? Whatever may be the answer it was MacKay's style of writing that won the day, and it forms the basis for most of the influential publication of this century including that of the Piobaireachd Society.

Clearly there is room for further research here and Dr Cannon's bibliography provides a handy and thoroughly reliable starting point. His is not the first bibliography: he properly acknowledges the contribution of W. L. Manson (in his book *The Highland Bagpipe, its History, Literature and Music*, Edinburgh 1901) and of G. H. Askew (*A Bibliography of the Bagpipe*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 1932) but for comprehensiveness and wealth of detail this newest work is unmatched. It is a model for others who may be tempted to venture into the morass of myth and legend and of the often fanciful writing that surrounds the piping tradition of Scotland.

PETER COOKE



## Books Received

- The Leighton Library, Dunblane. Catalogue of Manuscripts* by Gordon Willis. University of Stirling Bibliographical Society, 1981. 42 pp. £3.00.
- The Scottish Poor Law 1745–1845* by R. A. Cage. Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh 1981. 180 pp. £8.75.
- Twentieth-Century Publications in Scottish Gaelic* by Donald John MacLeod. Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh 1980. 188 pp. £12.50.
- Scott on Himself* by David Hewitt. Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh 1981. 298 pp. £6.75.
- Islay: Biography of an Island* by Margaret C. Storie. The Oa Press, Port Ellen, Isle of Islay 1981. Illustrated with photographs, drawings and diagrams. 260 pp. [No price stated.]
- Neil M. Gunn. A Highland Life* by F. R. Hart and J. B. Pick. John Murray, London 1981. Illustrated with photographs. 314 pp. £15.
- The Rural Architecture of Scotland* by Alexander Fenton and Bruce Walker. John Donald, Edinburgh 1981. Illustrated with 195 photographs, drawings and diagrams. 242 pp. [No price stated.]
- Muir of Huntershill. A Scottish Patriot's Adventures Around the World* by Christina Bewley. Oxford University Press 1981. Illustrated with photographic plates. 212 pp. £8.50.
- A Place in Trust* by Basil Skinner. (To mark the 50th Anniversary of The National Trust for Scotland.) Department of Extra-Mural Studies, University of Edinburgh 1981. 48 pp. [No price stated.]
- Grampian Hairst. An Anthology of North-East Prose*, edited by William Donaldson and Douglas Young; with a foreword by Cuthbert Graham and an essay on North-East Scots by David Murison. Aberdeen University Press 1981. xiv + 206 pp. £4.50 (£7 board).
- Journal of an Expedition against the Rebels of Georgia in North America Under the Orders of Archibald Campbell Esquire. Lieut. Col. of His Majesty's 71st Regimt. 1778*, edited and with an introduction by Colin Campbell. Richmond County Historical Society, Augusta, Georgia 1981. xvi + 139 pp. [No price stated.]
- Scots Saws: from the Folk-wisdom of Scotland* by David Murison. James Thin, The Mercat Press, Edinburgh 1981. 92 pp. £3.95.

