

main forms of the name under separate headings. The original Norse Hjaltland and the modern Shetland both have their roots in mediaeval times, and Mr. Fenton has been at pains to document each step as fully as possible. Evidence from Scandinavian as well as English and Scots sources is painstakingly sifted, leaving the reader with a real insight into the origin and development of this fascinating name.

Copies of this attractively-presented booklet may be had from the author, Mr. Alexander Fenton, Scottish Country Life Section, National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 1VD. The cost is 25p, (or 28p including postage).

Ian Fraser

FAROE : THE EMERGENCE OF A NATION. By John F. West. C. Hurst & Co., London. 1973. 261 pp. of text, 1 map, 50 pp. of appendices & index. Price £3.25.

Almost any new book on the Faroes should be an asset since we have all too little information in English on our northern neighbours. For a quarter of a century the sole, modern book available has been Kenneth Williamson's The Atlantic Islands but this soon went out of print and it was only three

years ago that it was up-dated and re-issued. Oddly enough, despite the fact that Mr. West's book only came out this Spring, it does not carry us much further forward in time. Thus, neither book tells us about the current situation in the Faroes to-day, but this would be to expect the wrong thing. It so happens that another book is shortly coming out in a well-known series on Islands and this may possibly bring the picture up to date.

Mr. West, who teaches liberal studies at Trent Polytechnic, decided that a historical treatment of the Faroes was long overdue and he wrote this book to remedy the deficiency. Faroe deals essentially with the period from the end of the 18th century until 1968. While not a professional historian, the author has creditably laboured to present a chronological sequence of events leading up to modern Faroese society. In his own words he has "tried to let the material speak for itself" unencumbered by any particular historical theory. This approach is a weakness that soon becomes apparent. The resulting book is a disappointment since it will satisfy neither the general reader nor the scholar for whom it was intended. The scholar, should he really need a secondary English source will be peeved at the skimpy, unbalanced and some-

what uncritical approach adopted. What is one to make of the pendentically-compiled list of all English works (known to Mr. West) on the subject of the Faroes that is given on pp. 279-292 - "regardless of their quality"? Likewise, the general reader will be bemused by all the facts and figures that strew the pages.

Mr. West's method of presentation is to juxtapose alternate chapters on politics with equally short chapters on economics, but as these two themes are generally given separate chronological treatment the result is a jerky historical progression since one is successively returned to the starting point of the previous, paired chapter. There is, then, a failure to link together the political and economic aspects of Faroese history into a meaningful synthesis. While the earlier part of the book up to the Home Rule Act (1948) is factually correct, the author's attempt to deal with post-war matters becomes less convincing as the statistics begin to dominate his discussion and fill his appendices. It might have been better to have concluded this history in 1948 rather than attempt to stretch out-of-date statistics into the present. Thus, we are given the composition of the fishing fleet in 1964, the population figures for 1966, the balance of

payment figures for 1962-68, and the fishing statistics for 1953-1968. The objection to this use of numbers is that Mr. West proceeds to draw many wrong conclusions about the Faroes to-day (1973), in chapters XI-XIII, from these statistics. These errors are compounded by his subsequent addition of further statistics for 1969-71 which are either quite wrong or misleading. Such last-minute proof corrections give a spurious impression of up-to-datedness in these last chapters and appendices. The very fact that there are many mistakes in the appendices and index does not increase one's confidence in the text. There are no illustrations in the book and the map is poorly reproduced.

Despite Mr. West's manifest failure to give a picture of the current situation in the Faroes, this does not detract from his initiative in writing this book nor in giving us some needed historical information in English. It is a very difficult task to describe the present and it needs skills much higher than that of a chronicler. Mr. West does not penetrate far into the Faroese character - Williamson's book is still outstanding in conveying the quality of Faroese life.

For those who are curious about the Faroes this book does provide a historical background

that complements Williamson's more impressionistic book. On this score it is a welcome addition. One can only hope that the renewed interest in the Faroes which these books show will soon lead to a more definitive work on that small group of islands off our shores, which still remain shrouded in mist and mystery for most of us.

Anthony Jackson