the chancel's E. end the S. side of a composite stone altar was located. No recess was observed within it. It is proposed to continue the work of excavation in August, 1976, so that the site can be more fully explored. The only small finds of note consisted of arrangements of snail shells and pebbles amongst the cists in Area 1 and a small fragment of claystone, in the same area, upon which are incised lozenges with inset crosses.

15.12.75.

REVIEW – JOHN R. BALDWIN

Alexander Fenton : *Scottish Country Life* (255 pp £6.50 John Donald Ltd. Edinburgh, 1976)

Scottish Country Life is not intended as "a history of the agriculture of Scotland", rather as "a study of some of the major aspects of the changing life of the countryside" from the 17th to the early 20th centuries, particularly the 18th and 19th centruies. Since this is the great period of agricultural change in Lowland Scotland (continuing through to the present-day in some Highland areas) agricultural matters, not surprisingly, predominate.

The book is based primarily on the functional objects of everyday rural life and work – how they were made and used, how they were influenced by environment and outside factors, how they changed.

Thus environment helps determine such factors as crops that can be grown, the tools, techniques and social organisation developed to raise and process these crops, and the diet and eating habits of the people. But outside influences – cultural, political, economic all play their part. The present concentration of settlement on small parcels of highly marginal land in many coastal areas of the Highlands and Islands is hardly due to environmental factors alone, so that the widespread change from

ploughing to spade cultivation, particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries, and the development of a highly specialised form of spade (the caschrom) reflects a variety of influences old and new, local and more distant.

In addition, change requires/occasions shifts in social patterns and community relationships, so that examination of life-style and the structure of the society is an essential aspect of study where "the functionalism of .... material culture" and "regional adaptation to the environment" are concerned – an aspect that will require a good deal more exploration in due course here in Scotland.

The amount of material gathered together in this book is considerable – whether from a wide range of documentary sources, or from objects housed in museums or examined on farms throughout Scotland. There are also references to oral material – to recollections of the bothy system in Angus, of the widespread survival of the cheese-press in the North-East into the 1930s, of the 'soor-dook' carts found in the Lothians into the late 1940s.

The value of such oral evidence is still under-rated in Britain, though increasingly recognised as an important and necessary aspect of historical investigation. Much can be gleaned from the wear-marks on a blade or handle, or from the listing of flails or spades in a local joiner's or smith's grubby account book. But only people brought up with the aches and pains, smells, textures and sounds of bothy, threshing mill or plunge churn can provide the fuller balance to official papers and surveys, and to the views of the generally more articulate, certainly more widely-reported, landowners churchmen, merchants and politicians.

Much detail going back into the 19th century can still be collected (along with much for the largely ignored present-day). The pity is that relatively little has yet been taken down

methodically across Scotland as a whole, and even less examined in any depth.

What is encouraging about *Scottish Country Life,* apart from its concentration on functional objects, is a recognition of the potential of oral tradition, and also of visual material - particularly the close-up or extracted detail. This should be yet another tool fundamental to historian, ethnologist, sociologist alike.

If sections on e.g. the plough, reaper, fanners, threshing mill and milking machine suggest a text-book, this is because most topics have featured these past few years in the Agricultural Museum, staged annually at The Royal Highland Show – a museum soon to be available on a permanent, all-the-year round basis. The book is none the worse for this, though as a textbook (one of its implied aims) the density of style would probably make it of greater value in tertiary than in secondary education.

In an educational sense, we should note the (freely-admitted) subjective selection of topics – it does not claim to cover all aspects of country life! It is not the first book, of course, to concentrate on material culture as a means of studying change in rural Scotland. Dr. Isobel Grant's *Highland Folk Ways* is a noteworthy predecessor. And just as *Highland Folk Ways* reflects more specifically (though not exclusively) the Eastern Highlands, so *Scottish Country Life* should not be seen necessarily as a mirror of all Scotland.

Mr. Fenton is right to emphasise that the Highland line is less rigid than many suppose, and certainly no-one should underestimate the influence of the highly-advanced, agriculturally, South and East of Scotland – a point underlined by the Shearer of Turriff hand-thresher with "Portuguese or Spanish lettering" found in a Finnish museum. It is equally correct to state that "There is no East and West when it comes

to questions of man's response to his environment."

At the same time, there are many cultural and non-environmental factors which colour man's response to his environment – factors which this book reflect more fully for the Lowlands than for the Highlands or Islands.

Scottish Country Life has a pioneering flavour – exciting and stimulating. It cuts a swathe through the fundamental activities of rural Scotland and successfully traces a good deal of change in tools, techniques and ways of life.

In doing so, it adds a further dimension to our knowledge of man in Scotland and serves as a useful and timely introduction to the identification of ethnologically distinctive cultures within Scotland – an essential first step to knowing ourselves and to setting Scottish or British material against evidence from Northern Europe, Scandinavia and further afield.

"A Proper Wooer"

Fischer Heinesen

Islanders have strange customs.

On the northwestern side of the Faroese island of Kallsoy there is a place called the wooer's stone. By the stone there is a sheer drop of about 500 metres down to the sea.

In order to be called a proper wooer, a young man should stand on the very edge of the wooer's stone, so far out that only his heels were on the stone. Another man should, standing at a safe distance from the edge, check that the wooer was standing straight up and not leaning back. Having performed this feat the young man was called "a proper wooer".

In the Faroes it was the cliff climbers only who settled the