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**THE RURAL INDUSTRIES
OF ENGLAND & WALES**

II

**OSIER-GROWING AND BASKETRY
AND SOME RURAL FACTORIES**

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THE RURAL INDUSTRIES OF ENGLAND & WALES

A SURVEY MADE ON BEHALF OF THE
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
RESEARCH INSTITUTE
OXFORD

II
OSIER-GROWING AND BASKETRY
AND SOME RURAL FACTORIES

By
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and M. DORIEL HAY

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P R E F A C E

IN any consideration of the development of the countryside the place and function of local industries in rural life must occupy a prominent position. Their importance in the past is obvious, when the village was largely an isolated economic unit ; in view of the part they might still play in maintaining a fuller life for the country dweller, in stemming the flow of population from the rural to the urban centres, and in solving some of the problems of modern industrialism, the need for a study of their present state, of the extent to which the changes in modern, social, and economic conditions demand their supersession, and of the possibility of adapting and developing them to serve these same conditions, becomes increasingly apparent.

It may be that rural industries can continue to supplement agriculture in the complete rural community, by providing subsidiary employment for the part-time land-worker and the small-holder ; by affording the chance of employment in their own homes or villages to the various members of their families ; by providing certain requisites of agricultural industry. It may be possible that in the revolution of economic principles and systems which is now being made by all sorts and conditions of persons, certain human advantages in rural industries may be set against the greater production of goods by the larger industrial units of the towns. In particular, the smaller industrial concern enables a man to see the whole series of connexions between the making and using of an article, and brings his work into direct relation not only with his own life, but with that of the community of which he is a member. There is little or no distinction between producer and consumer and one of the chief causes of present social conflicts is non-existent. The worker in

the country 'sees the nature of what he is doing; he is getting products from the land and making use of them by industry. He sees the whole process, and the fact is plain that labour and land are for the sake of himself and others like him who needs the goods. He sees the grain become flour, the wood from the forest become furniture, the hide become leather, and the leather boots, and the wool cloth—all beside him, and all of it a plain process of natural goods made useful by men.'¹ The men of the towns, however, have a genius for organization, and if it be necessary that their business should be arranged on a basis involving less specialization than at present, or so that some of the evil effects of over-specialization were eliminated, they may be able to modify existing systems without seriously affecting their productivity. The only basis upon which rural industries can be firmly established is that of a high standard of technical knowledge and skill, suitable machinery, and commercial organization. On the other hand, the moribund condition of many once-flourishing country trades and crafts may have to be recognized as the price of industrial progress in other centres. The modern tendency towards the centralization of industry and large-scale production; the enormous development of transport facilities which has broken down the barriers between town and country; the danger of these small unorganized enterprises becoming sweated industries serving only to subsidize agricultural wages, all of these things may render undesirable any effort towards the resuscitation of many of these ancient crafts.

With so little knowledge available it became clear that a thorough investigation of the position of rural industries, both economic and social, would be advantageous and, in 1919, at the suggestion of the Development Commissioners, an inquiry into the condition of rural industries in the neighbourhood of Oxford was set on foot by the Agricultural Economics Research Institute, at Oxford. It was rather of the nature of a trial trip, an experimental inquiry to explore the possibilities of a more complete investigation, and

¹ D. H. Macgregor, *The Evolution of Industry*, p. 24.

in the following year arrangements were made with the Development Commissioners and the Ministry of Agriculture for an extension of the survey so as to bring under review the principal rural industries of England and Wales.

The terms of reference of those responsible for the work were to consider—

(1) the existing rural industries and the causes of their establishment in particular localities, such as easy access to local supplies of raw material and labour, and local markets for the finished products ;

(2) the various types of organization in these industries, such as small factories and workrooms or individual production, organizations for the purchase of raw materials or the sale of finished products. Educational facilities and the possibilities of technical instruction were also to be borne in mind in this connexion ;

(3) the economic and social effects of rural industries, the conditions of labour attendant on them, the connexion between rural industries and agricultural employment, and how far such industries tend to depress or to ameliorate the lot of the agricultural worker ;

(4) the prospects of development of existing industries and of the introduction of new enterprises, or of the resuscitation of former industries now dead or in a state of suspended animation. In this connexion the existence of competition, both urban and foreign, was to be borne in mind, and consideration given to the conditions under which rural industries can compete with urban production.

The survey was carried out during three years by a specially appointed group of workers. They surveyed the country, county by county, and the results of their inquiries were embodied in reports dealing with the industries of particular localities. From these interim reports (which are available in manuscript, for consultation, at Oxford) the final reports were compiled, dealing with the various industries separately as they occur throughout the country.

As has already been said, the first district surveyed was that of Oxfordshire, and the investigator in this instance

was Miss K. S. Woods, who was assisted in part of the work by Miss C. D. Biggs. The results of the survey were embodied in book form, and published early in 1921.¹ From 1921 to 1922 the work was continued by Miss Woods and Miss Helen FitzRandolph, and in the summer of 1922 Miss M. Doriel Hay took Miss Woods's place. The survey of the Welsh industries required a knowledge of the Welsh language and was undertaken, apart from the English survey, by Miss A. M. Jones, in 1922 and 1923. All these investigators worked under the direction of Mr. A. W. Ashby. A list of the districts surveyed by each is appended.

The investigators must be congratulated upon the results of their work. Inquiries of this kind are not always too easily conducted, and call for a measure of enthusiasm and even of courage in those concerned if the best results are to be obtained.

It is impossible to name all those who assisted them in their work, but I should like to make grateful acknowledgement of the friendly reception accorded to them, and of the readiness with which those engaged in the various industries investigated gave of their time and knowledge. Without their cordial co-operation it would have been an impossible task.

For convenience of publication the reports have been collected together in four volumes, as follows :

Vol. I. Timber and Underwood Industries and some Village Workshops.

Vol. II. Osier-Growing and Basketry, and Some Rural Factories.

Vol. III. Decorative Crafts and Rural Potteries.

Vol. IV. Rural Industries in Wales.

The following report is Vol. II of the series.

C. S. ORWIN.

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
RESEARCH INSTITUTE,
OXFORD, July 1926.

¹ K. S. Woods, *Rural Industries Round Oxford* (Oxford University Press).

ORDER OF THE SURVEY

<i>Date.</i>	<i>District.</i>	<i>Investigator.</i>
1919-20	Oxfordshire	K. S. Woods and C. D. Biggs
1920-1	Bedfordshire	Helen FitzRandolph
1921	Derbyshire, Leicestershire, and Nottinghamshire	"
1921-2	Kent, Surrey, and Sussex	"
"	Westmorland, Cumberland, and Lancashire	"
1922	Shropshire, Staffordshire, and Cheshire	K. S. Woods
"	Herefordshire and Worcestershire	"
"	South Western Counties	"
"	Durham	Helen FitzRandolph
"	Northumberland	"
"	North Riding of Yorkshire	Helen FitzRandolph and M. Doriel Hay
"	East and West Ridings of Yorkshire	M. Doriel Hay
"	Carnarvonshire	A. M. Jones
"	Denbighshire	"
"	Flint	"
1923	Gloucestershire	Helen FitzRandolph
"	East Anglia and Essex	"
"	Lincolnshire	M. Doriel Hay
"	Warwickshire	"
"	East Midland Counties	"
"	Merionethshire and Montgomeryshire	A. M. Jones
"	Brecon and Radnorshire	"
"	Pembrokeshire, Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire, and Anglesey	"
"	Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire	"

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