

# Wisdom from the Iron Lady of the Rocks

Julia Bastian

## BIRTHRIGHT IN LAND BY WILLIAM OGILVIE AND THE STATE OF SCOTLAND TODAY

Shirley-Anne Hardy  
The Peregrine Press, £11.95  
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**I**F YOU SHOULD go walking along the Craigower Track, near Pitlochry, you may read in your guidebook about a local lady: "Mrs Shirley-Anne Hardy of Rock Cottage ... noted for her radical views on land use and land ownership ...". By some of her African friends who came across her writings on land reform, she is known as "the Iron Lady of the Rocks".

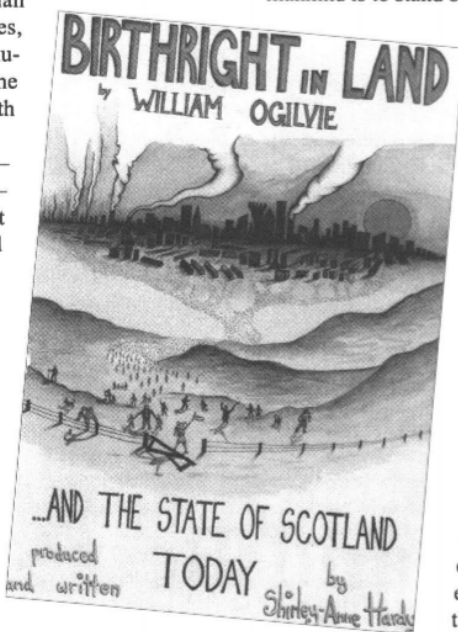
Mrs Hardy, herself a landowner, has spent many years planting indigenous trees over her 1.25 acres. Her hillside is now "forest land" while in the garden of her shepherd's cottage she cultivates herbs, salad crops and food for wild birds. She practices sustainable land use in its most practical form.

Her book is divided into three parts. Of particular importance is the essay on property in land written by William Ogilvie, accompanied by her commentary which links the 18th century writer to our own time. By analysing the work of others long forgotten, Mrs Hardy will renew interest in Natural Law, and ideas buried in the past which could now open up vistas for progress. Ogilvie is shown to be a pioneer in the social, economic and ecological spheres.

Another hero is William Wallace, tenaciously researched and passionately reported, including how the film "Braveheart" came to be made. Wallace cleared the English out of Scotland – with little help from Scottish nobility

– and freed Scotland from alien domination. All over the world he has been an inspiration to freedom fighters; not for nothing are there more than eighty place names, sculptures and monuments, to associate the deeds of Wallace with the landscape.

Part II – "Signposts" – explores the concept of community and the re-empowerment of the people. Topics investigated include the different qualities of water, floods, genetically modified organisms, drugs, cyberspace, types of energies, agriculture, racism and much else. These discussions bring to light how so many problems facing mankind stem from society's original subversion of the Law of Rent. An easily understood definition of this Law, which is timeless and universal in its application, is



provided. It removes the cruelty of land monopoly and restores the equal availability of land to all who require it for their livelihood, and it ensures that land is used and not sold for profit.

The work of Viktor Schauberg, for example, has been an important signpost for the health of the planet. He dedicated his study to the nature of Water and the water cycle of the Earth in its completeness. He has shown the high price we pay for ignorance which has already led to so much destruction of the environment.

Likewise the work of Dr Weston Price, a dentist, whose books on nutrition illustrate how social and environmental ills are traced back to society's original subversion of the Law of Rent. These, and other luminaries included in this book, emphasise that neither land nor people should be treated as commodities, and it is this idea that must be addressed if mankind is to stand back from self destruction.

Mrs. Hardy, a true Scotswoman, is rightly concerned about the state of Scotland today. She sets out the correspondence she has had with The Scottish Office regarding their land reform policy; although the new Scottish Parliament has discussed land reform and consulted about it widely, they have failed to understand the bigger picture.

The final section is called Kaleidoscope. It contains a remarkable collection of writings that enhance and extend all that has gone before. There are reprints of articles,

including some from *Land and Liberty*, from *Progress* (the Georgist journal published in Australia). These supporting documents on justice and liberty draw together extracts from newspapers, cartoons, poems, drawings, and much fascinating information on subjects of burning interest to everyone who cares about the health of the planet.

Shirley-Anne's erudite anthology is the culmination of some 40 years of research into the laws of social justice since she was first alerted to the work of Henry George. Her book will help to make Georgism relevant to the issues of our time and certainly provides a blueprint to guide Scotland towards economic and political freedom.

And since it will appeal to every ordinary member of the reading public with no special knowledge of Ogilvie, or Georgism or the Land Question, for them it could become the ideal Christmas gift.

☞ Signed copies available from Shirley-Anne Hardy, The Rocks, Pitlochry, Perthshire, Scotland PH16 5QZ

## Brazil

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crucified indigenous tribes and prevented the more recent settlers from gaining decent livelihoods by working the vast fertile hinterlands.

Rocha explains that Brazil's system of tenure was designed not to serve the interests of farmers; it was to be a supplier of raw materials to the Portuguese Crown. So the colonisers divided the territory into 13 "captaincies" for the King's soldiers and their henchmen. Sugar and coffee was produced from plantations worked by slaves.

In 1986, the 20 biggest landowners still owned estates covering a territory four times larger than the state of Rio de Janeiro of approximately 100 million acres. Meanwhile, according to the landless rural workers' movement (MST), 4.8 million families need land. At the end of last year, 60,000 families

lived in squatter camps – while vast areas were either vacant or underused.

Brazil has one of the most active direct action peasant movements. Land squatting is a regular occurrence, with landowners fighting back with the aid of hired gunmen. This study does not offer a coherent solution to this problem. Oxfam itself has not formulated a template for legal and institutional reforms that could guide countries like Brazil or Zimbabwe, to enable those nations to re-base their development programmes in the direction of economic efficiency and social equity.

Even so, the Rocha volume is value for money. It provides an authoritative survey of the facts which social activists need if they are to develop a coherent reform that would be fair to everyone in Brazil.