

analysis at such a high level of scholarship.

For the professional onomastician, however, such a methodical and painstaking treatment of the material is, these days, a vital factor in the production of a regional volume on place-names such as this is. Dr. Fellows-Jensen, as a product of that brilliant and productive school of place-name scholars which sat at the feet of the late Prof. A.H. Smith, maintains the highest professional standards with this volume. If place-name studies at this level are to succeed, the methodology must be sound, the scholar's linguistic background must be based on a good knowledge of several languages (some of them dead) and there must be a clear perception of history. In other words, the onomastician must draw together several specialities, all of them complex and some extremely obscure. It is no surprise that the true scholar of onomastics is such a rare creature.

Ian A. Fraser.

***The Orkney Story*, Liv Kjörsvik Schei & Gunnie Moberg: Batsford, London (1985), 224 pp. Innumerable B. & W. illustrations and 13 colour plates. Price £12.50.**

***The Prehistory of Orkney, B.C. 4000-1000 A.D.* edited by Colin Renfrew; EUP (1985), 304 pp. Innumerable B. & W. illustrations and 25 colour plates. Price £20.00.**

***Earl, Saint, Bishop, Skald – and Music. (The Orkney Earldom of the Twelfth Century. A Musicological Study)*, Ingrid De Geer; Doctoral Dissertation of the Institute of Musicology, Uppsala University (1985), 333 pp. Line Drawings. Price ?**

These three books, each of them – as I know – the fruit of years of labour, show the continuing enormous appeal of the history, antiquities and culture of the Orkney Islands for outsiders. The Orcadians must be a little mazed, if not gratified to see more books about the prehistory and history of their islands pouring out of the publishing houses. The first two of course are commercial ventures, the last is not. All are very different and all, in their way, well worth

acquiring.

The Orkney Story has been written by a Norwegian woman who has become passionately interested in Orkney and the island's Norwegian past and traditional links. She is not the first to have become so involved in the former colonial territories of the Norwegian empire, and it is good to see her following a famous predecessor, P.A. Munch, and quoting what that great Norwegian historian had to say about Orkney history. She examines the island's past and its present situation; she looks at the folklore, customs, place-names and language from the Norwegian viewpoint, and her own cultural background enables her to view many aspects with understanding, and to explain them with illumination. In the main her discussions are a sensible résumé of other people's work and theories, but there are gaps and there are misunderstandings. Archaeology is thin, and the chapter on place-names has no reference to W.F.H. Nicolaisen's work which takes Hugh Marwick's *Orkney Farm-Names* a stage further. The real value of this book is in the magnificent collection of photographs by Gunni Moberg – the work of a professional who has lived in the islands for many years and who has captured the landscape of Orkney in many moods and from the most unbelievable aerial viewpoints which put so many well-known historical and archaeological sites into a new perspective. Those who have appreciated Gunni's post-cards and her attractive collection of photographs in *Orkney in Stone* will be delighted to have the chance to acquire a book stuffed full of further examples of this talented lady's work.

The thin-ness of the archaeological material hardly matters when simultaneously *The Prehistory of Orkney* has finally become available to those with an interest in the monuments of the islands. This is a corporate production by thirteen professional archaeologists who have all excavated or studied the prehistoric sites of the islands, and it is edited by one of the most eminent archaeologists in Britain today who has devoted much time and interest to the neolithic monuments of Orkney, Colin Renfrew, Disney Professor of Archaeology in the University of Cambridge. It is unlikely that any other comparable region of Britain could have been so intensively studied by so many specialists of so many different eras; but then, there are few comparable regions of Britain which have the wealth of prehistoric

monuments that these islands have. One always knew that there were more ancient monuments per square mile in Orkney than anywhere else in the British Isles. This book really shows how much has been learnt about the prehistoric past from these monuments in the last twenty years. The knowledge gained from the many long and expensive excavations that have taken place in Orkney with the explosion of interest in archaeology in recent years is distilled into eleven readable and informative chapters ranging from the thirty-fifth century B.C. to the Viking Age. The difficult and technical material presented in Colin Renfrew's own book *Investigations in Orkney* is here explained in far more comprehensible form for the layman with an intelligent interest in the sites and monuments of the islands which he may be visiting, (or will certainly want to visit by the time he has finished it). It is lavishly illustrated with many black and white photographs and colour plates, which really bring home the amazing wealth of the structures and finds at domestic sites like Knap of Howar and Links of Noltland; funerary monuments like the Isbister and Quanterness chambered tombs; defensive structures like Bu and Howe brochs, which join the more familiar Maes Howe, Skara Brae, Ring of Brodgar and Midhowe cairn and broch as famous sites – and many of them type-sites – of the early and late Stone Age, and of the Iron Age in the north. For those particularly interested in the Viking Age and the problem of what happened to the Picts the two final chapters on 'Orkney in the Pictish Kingdom' by Anna Ritchie and 'Viking Orkney: a Survey' by Christopher Morris provide useful assessments of the most recent excavations and interpretations of Pictish and Norse settlement in the islands.

Finally, there has been written, on a very different scale, a thesis on the Norse earldom of Orkney in the twelfth century which has been stimulated by a study of the early polyphonic hymn to St. Magnus *Nobilis Humilis* (Cod. Ups. C233), thought to have been written in Orkney in the twelfth century. The result is a comprehensive investigation of Orcadian history and culture of the period, which sees the earldom not only as an 'integral part of medieval Western Civilisation' but also as a very important bridgehead in transmitting influences from the south to the Nordic world. The extensive knowledge which the author has acquired about every aspect of Orcadian history makes it a very remarkable compilation and a useful

one for future researchers. Whether her inter-disciplinary approach has really resulted in a proven thesis is, however, not quite so certain. Nonetheless her Scandinavian background provides the solid base against which the achievements of the earldom can be assessed; once more it is the outsider who in most respects possesses the right cultural background necessary for passing judgement on Orkney's place in history.

Dr. Barbara Crawford.

***Exploring Scotland's Heritage, Orkney and Shetland*, edited by Anna Ritchie, Edinburgh 1985, 183 pp.**

The series of books sponsored by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and appearing under the general title *Exploring Scotland's Heritage* provide an accurate and detailed, and eminently readable, account of local buildings and sites of historic interest. Information for the *Orkney and Shetland* volume in the series has been compiled by Anna Ritchie and constitutes a very comprehensive survey of both islands. Anna Ritchie is well known for her recent archaeological work in Orkney.

The book is very easy to use thanks to its logical construction with chapters or sections moving backwards in time from recent Military Architecture and Lighthouses to Early Prehistoric Monuments, and the material within each chapter is organised on a similar chronological basis.

In her introduction to the book, Anna Ritchie justifies treating Orkney and Shetland together rather than separately and, for the most part, this joint treatment is satisfactory and it is only occasionally that one feels that the unique quality of either set of islands has been submerged in the desire to emphasise the many features they have in common. Fair Isle is dealt with in a separate section, somewhat illogically sandwiched between 'Military Architecture and Lighthouses' and 'Harbours and Towns'. Other chapters include coverage of a variety of secular buildings ranging from farm steadings to mediaeval palace, as well as ecclesiastical monuments and Viking and