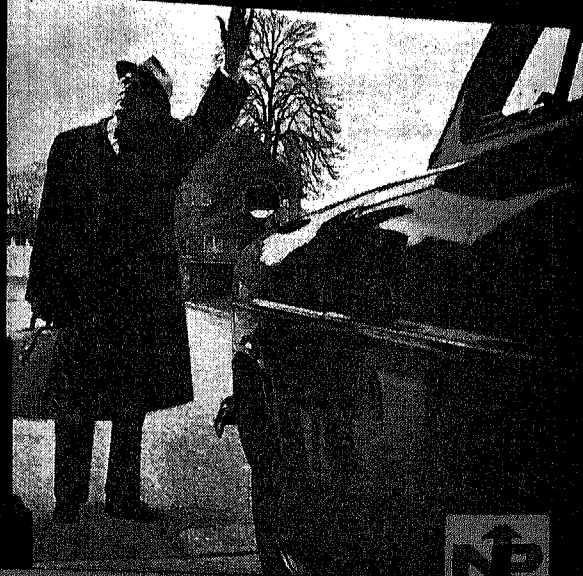


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*The*

SUMMER 1963

# Countryman

*comes from the country*



**The Lively Isle**

*Audrey Holmes*

**Socks for an Emperor**

*Mary Collier*

**Persian Harvest**

*Cicely Furse*

**Here's Flowers for You**

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## J. W. R. S.—*Some Tributes*

*The activities of Robertson Scott were so varied, he was interested in so many people, and his own warm and generous personality appeared so vividly in his writings that thousands of people, including many who had never met him face to face, regarded him as a personal friend. We give here just a few of the tributes received, to represent the many.*

H. E. BATES, *countryman and author*

ROBERTSON SCOTT'S undoubted masterpiece, 'England's Green and Pleasant Land', was first published in 1925 and by the early thirties had become my bible, sitting side by side in its high place of honour with those two great masters, Hudson and Edward Thomas. Here, it seemed to me as a vigorously outspoken and iconoclastic young man, was the way writing about the English countryside ought to be: pungent, forthright, fresh, free of cant and above all intensely human. My own writing on the countryside would never have been what it is without the combined influences of these three men. Hudson and Thomas, of course, were poets; Robertson Scott was not. He may have aspired to be and found it was not within him—I don't know. There was however more than a touch of the visionary in him, and it was this, together with the fervour of his dedication to all country matters and his splendid training under Stead, that made him a journalist apart and a great editor. Curiously enough, my abiding physical impression of him derives from a day when we didn't meet. I was driving through Idbury on a warm summer afternoon and saw him sitting in the garden of the manor. I stopped the car but, though we had corresponded considerably and I had written a number

of pieces for him, I was too shy to introduce myself. Yet the kindly patriarch sits there still, as if it were yesterday.

JANET TEULON WOODS, *early member of staff*

J. W. R. S. had a tremendous sense of purpose which, from 1927 onwards, was directed chiefly to establishing 'The Countryman'. His single-mindedness was inspiring, though exacting to a degree which might have alienated his women staff, had he not worked harder and longer hours than they did. There was, too, a gentleness about him and a sense of fun shown in rare leisure moments spent in walking with his wife and little dog Hurry. With us his customary reticence only partly concealed a genuine interest in young people and desire to bridge the half-century between the customs of his youth and ours. His way of bringing home to us our debt to those staunch women who fought for rights we, perhaps, too lightly valued was characteristic: after enumerating the petticoats worn by his mother under her sober Victorian gown, he declared with great solemnity, 'You little know the pit whence you were digged'.

FRANK ASHTON-GWATKIN, *diplomat*

PROPHETS, priests and kings are the three types of humanity who stand nearest to the centre of that circle whose circumference is infinity. These are in a special sense the Sons of God. I have known three authentic prophets, and perhaps two more. One of the three was John Robertson Scott. When I met him first in Tokyo more than forty years ago, he looked very much as he did towards the end of his life: something between a sheep-dog and a wolf-hound—shaggy, primitive and very northern, with

much of Beowulf and Gunnar of Lithend in his make-up, and little or nothing of Athens or Rome or Paris. Certainly a prophet, though his religion seemed quite innocent of creed or dogma and to concentrate on humanity, the better world, racial harmony, village communities, improved housing and all that. I have found a description of him in a translation from Horace's Satires:

What though your friend be hasty now and then,  
Too rough for the nice taste of modern men?  
What though his beard oft ask the barber's skill,  
His coat look shabby and his shoes fit ill?  
Yet, you might add, he is a man of parts,  
His bosom holds the very best of hearts;  
And in this rude exterior lurks enshrined  
A generous temper and gigantic mind.

There was in him true generosity and real breadth of mind, not in the plodding industry and patient pursuit of a livelihood, but in the sense of life; in the pleasure taken in struggle and success; in the keen desire (as in the vow of the Amida Buddha) to bring all creation into Paradise with him.

ROBERT TROW-SMITH, *journalist and author*

I MET Robertson Scott a few times in person, regularly in print; and though I often disagreed with him on details, of all rural writers none was more right about the fundamentals. As a journalist, I immensely admired his skill in the craft.

ROLF GARDINER, *estate owner, farmer and forester*

IN the 1920s there was a notable revival of the Cotswold Morris dance among undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge. Towards midsummer 1924 the first Cambridge 'Travelling Morrice' set forth on

bicycles for the Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire villages whose names were inseparably connected with traditions of the dance—a journey of ecstatic pilgrimage and discovery. In the neighbourhood of Bledington, haunt of one of the most famous Morris traditions, it was Idbury Manor or, as we termed it, *Château* Robertson Scott which became our *rendez-vous*. Here we were always sure of the warmest welcome, J. W. R. S. and Elspet providing us with a beautiful pitch, hot baths, extra food and unquenchable kindness. He was much intrigued by our passion for the Cotswold Morris, though one sensed his uncertainty as to the serious value of a revival of traditions derived from pagan magic and fertility rites, or its relevance to modern education and the improvement of the rural economy. But he was impressed by the happiness our visits created in the hearts and minds of surviving village dancers: John Hitchman, Richard Bond and the fiddler Charlie Benfield. Our coming was a great event in the declining years of these old veterans of the Morris. To watch their vivid, critical interest and shining eyes when they attended our performances on the lawn at the manor or in a great timbered barn near by was an experience that could not be forgotten.

AGNES STOPS, *who started many Women's Institutes in New Zealand*

DURING his long full life Robertson Scott gave us more happy and helpful memories than anyone else. In the early days of the Women's Institutes, with the Nugent Harrises, he was always at hand to help, advise and inspire us at headquarters with the right ideals and common aspirations. He was the great man on our committee, thinking out and then writing the story of the movement, which he published from Idbury in 1925. I took copies to New Zealand

in 1927; to every one sold he added a free copy of 'The Countryman'. Many old institute members there and elsewhere overseas were kept in touch by his writing in the review. When I visited Idbury, passing through lovely Cotswold villages, I realised how much Robertson Scott had done as chairman of the district council's housing committee to preserve their beauty, while adding to the comforts of the people living in them.



### *On the Crafty Side* by Mary Noble

'TAKE pheasants, now', said Ernie. 'Anybody with plenty o' time, like yerself, say; they could do themselves a bit o' good rearin' pheasants. 'Alf a crown to two shillin's apiece you can get fer th' eggs. An' if you 'atch 'em out an' let the chicks get up sizeable—say s' big as a good blackbird—they'm wuff ten bob apiece. Mind, you got to be real knowin' to rear 'em to that size. Very nesh, pheasants is. Two 'undred eggs Farmer Elms bought, back-a-long, an' seventy pheasants is all 'e've a-reared up. Mind, you d' want the right sort of 'ens to put the eggs under—not them big 'eavy quaddly sort. Bantams is best. An' you d' want the right place to kip 'em. An' you d' want to feed 'em right. Ants' eggs, that's what pheasant chicks d' like. Where 'tis, though, you might find yerself with a lot o' pheasant chicks an' then yer ants might 'ave stopped layin'. But fer anybody as is a bit on the crafty side, there's a nice profit in pheasants.'

### *Thomas Hardy, Man of Dorset* by Gabriel Seal

WHEN Hardy died in 1928 a spadeful of Dorset earth was sent to London and scattered on the casket containing his ashes before it was interred in Westminster Abbey. At the same time his heart was returned to Dorchester and buried at Stinsford with the bodies of his forefathers under an ancient churchyard yew.

These simple acts of piety were symbolic of the man. Hardy was, to use the time-honoured expression, a 'true son of the soil'. He came of a family of Dorset craftsmen, and was born and brought up in a secluded cottage which his great-grandfather had built half a century earlier at Bockhampton. When he had means enough to marry and build himself a home, he selected a plot only a mile or two distant; and to the end of his long life his favourite walk was along the water-meadows to Stinsford church and back. His life's work, one might say, was the rendering in prose and poetry of his native region and its peasantry. Like Wordsworth's skylark, he was

Type of the wise who soar but never roam;  
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!

That Dorset cottage of his parents, the last house in a narrow rising lane, is as secluded today as it was a century ago—one of the few birth-places of the famous which do justice to the image we have formed in our minds of what such a place should be. It is stone-flagged, beam-ceilinged and snugly thatched with

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