

The Cost of Parliamentary Enclosure in Buckinghamshire¹

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IN a recent article on 'Sources for the History of Agriculture' W. B. Stephens made very slight reference to the sources for a study of parliamentary enclosure. For extra-award material he was content to say, "If they exist, other enclosure records such as surveys, field books and valuations may give fuller details."² Many years earlier on the other hand, W. E. Tate devoted a whole essay to a discussion of these "unexplored Records."³

The purpose of this paper is to use the information available for Buckinghamshire to demonstrate some of these extra-award sources.⁴ For some enclosures only the commissioners' minute book survives, but in other cases the complete working papers exist incorporating minute book, surveyors' quantity and quality books, accounts, draft copies of bills, Acts, and awards, and full correspondence.⁵

Professor Beresford, producing a table based on fifty-three enclosures, has previously demonstrated that the time between the passing of an Act and the completion of an award was often a lengthy one.⁶ There are two further considerations which must be discussed both of which are revealed in the extra-award materials. First, the time between the passing of an Act and the signing of the award by no means completed the enclosure. There was often a lengthy pre-Act period during which the parliamentary Bill was prepared and opinion in the parish obtained, and also an equally lengthy post-award period during which the commissioners settled any outstanding financial business.⁷ Second, the completion of the award was often postponed either because of absenteeism by the commissioners or failure by the proprietors to meet the enclosure expenses.

The commissioners figure prominently in the stage of soliciting the Bill. They were often approached long before the Act was passed and employed by the leading promoters to sound out opinion in the parish, and as they were frequently land surveyors they might undertake preliminary surveys.⁸ For the Bledlow enclosure

¹ I am obliged to Dr B. A. Holderness of the University of East Anglia for his useful comments.

² W. B. Stephens, 'Sources for the History of Agriculture in the English Village and their Treatment', *Ag. Hist.*, XLIII, 2, 1969, p. 233.

³ W. E. Tate, 'Some Unexplored Records of the Enclosure Movement', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, 57, 1942, pp. 250-63.

⁴ The material is catalogued under parishes in the Bucks. Record Office, Aylesbury, hereafter B.R.O.

⁵ I am obliged to Mr E. J. Davis, County Archivist, and his staff for their kind assistance in making the material available to me.

⁶ M. W. Beresford, 'The Commissioners of Enclosure', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, XVI, 1946, p. 137 (reprinted in W. E. Minchinton (ed.), *Essays in Agrarian History*, II, 1968, p. 98).

⁷ H. Homer, *Essay . . . upon the inclosure of common fields*, Oxford, 1766, p. 36, says four-fifths of the property was necessary for consent.

⁸ W. E. Tate discusses professions of commissioners in 'Oxfordshire Enclosure Commissioners, 1737-1856', *Jour. Mod. Hist.*, XXIII, 2, 1951, pp. 137-45. See also Beresford, *op. cit.*

(1809-12), the commissioners received a total of £444 for attendances prior to the Act.¹ This, plus the solicitors fee and the fee for the Act itself, represented a sizeable proportion of the final cost. For the abortive Quainton Bill of 1801 there must have been much expenditure. John Fellows, many times a commissioner, was employed by the promoters of the Bill between 1799 and 1810 to present frequent reports expressing the advantages of an enclosure.² In a lengthy letter he explained the disadvantages of open-field cultivation and the merits of enclosure. Not only would rents be doubled but much common ground and waste would be brought under cultivation. Besides, "Quainton Field is the only one in that part of the county of Buckingham that remains uninclosed;³ unless a division and inclosure of the open fields of Quainton is carried into execution, that property will ever remain in that unimproved state which it has been in for centuries past, to the disgrace of that part, with so many others of the County of Buckingham, which are so much behind in the improvement of agriculture compared with so many other counties."⁴ However, Quainton was to remain open for a further forty years.

W. E. Tate, after an examination of the House of Commons Journals, held that of the possible modes of protest against enclosure, counter-petitions were not the favourite.⁵ The evidence for Buckinghamshire confirms this view, though in some cases successful appeal to Parliament was made. The prelude to enclosure was a time in which parish opinion was investigated, and, if necessary, dissension was met by the buying of property. The size of solicitors' fees indicate that this pre-Act period of persuasion was often lengthy. A few examples will illustrate the point. Soliciting the Act for the enclosure of Drayton Parslow (1797-8) represented 11 per cent of the total cost,⁶ for Stewkley (1811-17) it was 9 per cent,⁷ and for the enclosure of the waste of Olney (1803) it was 27 per cent.⁸ The results of this pre-Act period might be summarized in a schedule showing consenting and dissenting parties, which could be used as evidence when petitioning Parliament. Table 1 is a representative sample taken from the extra-award material for Buckinghamshire.⁹

Quainton provides an interesting study. Table 1 figures suggest that the promoters of the Bill had secured the necessary four-fifths majority. Mantoux observed that the average size of the consenters was £28 8s. 3d. and that of the opposition

¹ Bledlow Enclosure Account Book: B.R.O., IR/M/2.

² In Buckinghamshire between 1788 and 1821 he served on twenty-nine commissions. In addition he served as surveyor eight times and twice as umpire. In Oxfordshire he was commissioner once and surveyor twice: *A Handlist of Inclosure Acts and Awards relating to the county of Oxfordshire*, Oxford C.C. Record Publication, No. 2, 1963. In Bedfordshire he was commissioner on fifteen occasions and surveyor on four occasions, *ex. inf.* Miss McGregor, Bedford County Record Office.

³ Thirty years before Arthur Young remarked, "From Aylesbury to Buckingham the whole country is open fields." *The Farmer's Tour through the East of England*, London, 1771, I, p. 23.

⁴ Letter of 14 May 1801, Quainton Working Papers, B.R.O., IR/M/9.

⁵ W. E. Tate, 'Parliamentary Counter-Petitions during the Enclosures of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, LIX, 1944, pp. 392-403.

⁶ Drayton Parslow Enclosure Commissioners' Minute Book: B.R.O.

⁷ Stewkley Enclosure Account Book: B.R.O., IR/M/10/6.

⁸ Olney Enclosure Working Papers: B.R.O., IR/M/16.

⁹ The method of obtaining parish opinion was related to the Land Tax Assessments. It was therefore the majority in value and not the majority in number.

was £1 16s., "thus the opposition was of small landowners."¹ Unfortunately he was influenced by the transcript in the House of Commons Journal. The issue was clouded because the above figures took into account old enclosures as well as open-field land. The position in the open field was that of a total of 44½ yardlands proposed for enclosure, the consenting parties totalled 23⅞ yardlands, the dissenters 18⅝ yardlands, and the neuters 2 yardlands.

TABLE I

Parish	Act	Consents			Dissents			Neuter			Other		
		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Stoke Mandeville	1797	83	10	8	10	6	0	78	1	8	18	4	0
Weston Turville	1798	302	2	10	4	18	0	27	3	0½	—		
					(1 owner)								
Iver	1801	838	15	11	167	2	0	112	7	0	10	12	0
Quainton*	1801	203	5	11¾	39	12	6½	6	13	6	—		
		(8 owners)			(22 owners)			(4 owners)					
Olney	1803	(75 Common Rts.			—			5 Common Rts.			—)		
Bledlow	1809	231	1	11¾	40	2	3	76	16	5¾	0	16	8¾
Princes Risborough	1820	242	15	5½	154	2	0	83	9	7	1	4	3
Monks Risborough	1830	301	1	3	7	16	6	17	10	9	—		
		(69 owners)			(6 owners)			(9 owners)					

* Taken from the *Journal of the House of Commons*, LVI, p. 544.

The above results for Monks Risborough came at the end of a very bitter struggle between the leading landowners and the poor of the parish. Our main source of evidence is the correspondence between the Earl of Buckingham and his agent in London.² The outcome of a counter-petition presented on behalf of the poor was that the agent proceeded to, "procure the attendance of certain Lords onto the committee of inquiry."³ The Bill was eventually passed, but not before a unique clause was inserted appointing a special commissioner for the poor. The agent conveys the news to the Earl thus, "Sir John Dashwood King is appointed commissioner for the poor, it is a matter of no consequence he is a blundering blockhead and in fact will not trouble himself about the matter."⁴ In fact this was to be far from the truth: the commissioners' minute book is witness to a struggle between King and the other commissioners before the allotment for the poor was finally settled.⁵

The counter-petition that was presented to Parliament at the Princes Risborough

¹ P. Mantoux, *The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century*, 12th ed. London, 1955, pp. 170-1.

² Monks Risborough Enclosure Working Papers: B.R.O., IR/M/176/1.

³ Letter 13 April 1830. ⁴ Letter 21 May 1830.

⁵ Monks Risborough Enclosure Minute Book, I: B.R.O., IR/M/8; II: B.R.O. AR/54/65.

enclosure stated that the small estates were already mortgaged to the extent of one-half to two-thirds of their value and therefore it would be difficult to find a person to advance more money to meet the enclosure expenses. The petitioners further stated that if the Bill were passed they would have to sell, become day-labourers, and soon add to the number of paupers, as happened at nearby Bledlow.¹ The Bill was passed when it was proposed to defray the expenses of the enclosure by the sale of land, and besides, "Parliament was now favoured so much towards enclosure that it was difficult to find a member to oppose it."²

The Bill, having become an Act, was followed by the actual allotting of the parish. This was often a very lengthy procedure for which the surviving minute books and miscellaneous papers are irreplaceable sources. When, in 1947, Professor Beresford compiled his lists of commissioners' minute books he detailed eight for the county of Buckinghamshire.³ There are now, at the time of writing, twenty-four minute books in bound volumes and an incomplete set of draft minutes for one other enclosure.

W. E. Tate observed that John Davis of Bloxham "was the Oxfordshire commissioner who sat oftenest of all" (thirty-six commissions between 1793-1819), and that he had "been in many counties and employed on 26 commissions of enclosure at the same time."⁴ In Buckinghamshire he was employed on thirteen commissions between 1796 and 1813. It is hardly surprising that the minute books record that Davis, of all other commissioners, was most frequently absent from meetings. For the Moulsoe enclosure (1802) he attended only half the recorded meetings, whereas for the Stewkley Enclosure (1811) it appears he attended only those meetings which dealt with the draft award.⁵ In other commissions frequent absenteeism is recorded for all commissioners, the resulting adjournments sometimes serving to prolong the enclosure unnecessarily and adding further to the final cost. The commissioners for the Weston Turville enclosure met on only fifty-nine days between June 1798 and July 1800.⁶ The Langley Marish enclosure minute book records seventeen meetings of a total length of only fifty-three days between April 1809 and February 1813. This was an enclosure prolonged by three adjournments of six months each.⁷ The commissioners to the Monks Risborough enclosure (1830-39) failed to meet once between November 1836 and May 1839. On a resumption the first business to be conducted was to record the changes in land-ownership that had occurred since the draft award was constructed.⁸ On other occasions the commissioners blame the proprietors for any unnecessary delays. In the enclosures of Little Woolstone (1791-2), Stoke Mandeville (1797-8), and Bled-

¹ For a discussion of the poor of Bledlow see Pamela L. R. Horn 'Bledlow and the Lancashire Cotton Industry', *Records of Buckinghamshire* xviii, pt iv, 1969, pp. 318-23.

² Contained in Princes Risborough Working Papers: B.R.O., IR/M/1-7.

³ M. W. Beresford, 'Minutes of Enclosure Commissioners', *Bull. Inst. Hist. Res.*, xxi, 1947, pp. 59-69.

⁴ Tate, *op. cit.* (1951), pp. 144-5.

⁵ Moulsoe Commissioners' Minute Book: B.R.O.; Carrington MSS., Box 8a, Moulsoe Settled Estates Bundle No. 11; Stewkley Minute Book: B.R.O., IR/M/10/2.

⁶ Weston Turville Enclosure Working Papers: B.R.O., IR/M/3.

⁷ Langley Marish Working Papers: B.R.O., IR/M/55. ⁸ Monks Risborough Enclosure Minute Book.

low (1809–12) several proprietors remained in arrear in paying the commissioners' rate, thus preventing the closing of the accounts. The commissioners to the Stoke Mandeville enclosure circulated a letter stating that "solely on account of some of the proprietors not having paid their proportions of the rates, the commissioners were not able at their last meeting to close their accounts and sign the award, and they lament the necessity of increasing the general expenses by further meetings, and are further determined that unless all the arrears are forthwith paid . . . they will levy the same by distress and sale of the goods and chattels of the defaulters or by entering upon their allotments in pursuance and according to the directions of the act."¹

The commissioners' minute books can also be used to plot the movements of the more active commissioners.² It would be possible to reconstruct the day-to-day diary of a commissioner by an inspection of the minute books. For the twenty-nine commissions on which John Fellows served there are seven minute books. During the years 1797–8 he was engaged in at least six enclosures in Buckinghamshire and a further six enclosures in Bedfordshire.

Perhaps the most profitable way we can use extra-award material is in a discussion of the cost of enclosure. Prior to 1774, when a change in the standing orders of the House of Commons made it obligatory for commissioners to keep separate financial schedules,³ we are dependent for our information on the schedules that were usually appended to the awards. This practice continued in Buckinghamshire until the early 1790's but was discontinued and not resumed until after the General Act of 1845, when land was sold to defray costs. Thus, for more than half a century our information on costs as shown in the awards is non-existent. This period includes the decade of the 1790's and early 1800's when enclosure was at its height in the county of Buckingham. In his study of Warwickshire, Dr Martin was fortunate in that most of the parliamentary enclosure for that county occurred during the eighteenth century.⁴ However, the extra-award material is a much richer source for costs than the awards themselves. From a study of this material it would appear that former estimates based on awards alone may well be too low. Certainly the studies of Martin (Warwickshire), Tate (Oxfordshire and Nottinghamshire), and Swales (Lincolnshire) draw very few examples from the nineteenth century.⁵

¹ Stoke Mandeville Enclosure Minute Book: B.R.O., IR/M/II.

² Three Buckinghamshire Minute Books have been edited: G. Eland, 'Enclosure Commissioners' Minutes for Drayton Parslow, Bucks., 1797–1801', *Records of Buckinghamshire* XI, 25, 1923, pp. 256–64; E. J. Davis, 'An Eighteenth-Century Minute Book relating to Meetings held by Enclosure Commissioners for the parishes of Hartwell and Stone, 1776–7', *ibid.*, xv, 2, 1948, pp. 97–106; E. J. Davis, 'An Eighteenth-Century Minute Book: Minutes of the Meetings held by the Commissioners for the Enclosure of the parish of Weston Turville, 1798–1800', *ibid.*, xv, 3, 1949.

³ W. H. R. Curtler, *The Enclosure and Redistribution of our Land*, Oxford, 1920, p. 155.

⁴ J. M. Martin, 'The Cost of Parliamentary Enclosure in Warwickshire', *Univ. Birm. Hist. Jour.*, ix, 1964, pp. 144–62 (reprinted in E. L. Jones (ed.), *Agriculture and Economic Growth in England 1650–1815*, 1967, pp. 129–51).

⁵ W. E. Tate, 'The Cost of Parliamentary Enclosure in England (with special reference to the county of Oxford)', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., v, 1952, pp. 258–65; T. H. Swales, 'The Parliamentary Enclosures of Lindsey', *Reports and Papers of the Architectural and Archaeological Societies of Lincs. & Northants.*, XLII, 1937, pp. 233–74; n.s., II, 1938, pp. 85–120.

An enclosure award cannot specify any expenditure incurred after it was signed, but further expenditure there certainly was. In Buckinghamshire there are eleven minute books that record meetings after the award was signed. There are also account books with entries going well beyond both award and minute books, and there are also miscellaneous papers recording expenditure after the award. The usual reason for holding a post-award meeting was to settle outstanding accounts and, if necessary, to issue warrants of distress upon those proprietors who had not paid their share of the expenses. It was not unusual for more money to be extracted from the proprietors.

The commissioners of the Drayton Parslow enclosure (1797-8) held a meeting a full three years after the award was signed and the accounts were published. It was discovered that the original estimates for the roads were inadequate, making it necessary to levy a further rate of £214 7s. 2d. on the proprietors which increased the cost per acre by 4s. For the enclosure of Iver (1800-4), the minute book ends abruptly in 1802. However, from the miscellaneous bills and accounts we can estimate the cost of enclosure at 94s. per acre, which must be regarded as only the minimum estimate. If the minute book or miscellaneous papers were complete the final cost might well appear as in excess of £5 per acre.¹ The Great Kimble minutes indicate that there were still arrears on the general expenses owed by certain proprietors five years after the award was signed.²

The only surviving extra-award information for the Wing enclosure (1797-8) is the account book.³ In it are recorded the individual cost items, the parliamentary expenses, the commissioners and surveyors fees, and the public expenses. In fact it is little more than the schedule which was formally appended to the awards and is therefore contemporary with the award. For the Langley Marish enclosure (1809-13) the account book and the minute book both survive. However, the last entry in the account book is October 1811, nearly two years before the award was completed and there is record of a further rate of nearly £300 in the post-award period. This leads one to speculate that the schedule contained in the Wing Account Book, detailed above, may well be incomplete.

The Bledlow enclosure provides an interesting case study. The total cost from the minute book differs from the total in the miscellaneous bills and accounts, and both differ from the total in the account book. The award was signed in August 1812 but the last entry in the account book was for April 1812. On completing the award it was found that the road account was in arrears for which a further rate of nearly £600 was ordered, which of course is not entered in the account book. Again, in April 1815, another rate was ordered for the road account. The total recorded in the account book was £10,203, while the total in the miscellaneous papers was £13,104, a difference of 28 per cent. Again we may speculate on the final outcome of the Wing enclosure, and for that matter on all enclosures where cost details do

¹ B.R.O.: Way Papers Bundle 70; Iver Enclosure Working Papers: B.R.O., IR/M/122.

² Great Kimble, Little Kimble and Ellesborough Enclosure Minute Book: B.R.O., AR/54/65.

³ Wing Enclosure Account Book: B.R.O., IR/M/14.

not post-date the awards. For the Stewkley enclosure of 1811-14 also, a post-award rate was ordered, this time for nearly £700. This is recorded in the account books the last audit of which was held in July 1815. However, the commissioners held a further series of meetings between November 1816 and May 1817 when it was found that another rate was necessary. Unfortunately, this last rate is not specified, but from the account book it appears that the total cost was nearly £13,000, an average cost of 96s. per acre. It seems likely that the final cost may have been in excess of £5.

Princes Risborough provides another interesting study.¹ In the pre-act stage of soliciting the Bill, William Collisson, a very experienced commissioner and land surveyor, attempted to estimate the possible expense of the forthcoming enclosure. The following table is the estimate he made compared with the eventual cost.²

TABLE II
ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE AND ACTUAL EXPENDITURE ON THE PRINCES RISBOROUGH ENCLOSURE
(1820-1823)

	<i>Collisson's minimum estimate</i>	<i>Collisson's maximum estimate</i>	<i>Actual cost</i>		
	£	£	£	s.	d.
Soliciting the Act	1,000	1,250	837	0	10
Clerk	1,000	1,250	1,014	12	5
3 commissioners	1,200	1,500	1,400	12	0
Surveyor	1,200	1,400	1,486	8	7
Roads	1,200	1,800	3,930	14	3
Public fences	1,400	1,800	853	9	5
Other	300	500	248	3	0
		Bridges	209	17	1
		Tillage	521	10	5
		Left in surveyor's hands to disburse for fences, bridges, roads and tillage	1,219	15	10
Total	7,300	9,500	11,722	3	10

Even one as experienced as William Collisson could not foresee the enormous scale of the public expenses. The fears expressed by the opposers to this enclosure were well founded. The Bill was originally passed with the intention of defraying the costs by the sale of land. In fact, such sales totalled £10,382, and therefore £1,340 had to be raised by rates on the proprietors including a rate after the award was com-

¹ The materials bearing on this enclosure have been studied at length: T. W. Davis, 'The Inclosure of Princes Risborough 1823', unpub. essay, B.R.O., Miscellaneous Essays.

² William Collisson of Brackley, Northants., served as commissioner on fourteen occasions in Buckinghamshire (1788-1820). He also served outside the county: Tate, *op. cit.* (1951), p. 141.

pleted. As it stands, the last column above must be regarded as incomplete. It was constructed from the account book whereas from an investigation of individual bills it appears that the clerk's fee was at least £1,457 and the cost of soliciting the Act £956. William Collisson made a similar estimate for the Amersham enclosure but in this case he slightly overestimated.¹ The evidence suggests that even where apparently extensive information from commissioners' working papers is available, former estimates of the cost of enclosure may be too low. The incidence of post-award expenditure is too great to be disregarded and indicates that the cost of enclosure in the eighteenth century was greater than past research would have us believe. Compare in table III the nineteenth-century examples given by Dr Martin for Warwickshire and my estimates for Buckinghamshire (which were derived entirely from extra-award material).

TABLE III
COST OF PARLIAMENTARY ENCLOSURE IN WARWICKSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

<i>Warwickshire*</i>			<i>Buckinghamshire</i>		
<i>Parish</i>	<i>Cost £</i>	<i>Cost/acre (shillings)</i>	<i>Parish</i>	<i>Cost £</i>	<i>Cost/acre (shillings)</i>
1801 Welford	2,384	73.9	1800 Iver	12,308	93.9
1805 Sutton	2,646	59.1	1803 Olney	334	46.8
1812 Hampton	1,304	43.4	1809 Langley	5,427	89.4
1824 Bickenhill	3,753	45.1	1809 Bledlow	13,104	105.8
1831 Wolverton	3,259	122.7	1811 Stewkley	12,952	95.6
1850 Blackwell	1,420	37.0	1815 Amersham	3,756	77.1
1850 Whitnash	1,090	42.6	1820 Princes Risborough	11,722	81.6
1865 Armscote	3,598	71.7	1830 Monks Risborough	13,337	139.3
			1830 Whaddon	5,162	49.2
			1838 Astwood	1,093	66.5
			1840 Quainton	3,393	45.5
			1841 Great Horwood	4,073	37.6
			1842 Buckland	3,417	86.1
Average of 8 enclosures		61.7	Average of 13 enclosures		78.0

* Martin, *op. cit.* (1967), p. 147.

It is clear that in the nineteenth century the cost of enclosure was higher in Buckinghamshire than in Warwickshire. However, table IV below compares the two counties in the eighteenth century and the results are very similar. This time the figures for Buckinghamshire are taken from the awards.

Owing to dependence on the awards the cost of enclosure in the eighteenth century, evidently, has been underestimated. Unfortunately, there is little contem-

¹ See Amersham Enclosure Commissioners' Minute Book: B.R.O., IR/M/4., for the actual expenditure, and *Memo Book of Business done and Journeys taken in and about the Inclosure of Amersham by William Collisson*, B.R.O., AR/51/70, for details of the estimate.

porary evidence to support this claim. However, we do know that the enclosure of the parish of Twyford (1774-6) was not complete when the award was signed. Why else would two replacement commissioners be appointed a full eleven years after, if not to complete the enclosure?¹ The total cost in the award of 1776 was £1,523, which was 16s. per acre. The final cost up to and perhaps after 1787 may have been much more. The total cost of the enclosure of the parish of Shenley Brook End (1762-3) is given as £612 in the award. The individual cost to the leading landowner is given as £344. However, a unique account book survives of the money expended by this landowner on the enclosure, covering a period nearly two years after the award was signed.² We discover that his final bill from the commissioners was £450, a difference of 30 per cent from the amount stated in the award.

TABLE IV
COST OF PARLIAMENTARY ENCLOSURE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY IN
WARWICKSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

	<i>Warwickshire*</i> (Average cost/acre in shillings)		<i>Buckinghamshire</i> (Average cost/acre in shillings)	
Pre 1760	11.0	17 awards	—	—
1760-1769	13.7	20 awards	16.8	10 awards
1770-1779	19.6	29 awards	20.6	18 awards
1780-1789	19.7	6 awards	24.1	4 awards
1790-1799	34.08	9 awards	34.3	5 awards†

* *Ibid.*, p. 132.

† It is significant that for four other enclosures in the 1790's for which extra-award information is available the average cost is 42.8s. per acre.

The discussion so far has mentioned costs, but what of the complementary financing of enclosure?³ The evidence in the extra-award material is not very extensive but some general findings are possible. The frequent references made to defaulters in the minute books suggest either difficulty in meeting expenses or refusal to pay. The impression obtained supports the former view, although, the threat of a warrant of distress always prevailed. The completion of an award was often delayed because of the inability to meet the commissioners' rates.

Acts sometimes provided special facility for charity lands and school lands to defray their expenses by land deductions or land sales. In the Bledlow enclosure of 1809-12, the Provost of Eton was allowed to sell about 47 acres for £1,577 in order to defray the general expenses and meet the cost of fencing. This still left Eton with over 500 acres in the award.⁴ In the Whaddon enclosure

¹ Twyford Enclosure Award, B.R.O. Inrolment, vol. 2; appendix made 20 December 1767.

² Knapp MSS. Box 10: *Account of Moneys disbursed by Matthew Knapp on Shenley Brook End Enclosure, 1762-4.*

³ I am obliged to Dr L. S. Pressnell of the City University for some useful suggestions on the financing of enclosure.

⁴ Bledlow Minute Book and award: B.R.O. Inrolment, vol. 7.

of 1830-1, the trustees of certain charity lands had land deducted from their proposed allotments to the value of their proportion of the expenses. In the same enclosure this opportunity was extended to other landowners. A certain Martha Horwood's share of the expenses at Whaddon were £148. The commissioners sold on her behalf 12 acres of land for £225 in order that she might defray her share of the general expenses and also fence her allotment. A fee of £10 was deducted by the commissioners for arranging the sale. Thus £67 was deemed sufficient for fencing her allotment (which was 53 acres in the eventual award).¹ In the Weston Turville enclosure (1798-1800) two of the interested parties requested time in which to pay their respective proportions of the expenses. The Mercers Company wanted three months' grace because "it would be very unpleasant for the company to sell stock at the present time, when in three months they will have effects to pay their proportion." A somewhat smaller proprietor requested time "for the sale of timber on the property at a sum nearly sufficient to pay her share."² At the time of the last entry in the minute book this proprietor was still in arrears and a warrant of distress was ordered.

Provision was nearly always given in the Acts for money to be raised on estates by mortgage. In the enclosure of Shenley Brook End already referred to, the following is an extract from the account book of the leading landowner:

	£	s.	d.
Proportionate share of the General Expenses	449	17	2
Capital Improvement (includes fencing and re-siting of buildings and labour)	1,067	8	6
Whole sum disbursed on the Enclosure	£1,517	5	8
The sum taken upon the estate by Mortgage	£1,300	0	0

This landowner was able to raise sufficient on his estate to defray his share of the commissioners' rates, but the total cost of his land improvement exceeded the income raised on the estate by £217 5s. 8d.³ The amount of borrowing by mortgage varied through time. The Act for Little Woolstone (1791) allowed up to £2 per acre to be raised on property. For Stoke Mandeville (1797) it had risen to £3. The Iver Act (1800) allowed £3 per acre on the newly enclosed land and 10s. per acre on homesteads and old enclosures.⁴ Subsequently it became the general rule to allow up to £5 per acre. In some cases this would be inadequate to defray the general expenses, not to mention the additional expense of fencing. Iver is a typical example. As stated above, up to £3 per acre could be raised whereas the cost of the enclosure was nearly £5 per acre.

One of the objections to the Princes Risborough enclosure was that the final cost

¹ Whaddon Enclosure Minute Book: B.R.O., IR/M/13. Thus at Whaddon the general expense was 49·2s. per acre and the fencing cost 25·3s. per acre.

² Miscellaneous letters of 24 June 1799, 11 February 1800. ³ Knapp MSS., *op. cit.*

⁴ Little Woolstone Act, 31 Geo. III, c. 21, 1791; Stoke Mandeville Act, 37 Geo., c. 114, 1797; Iver Act, 40 Geo. III, c. 55, 1800.

of the neighbouring Bledlow enclosure was £11 per acre. From the working papers of the Bledlow enclosure we know that the general expenses were just over £5 per acre, and therefore the cost of fencing was greater than the general cost. Clearly the physical act of enclosing might be as expensive as the general costs. The ring or outward fencing was an expense which could not be postponed. The commissioners were empowered to order that the fencing be completed within a short time after the signing of the award, usually three months but sometimes up to twelve: "when they had got their land, there was the expense of quicking and inclosing it, for the commissioners would not give a proper title to the inclosure if it was not in order."¹ In his book *Good Neighbours*, Walter Rose describes the enclosure of Haddenham (1830): "they [the villagers] knew that the commissioners' fees, together with the cost of remaking the public roads, the planting of hedges, digging of ditches, and the erection of fences . . . would all be chargeable on the land, not, as it is now, a debt spread over a period for payment, but to be paid forthwith."²

Regardless of the expense to the individual there was the need for the commissioners to obtain finances to administer the day-to-day running of the enclosure proceedings. Until the proprietors were ordered to contribute to a commissioners' rate, other sources of finance had to be found. Dr Pressnell has made generous use of commissioners' minute books to illustrate the appointment of bankers.³ For the soliciting stage, before the Act was passed, it was common for the solicitor to conduct the business with his own resources, for which service he would be granted interest of 5 per cent. When a banker had been appointed credit could be drawn. In the Quanton enclosure (1840-3) the commissioners drew £800 in advance from the bank before any money had been levied on the proprietors. The money was used to pay the parliamentary fees and solicitors' fees and the interest thereon, and was in effect a transfer of debt.⁴ A general rate was not ordered until the following May. At the Bledlow enclosure (1809-12) there was a request for an advance of £500 from the bankers. The following year the enclosure was "found to be much in debt to the bankers," and a rate had to be levied on the proprietors to defray this debt.⁵ At the first meeting of the Monks Risborough enclosure (1830-9) the commissioners appointed William Rickford of Aylesbury as banker and immediately drew £2,000 on credit.⁶

On occasions the proprietors were requested to advance funds. Entries in the Hanslope account book (1778-79) suggest that the Lord of the Manor and the owner of the impropriate tithes both advanced money for the enclosure.⁷ In the Iver enclosure (1800-4), a letter from the clerk requests the advance or loan of money. It was desired to complete the roads as soon as possible but could not be done "unless

¹ H. Harman, *Buckinghamshire Dialect*, London, 1929, p. 96.

² Walter Rose, *Good Neighbours: Some Recollections of an English Village and its People*, 1942, p. 4.

³ L. S. Pressnell, *Country Banking In the Industrial Revolution*, 1956, pp. 276-9, 349-55.

⁴ Quanton Minute Book, entry of 16 December 1840.

⁵ Bledlow Minute Book, entries of 30 March 1810; 4 January 1811.

⁶ Monks Risborough Minute Book, entry of 17 June 1830.

⁷ Hanslope Enclosure Working Papers: B.R.O., AR/36/69(L).

some of the principal proprietors will consent to advance the money the commissioners request."¹ At the Moulsoe enclosure (1802-3), it was the wish of the commissioners that Lord Carrington furnish them with "sufficient money or by other means enable them to discharge the several bills of expenses at their next meeting."² On other occasions the bankers not only advanced loans to the commissioners but were requested to aid certain charity lands. At Quainton, for example, "the Trustees of the School and Bridge Land request a loan to pay expenses, the clerk is directed to write to the Bankers in the hope of inducing them to accommodate the Trustees with the loan to be repaid by instalments."³

In general, however, our knowledge of the financing of enclosure in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is still inadequate. To reiterate Dr Pressnell's view, "the finance of this outlay is one of the least explored features of agricultural and financial history."⁴

This essay sprang from the need to edit the extra-award material which is available for a study of Buckinghamshire Parliamentary Enclosures. Some important issues, particularly related to costs and finance have been explored in depth. If one major conclusion be permitted it is that our former attitude to the cost of enclosure needs reconsideration. It seems highly probable that the cost of enclosure was of a far greater dimension than generally believed.

¹ Letter of 7 April 1801 from the clerk of the Iver Commission to Benjamin Way: Way Papers, Bundle 70, Item 23.

² Moulsoe Minute Book, entry of 24 February 1803.

³ Quainton Minute Book, entry of 6 May 1842. ⁴ Pressnell, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

NOTES AND COMMENTS *continued from page 34*

Counties Society, 3 Pierrepont Street, Bath BA1 1LD.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The British Agricultural History Society's twenty-first AGM was convened at University College London on Saturday, 25 November 1972 and unanimously passed the following amendment to section 4 of the Constitution submitted by the Executive Committee: "The annual subscription shall be three pounds 50p., due on 1st February." The remainder of the meeting was adjourned until Tuesday, 10 April 1973, at Matlock College of Education, Derbyshire.

THE WINTER CONFERENCE

The one-day conference of the B.A.H.S. was held at University College, London on Saturday, 25 November 1972. The subject was

"Agriculture and the history of drink." The morning session featured papers on "Port in English history" by Dr H. E. S. Fisher, and "The history of cider since 1870" by Prof. W. E. Minchinton (both of the University of Exeter). A lively discussion ensued. The afternoon session was devoted to stronger liquors with papers on "The distilling industry and Scottish agriculture, 1780-1830" by R. B. Weir (University of York), and "Gin and juniper" by Dr Lena Ward (Monks Wood Experimental Station, The Nature Conservancy). These were followed by an interesting discussion. The conference showed that the demands of the drink industry have had many far-reaching effects on the development of agriculture which have not always been fully realized, and that the subject remains one where further research would be fruitful.