

Plough Rituals in England and Scotland

By THOMAS DAVIDSON

UNTIL late into the eighteenth century Clydesdale ploughmen chanted the following rhyme three times on turning their horses at the end of ridges, in the belief that the fare asked for would be ready for them at the end of the fourth furrow:

“Fairy, fairy, bake me a bannock and roast me a collop
And I’ll gie ye a spirtle aff my gad-end.”¹

This nonsense rhyme takes on a different complexion when it is compared with what must be the earliest account of ritual ploughing amongst the Greeks. The agricultural significance of this account was first pointed out by Armstrong,² and it is to be found in the description of Achilles’ shield in the *Iliad*. “Further he set in the shield a soft ploughed field, rich tilth and wide, the third time he ploughed; and many ploughers therein drave their yokes to and fro as they wheeled about. Whensoever they came to the boundary of the field and turned, then would a man come to each and give into his hands a goblet of sweet wine, while others would be turning back along the furrows fain to reach the boundary of the deep tilth.”³

In both we note the ploughmen expected or were given refreshment on the completion of a certain number of furrows. Now in many parts of Scotland there was an observance with regard to the first ploughing or the first furrow drawn by the plough after the fields had been cleared of the grain crops. The ploughman engaged on the work was given refreshment in the form of food and drink and a portion was given symbolically to the plough: that is, food was tied or laid on the beam of the plough and drink was poured over it. This ceremony, known as ‘streeking the plough’, was an event of very considerable importance and is a survival of perhaps one of the oldest and most elaborate rituals carried out to ensure a prosperous ploughing and sowing.

At Hallgreen in the parish of Cairney about the year 1843 when one furrow had been ploughed, bread, cheese—a keback (cheese) was broken for the occasion—and milk porridge made of oatmeal and sweet milk were given to the ploughman. The first slice of the keback, however, was reserved for

¹ R. Chambers, *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1841, p. 323. Spirtle=porridge stick; gad=ploughman’s goad.

² E. A. Armstrong, *Folk-Lore*, LIV, 1943, p. 254.

³ A. Lang, *et al.*, *The Iliad of Homer*, London, 1893, pp. 382-3.

the 'herd-boy' and was called the culter wedge, a practice which immediately dates the custom back to the time of the 'twal owsen plough'. It was of the utmost importance that the porridge should be of the right consistency; if too thin, it was an omen of a poor crop of cereals the following season. The details of the ceremony varied from one district to another. In some parts the first offering of bread and cheese was laid on the plough-beam "as a sort of oblation to Ceres, the protectress of agriculture."¹

The following account from a farmer in Cateside, Strachan, shows that the day on which the plough was put to the soil for the first time was no ordinary day. On this particular farm the ploughman, wishing to start his ploughing early in the week, was put off by the farmer each day till Saturday came. On Saturday he was told he need be in no hurry to begin, and by the time he got to the field, the farmer was there carrying bread, cheese, and a bottle of whisky. The ploughman drank a glass himself, and refilling the glass poured it over the bridle of the plough, repeating as he did so the words, "Weel fah the labour." A piece of bread and cheese was then carefully wrapped up in a piece of paper and firmly tied to the beam of the plough by the farmer, who at the same time gave strict instructions to the ploughman that it was not to be removed. "It may fah off o't sell, or the dogs may eht it. Nae maitter, but dinna ye touch it." When all this had been carried out and agreed, he added, "Noo jist tak ye anither fur and syne louse. ["Now just plough another furrow and stop work."] Ye'll be ready for yir wark on Mun-inday's mornin'."²

The interesting point here is that the farmer put off the operation until the Saturday, because this Saturday ploughing, he considered, was a ceremony quite apart from the ploughman's "wark" which would start on the following Monday. Although there is little or no evidence to show which was considered the most propitious day to start ploughing operations, there is abundant evidence from all parts of the Highlands of Scotland on which was the unluckiest day. This was Good Friday. Indeed the belief held by the Highlanders that no iron should be put into the ground on this day was so strong that the more superstitious extended the ban to every Friday. The reason for this may well rest on the traditional belief that the nails of our Saviour's cross were made on this day.

In Buchan after the first furrow was ploughed the 'guid wife' proceeded to the field with bread, cheese, and a jar of home-brewed ale, or whisky. The cakes were specially prepared, being rubbed with cream before they were

¹ J. M. McPherson, *Primitive Beliefs in the North East of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1929, pp. 86-7; J. Pirie, *The Parish of Cairney, Banff*, 1906, p. 143.

² J. M. McPherson, *op. cit.*, p. 87; quoting W. Gregor, *Folk-Lore Journal*, II, 1884, p. 330.

placed on the girdle over the fire to be cooked. The ploughman was usually the 'guidman' himself or his son, for in most parishes each family tilled its own holding. "The salutation to the man between the stilts was in the well-known form, 'Guid speed the wark', to which he replied, 'May Guid speed it'. He then seated himself on the beam of the plough, and after various forms of good wishes for the health and prosperity of the family during the year for which he had just begun the labour, cut the cheese and partook of the dainties carried to the field. A piece of the oat-cakes was given to each horse. The whole household partook at supper of the bread and cheese."¹ In upper Banffshire the bread was first blessed and a portion carefully placed under the first furrow.² In all cases, however, we find a portion of the food offering was kept until the evening, when the whole family gathered together at a supper feast, or *Pleuch Fehst* as it was called in Strathdon.³

Refusal to participate in the ceremony or to partake of the offering, even by the animals, had its dangers. This is well illustrated in the following tale from the north of Scotland. One evening "atween the sin an the sky," a man was ploughing with his "twal-ousen plew" when a woman came to him and offered him bread, cheese, and ale. The ploughman accepted, and the woman went on to offer each of the oxen a piece of cake. One by one the oxen took what was given, except the 'wyner'. The woman left and the ploughman resumed his work, but on the turn at the end of the furrow, the 'wyner' fell down and broke his neck.⁴

Now this Scottish custom of 'streeking the plough' has a close parallel in the Plough plays and costumed processions held in England on Plough Monday, the first Monday after Twelfth Day. In England Plough Monday has always been considered the date for starting ploughing operations. More than three centuries ago it was said that the ploughing of the soil should commence with the beginning of the year, which "with husbandmen is at Plow-day, being ever the first Monday after Twelfth day, at which time you shall gow forth with your draught and begin to plough."⁵ Or, as Tusser records it:

"Plough Monday, next after that Twelfth tide is past,
Bids out with the plough, the worst husband is last,
If ploughman gets hatchet, or whip to the screen,
Maids loseth their cock, if no water be seen."⁶

¹ J. B. Pratt, *Buchan*, Aberdeen, 1858, p. 21.

² J. M. McPherson, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

³ *Transactions Buchan Field Club*, IV, p. 148.

⁴ W. Gregor, *Notes on the Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland*, London, 1881, p. 64.

⁵ Gervase Markham, *The English Husbandman*, 1613, Pt 1, chap. 5, lines 24-8.

⁶ T. Tusser, *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*, ed. W. Mavor, London, 1812, p. 270.

Mavor, commenting on this, says the ploughmen and farm maids vied with each other in early rising on Plough Monday. If the ploughman could get his implements placed by the fireside before the maid could put on the kettle, she forfeited her Shrovetide cock.

The Plough plays seem to be confined to or characteristic of the counties grouped together in the centre of England, i.e. Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, and Yorkshire. The Willoughton (Lincolnshire) version called the Plough Jack's Play was performed by a band of farmworkers parading the streets and calling at each house. The procession took the form of two plough lines kept parallel by means of short sticks spaced at intervals between them, one man at each stick representing a horse. Then came the waggoner driving them with a long whip and an inflated pig's bladder on the end of a lash. Next came the plough which they trailed. The plough was without wheels and ready for ploughing. Having arrived at the house they demanded entrance civilly. If allowed in, they performed their play and were rewarded with food and drink. If they were not admitted, then they ploughed up a furrow or two in front of the house.¹ A curious detail comes to light here; the mummers arrogated to themselves an over-riding authority and sanction for this action. When remonstrated with for driving the ploughshare into the ground, they replied simply, "There's no law in the world could touch them because it's an old charter."²

In Wakefield, where the play was last performed in 1865, the two youngest farm lads acted as drivers of the plough, the oldest as collectors and the rest as horses.³ In the Alkborough version known as the *Plough Jags*, the play ended in a song, one version of which goes as follows:

"Good master and good mistress,
As you sit around the fire,
Remember us poor plough boys,
Who plod through mud and mire,
The mud is so very deep,
The water is not clear,
We'll thank you for a Christmas box,
And drop of your best beer."⁴

The play itself followed the standard pattern of mummer plays, except that

¹ *Journal English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 1, 1939, p. 291.

² L. Spence, *Myth and Ritual in Dance, Game and Rhyme*, London, 1947, p. 158.

³ W. S. Banks, *A List of Provincial Words in Use in Wakefield*, London, 1865, p. 52.

⁴ *British Calendar Customs: England*, London, 1938, II, pp. 96-8.

one of the central characters, usually St George or a king, was replaced by a scapegoat character in the guise of an old woman.

The Plough Monday processions were very similar to the Plough plays, and they had a wider distribution. In these the performers danced either a sword dance or a form of Morris dance through the streets, dragging behind them a plough brightly decorated and dubbed the Fool Plough. The plough was dragged from door to door, where the ploughmen asked for bread, cheese, and ale, or a contribution in money. Hutchinson gives us one picture of the Northumberland ceremony. "Men in gay attire draw about a plough, called the *stot* plough, to obtain contributions and when they receive a gift from a house visited by them they exclaim *Largess*, but when they do not receive a gift from the House they plough up the ground in front of it. I have seen twenty men in the yoke of one plough."¹ Pegge, writing in 1672, describes how "on this day the young men yoke themselves and draw a plough about with musick, and one or two persons in antic dresses, like jack-puddings, go from house to house, to gather money to drink. If you refuse them, they plough up your dunghill."²

In Northamptonshire the performers were called plough-witches, in Huntingdonshire plough-witchers, and the ceremony plough-witching; while in Holderness 'ploo-lads'—fantastically dressed farm lads—dragged round a 'fond-pleeaf', a plough from which the share has been removed. One of the chief characters was a man disguised as an old woman. Occasionally, if the winter was severe, the procession was joined by threshers carrying their flails, reapers bearing their sickles, and carters with their long whips; even the smith and miller were among the number, for the one sharpened the ploughshares and the other ground the corn.³ On all such occasions, we are told, "the peasants wished themselves a plentiful harvest from the great corn sown (as they called wheat and rye) and also to wish God speed to the plough as soon as they begin to break the ground."⁴ Here, as in late Scottish rural celebrations, particularly 'Burns' night' suppers, appears the familiar toast or blessing "God speed the plough."

Coming down to the present day, Plough Sunday is kept in many churches throughout the agricultural areas of England. A plough is brought into church and blessed that the year's labour may prosper. For example, the ceremony carried out in a Sussex church in 1956 is recorded as follows: "In our Sussex church the plough that will be taken into church is over a hundred

¹ W. Hutchinson, *History of Northumberland*, 1798, II, App., p. 18.

² C. Hole, *English Custom and Usage*, London, 1950, pp. 31-2.

³ J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 3rd ed., London, 1914, II, p. 329.

⁴ *The British Apollo*, II, 1710, p. 92.

years old, and was no doubt one of those made by a local ironmonger who was the inventor and manufacturer of an improved iron plough, for light and heavy soils, shown at the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park in 1851.

"Following the choir and clergy a farmer, who is also a churchwarden, will lead the procession of the plough up the aisle—on either side will walk a couple of stalwarts from two other farms while another holds the handles and, rather nervously, 'drives' the plough. Reaching the chancel step the farmer will formally state to the Vicar his reason for bringing the plough to church, offering the work of the countryside to the service of God. So the service will proceed, the farm workers taking their part. . . The old iron plough rests on the soft carpet of the chancel."¹ And in London the Plough Monday ritual, stripped of all its ancient ceremonial, is still observed each year by the Lord Mayor. In the old days the Mayor and Aldermen visited farms belonging to the City to witness ploughing matches, for the day marked, as it does to the present time, the occasion on which the Lord Mayor officially resumes office at the Guildhall. Now he performs the ceremony by journeying to the Guildhall to preside over a Grand Court of Wardmote, a court convened annually to receive returns from the wardmotes held on St Thomas's day, and to hear petitions against the elections should there be any.²

Though the Scottish 'streeking' and the English Plough play ceremonies differ in many respects, they have a common incident. The ceremony clearly is one of propitiation, and a survival of an old fertility rite associated with the cultivation of the soil, and whose observance was governed by the desire to secure a good harvest. In this connection Frazer records a custom from Whittlesey in Cambridgeshire, which may have been originally an integral part of the same ceremony. There on the day after Plough Monday a 'straw-bear'—a man completely swathed in straw—is led on a string and made to dance in front of each house, in return for which a money contribution was expected. The 'straw-bear' represents the corn spirit bestowing his favours on every homestead after the ploughing and sowing ceremonial had been performed to quicken the growth of corn or reanimate the corn spirit.³ Indeed, in the Hallgreen observance, the slice of cheese laid on the plough-beam is specifically stated as being a sort of oblation to Ceres, the protectress of agriculture. The plough, dressed up in highly decorative ribbons, represented the central figure of the mime; the choicest fruits of the soil were sacrificed in the hope that nature would return this gift in the form of an abundant harvest, and the ceremony ended with a feast and a prayer offered to the god or spirit who controlled the crops and harvest.

¹ *The Times*, 7 Jan. 1956.

² *Ibid.*, 8 Jan. 1952.

³ Frazer, *op. cit.*, II, p. 329.

In the Plough plays the usual character of St George or king is replaced by an old woman, a change in cast which points to the old belief that the corn spirit was generally thought to be feminine. The ritual here represents a piece of symbolism in which no detail may be omitted, so that, by going through a mimetic ceremony, it sets an example as it were which nature is expected to follow. The old woman is 'thrashed' to death and brought to life again. In the same way as threshers using their flails to beat out the live seed from the chaff, so is the ageing spirit of the corn beaten out of the scape-goat old woman to allow of the rebirth of the new and rejuvenated corn spirit. The gestural elements in the crude acrobatic dances were mimetic in character so that the ensuing crops, it was hoped, would grow as high and vigorously as the dancers leaped and danced.

Our remarks so far have been confined to the remnants of the plough ritual as they are still to be found in Scotland and England. The ritual, however, is as old as the plough itself. The origin of the traction plough, that is, a man- or ox-drawn plough, has been traced to the ancient near East, and, as far as we know, a ploughing ritual was evolved at the same time.¹ The plough with its associated ritual appeared in this country by diffusion or a culture-borrowing process, not by independent invention or evolution. This is readily apparent when we compare the ancient ritual with the Scottish ceremony. The active elements in the earliest known forms of the ritual differ in points of detail only from the Scottish 'streeking'. In Homeric Greece the ploughman found a cup of wine awaiting him at the end of the furrow; in ancient China the emperor was refreshed with wine after he had guided the plough along several furrows "in a sacred field, or field of God as it was called."² In Morocco the ploughman was offered bread made without yeast, ordinary bread, and dried fruits, and in the Rif country bread was broken over the plough-beam.³ We know too that the appropriate gods, Osiris in Egypt and Demeter in Greece, were invoked by the ploughman at the inauguration of the ploughing. Demeter was propitiated with an offering of the first fruits at a feast called the *Procrosia*, that is 'Before the Ploughing'.⁴ In Strathdon the feast was called the *Pleuch Fehst* or 'Plough Feast'.

Bishop poses the question "whether it [the plough] was not itself actually of priestly origin, and first employed in the production of sacred crops destined for ceremonial uses." Examples of areas set aside for this purpose are the Rharian Plain near Eleusis dedicated to Jupiter, and the Sacred Field ceremonially tilled every spring by the Chinese emperor.

¹ C. E. Bishop, *Antiquity*, x, 1936, pp. 280-1; Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

² Frazer, *op. cit.*, II, p. 14.

³ E. Westermarck, *Folk-Lore*, xvi, 1905, pp. 38-9.

⁴ Frazer, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 45, 48, 50.

Now the 'Halieman's ley' or 'Guidmans Croft' in Scotland, a plot of land set aside and untilled, was dedicated to the devil, and in Ireland similar plots in cornfields were set aside and dedicated to the fairy.¹ The devil here is without doubt the christianized form of the witch-god, and in an interesting hypothesis Miss Murray has bracketed together the witch and fairy beliefs and identified them as the relics of a pre-Christian religious cult.² Nutt, commenting on the origin and meaning of the fairy cult, suggests that it was "based on an agricultural ritualism . . . of a particularly rigid and inflexible nature."³ It may be that we have, in the Scottish and Irish sacred plots, surviving remnants of the same ancient sacred field system in which the tilling and sowing was ritualistic in character and the succeeding crops were set aside for ceremonial purposes.

These customs were so closely associated with heathen idolatry that the early church could not sanction them; but, recognizing their reality and undoubted power, she endeavoured to wean the people from the practices by absorbing them into her own ritual. Thus Plough Monday became an occasion for blessing the tilling of the soil. The ceremonial or church plough used was kept in the church, probably, although on this specific point we have no precise information, in front of the altar of the Ploughmen's Guild. The following entry is to be found in the old church account of Holbeach; it occurs in a list of church goods disposed of by the warden in 1549. "Item to Wm. Davy the sygne whereon the plowghe did stand . . . xvj."⁴ In Nottinghamshire in 1638 ploughs were still kept in Hawton and North and South Collingham,⁵ and a correspondent writing in 1852 says, "Less than ten years ago, in the belfry of Castor church, Northamptonshire, was an old town plough, roughly made, decayed and worm-eaten . . . about three times as large as an ordinary plough."⁶

Plough lights or tapers of the rush or wax type were kept burning before the Guild altar. They were placed there and paid for by the local husbandmen, in order to ensure success to their ploughing and subsequent labours throughout the remainder of the year. Payment or contributions were made in the form of money or barley: for example, at Sutterton, in the year 1490, a sum of ten shillings was paid by "Thomas Raffyn of ye plowlyth" and in Northborough, Nicholas Tighe in 1533 donated "to the plow light . . . ijd."

¹ T. D. Davidson, *Agricultural History Review*, III, 1955, pp. 20-5.

² M. A. Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, London, 1921, p. 14; App., pp. 238-48.

³ L. Spence, *The Fairy Tradition in Britain*, London, 1948, p. 308, quoting A. Nutt, *The Voyage of Bran*, London, II, p. 233.

⁴ W. Marrat, *The History of Lincolnshire*, Boston, 1814, II, p. 104.

⁵ M. W. Barley, *Journal English Folk Dance and Song Society*, VII, 1953, p. 72.

⁶ *Notes and Queries*, VII, 1853, p. 339.

When the donation was in barley, it was recorded as follows: Luton, 1511, "To the plough light . . . ij stryke of barley;" in Warmington, 1532, "To the plowe lyzth . . . ij stryke of barley."¹

It would appear that one of the main duties of selected members of the guild called plough-masters or wardens was to maintain in good order the plough and plough-lights, and to keep the accounts of the plough-light fund. They are mentioned in the following Leverton accounts, together with particulars concerning the amounts paid in to the plough-light fund and the amount paid out to the Plough Monday celebrations.

Plough Light:

- 1498 Resseuyd of ye plowth lyth of Leuton xls.
- 1526 Of Thomas Sledman of benyngton for debt of
Robert warner of ye plough lyght xxd.
- 1531 Of Thomas burton for debt of ye plowlyght xxd.
- 1559 Resaued of willyam Wastlare jun. & John
pullw'tofte of the plowygh lyght mone xvijd.

Plough Monday:

- 1577 Recd. of the Plowe maysters xxijs. viijd.
- 1611 For ayle on plowmunday xijd.²

Information on the duties of these Plough masters is given in the old churchwardens' book of Waddington.³ Under the date 1642, four persons were appointed as "Plowmeisters," and from the accounts, it would appear that these appointments were made annually. They had in their hands certain money called plough money, which they undertook to produce on Plough day. The form of this undertaking is as follows:

- 1642. "Andrew Newcome hath in his hands the sum xxs. and hath promised to bringe the Stocke upon plow-daye next, and hath hereto set his hande."
- 1738. "Memorandum that John Foxe hath in his hands £2 10. 0. of the Plow-money which sum I acknowledge myself indebted to the town of Waddington."

¹ *County Folk-Lore*, vi, 1912, pp. 172-3; *Archaeological Journal*, 2nd Series, xx, 1913, pp. 382, 363, 425.

² E. Peacock, *Extracts from the Churchwardens' Accounts of Leverton*, 1868, pp. 6, 17, 21, 29-30, 33, 36.

³ *Lincolnshire Notes and Queries*, I, 1888, pp. 86-7.

From the plough money fund the 'plow-wardens' of Cratfield in 1547 bought a new plough for 8d.¹

As the Reformation dealt the death blow to all religious guilds, the Plough Play did not escape, and most if not all ceremonial was abolished. The churchwardens' accounts for Holme Pierrepont in Nottinghamshire show clearly the effect of this step. In 1552 the parishioners had to pay an assessment tax annually to the church stock because the usual collections "with hobby horse and light" were now prohibited.² The residue or outstanding balance of the plough-light money was confiscated by the church or parish. And in Leverington, near Wisbech, for example, we find the plough-light money was added to the town stock, that is, the fund from which villagers could borrow capital. Those who had borrowed during the year had to attend and settle their score "at ye settinge forthe of ye plowghe every yeare."³ This misuse of plough-light funds is also apparent from the Waddington accounts, where, under the year 1706, there is an entry:

"On plow-day ye 7 January paid to the Ringers and Minstrels 1-4.
Spent at the same time..... 1-9."⁴

We have now passed in review some of the variant elements in a ploughing ritual known in Scotland as 'streaking the plough', and in England appearing as the central theme of Plough Monday processions and plays. Although the ritual is the same they appear, however, at different levels of survival. In England the ritual is represented by remnants only, which have been taken up into rural festivities, costumed processions, and folk plays. As a result of Christian influence and toleration towards avowedly pagan customs, the ritual became more sophisticated and assumed a certain stability and sanctity, as evidenced by the many church-ploughmen and plough-light guilds. Two factors contributed to the decline of the ceremony. The first, as we have already noted, was the Reformation, which abolished, or at any rate purged, the guilds of much of their ceremonials. The second cause was the changing pattern of farming from arable to pastoral which took place, particularly around the central midland areas where plough-play activities were mostly concentrated. This gradual change-over to pastoral farming meant the inevitable displacement of the ploughman from his position of first importance on the farm. In Scotland late into the nineteenth century the ritual

¹ *British Calendar Customs*, II, 1938, p. 102, quoting J. Charles Cox, *Churchwardens' Accounts 1400-1700*, 1913, pp. 248-9.

² Barley, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 72, quoting *Fenland Notes and Queries*, VII, pp. 184-90.

⁴ *Lincolnshire Notes and Queries*, I, 1888, p. 87.

persisted in a form closely resembling the ancient ceremony carried out in the near East. The authority of the Church and influence of the Reformation, which was no less intemperate or hasty in action than in England, was not felt to the same extent in the country areas where the ceremonies were most commonly observed. The absence of Plough Plays from Scotland may also be attributed to the prevailing system of small-scale farming and, therefore, the absence of sufficient numbers of young farmworkers to make up the play teams. The result has been that the ritual, the 'streaking of the plough', continued in the same form until eventually, with the passage of time and the enlightenment that came with education and agricultural progress, the ceremony has fallen into desuetude.

NOTES AND COMMENTS (*continued from page 26*)

among Bakewell's best and that three years earlier Bakewell had been putting "a Dishley Ram" on "a Hereford Ewe."

It is probable that what Culley bought from Bakewell was not one of the true New Leicesters but rams which were bred from, and bore some of the character of, the old Hereford breed whose wool was the lower priced in the medieval lists: and that this blood carried on the ancient West Herefordshire type into the modern Border Leicester.

AGRICULTURAL HISTORY
IN THE NETHERLANDS

We have recently received details of the following organizations concerned with agricultural history in the Netherlands.

Nederlands Landbouw-Museum (Netherlands Agricultural Museum), Stationsstraat 1, Wageningen. Director: Dr J. M. G. van der Poel.

Founded in 1936, this museum contains rooms which exhibit the salient features of agriculture and rural life and also the history of the town of Wageningen. The museum collections will ultimately be combined with the

collection of old agricultural tools gathered together by the Department of Rural History (see below).

Studiekring voor de Geschiedenis van de Landbouw (Agricultural History Society). Secretary-Treasurer: H. K. Roessingh, Bosrandweg 7, Wageningen.

Founded in 1939, it has 180 members both Dutch and Belgian. Its main functions are to publish a yearbook and papers and to hold annual conferences and excursions.

Nederlands Agronomisch-Historisch Instituut (Institute for Agricultural History). Grote Markt 26, Groningen. Director: Dr. L. S. Meihuizen.

Founded in 1950, it acts as a centre for the collection of information and bibliographical material. It has published since 1953 *Historia Agriculturae*, a yearbook which contains an international bibliography of works on agricultural history.

Afdeling Agrarische Geschiedenis van de Landbouwhogeschool (Department of Rural History). Herenstraat 21, Wageningen. Founded 1952.