

Tithe as an Index of Pre-industrial Agricultural Production

By ROGER KAIN

I

THE growth of agricultural production and population are fundamental variables in any model of the pre-industrial economy. But, paradoxically, one of the principal *lacunae* in European agricultural history is the lack of quantitative data on agricultural production in the period before central governments began collecting agricultural statistics on systematic annual bases in the nineteenth century. For example, Deane and Cole in a standard work on British economic growth state that, "For corn there are no production or quasi-production series which might be regarded as reliable guides, and we cannot place much faith in the pattern of change which might emerge from a comparison of the scattered accounts of contemporaries."¹ Instead, they estimate the output of British agriculture by reference to consumption data, an exercise fraught with all sorts of difficulties. Contemporary estimates of consumption are purely notional, and, as Dr E. J. T. Collins has demonstrated in a recent issue of this *Review*, there is growing evidence that households switched from one cereal to another in response to prices.²

Over the past fifteen years or so, a growing group of continental, mainly French, agricultural historians has been making a concerted effort to chart the broad trends of agricultural growth by monitoring the output of the industry from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries with indices calculated from the annual value of tithes paid by farmers to ecclesiastical and lay tithe owners. One purpose

of this article is to review some of this work. Though tithe payments may well be an imperfect index of agricultural production, for some continental European countries they can be shown to have some advantages over *ad hoc* estimates based on consumption. A second purpose of the article is to examine briefly the nature of the English tithe record in order to highlight some of the problems that might be encountered in attempts to measure English agricultural production from tithe payments.

The driving force behind the initiation of a concerted project to reconstruct the pattern of pre-industrial agricultural output was the French National Centre for Scientific Research (C.N.R.S.). In October 1963, its Modern History Commission reported on the need for research on the movement of agricultural production in *ancien régime* France. One of the main advocates of this venture was the historian Ernest Labrousse, who was convinced that tithe accounts would form the sheet-anchor for such a study. Three years later, the Association of French Economic Historians (A.F.H.E.) agreed to sponsor a study of pre-industrial agricultural production, and entrusted its organization to the Centre for Historical Research (C.R.H.) of the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. Seventeen papers examining the relationship between tithe and agricultural production were presented at the first national congress of the A.F.H.E. in Paris, held on 11-12 January 1969. These papers have been edited by Joseph Goy and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, and were published in 1972.³ Most of them relate to France, and in particular to the Midi, where Le Roy Ladurie had earlier used some very long series of tithe accounts in

¹ Phyllis Deane & W. A. Cole, *British Economic Growth 1687-1959*, 2nd edn, Cambridge, 1967, p. 92.

² E. J. T. Collins, 'Dietary Change and Cereal Consumption in the Nineteenth Century', *Ag. Hist. Rev.*, XXXII, 1975, pp. 97-117.

³ J. Goy & E. Le Roy Ladurie, eds., *Les fluctuations du produit de la ferme. Conjoncture dérivale et domaniale de la fin du Moyen Âge au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1972.

his classic study of the peasants of Languedoc.⁴

At a congress on historical methodology held at Saint-Jacques de Compostelle, 24-27 April 1973, it was decided to extend the geographical base of these studies of pre-industrial agricultural production to a rather more international level by inviting more agricultural historians to take part in a further stage of the project, co-ordinated again by the C.R.H. in Paris. This phase culminated in a colloquium at which fifty-five papers were presented under the auspices of Section A3 of the Seventh International Economic History Congress, held at the Collège de France from 30 June to 2 July 1977. A majority of these papers were concerned with tithe and agricultural production in France, Spain, and Italy, but there were also contributions from Belgium, Canada, East and West Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland, the U.S.A., and the U.S.S.R. A synthesis of the main findings of these papers was reported to the main meeting of the Economic History Congress in Edinburgh in August 1978. The texts of all the papers, together with a fuller synthesis, are to be published.⁵

It is clear from these papers and from the discussions that French, Spanish, and Italian agricultural historians in particular have brought home a rich harvest of tithe data, which, when analysed, can be related in a fairly direct way to the trend of agricultural output. But what is also clear is that on the northern margins of Europe the agrarian revolutions of Germany, Holland, and Great Britain produced a relationship between tithe and output which is by no means as straightforward. Some of the problems with the British tithe record are examined in a later section. The following section examines the theoretical general relationship between tithe and production, and summarizes some of the main trends in French

agricultural output revealed by an analysis of tithe payments.⁶

II

The essential point of the Labrousse and Le Roy Ladurie thesis is that, if the rate of tithe and tithable area remains constant, or if changes in either are known, and if tithe is levied in kind on all crops and livestock directly by the parson, then the annual account of tithe rendered to him will exactly reflect gross agricultural output from the tithery. If a continuous record of these annual tithe receipts is available over a number of years, then these data can be graphed, and moving means calculated to describe the overall trend of production. But this ideal archival situation is not always found, and there are a number of factors which can make the record much less useful and even confuse and obscure the arithmetical relationship, so attractive by virtue of its simplicity, between tithe and production. Firstly, not all crops were tithable. This fact immediately begs the question, What is being measured by an index based on tithe payments? This is certainly a problem with English tithe records, as will be shown later, and it can also be a serious problem on the Continent. In Languedoc, for example, wine was not tithable but clearly was an important element in the agricultural production of these pre-industrial communities. In Spain and Italy there is also the problem that often maize was not tithed at all. So what is being measured by tithe? On this point our French colleagues are quite unequivocal. They say that in an environment of almost complete ignorance, where existing estimates of production are either based on the return to seed grain, after Slicher Van Bath, or on the work of Toutain, based in part on the erroneous estimates of Vauban and Gregory King, then a graph showing perhaps only the trend in wheat from the tithe is indeed a valuable step for-

⁴ E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Les paysans de Languedoc*, Paris, 1966.

⁵ Publication details can be obtained from the Centre des Recherches Historiques, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 54 Boulevard Raspail, Paris, Cedex 06.

⁶ E. Le Roy Ladurie & J. Goy, 'Présentation', in Goy & Ladurie, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-24; G. Frêche, 'Dîme et production agricole: remarques méthodologiques à propos de la région toulousaine', *ibid.*, pp. 214-44; M. Morineau, 'Réflexions tardives et conclusions prospectives', *ibid.*, pp. 320-33.

ward.⁷ It is difficult to fault the compelling logic of such arguments. Other complications are introduced where tithe was compounded for cash rather than paid in kind. Firstly, it is necessary to remove the effects of general price inflation. To do this a series of agricultural prices are required for markets close to the tithery so that the tithe composition payments can be deflated in proportion to them. A further problem is that where tithes were compounded for cash, their collection was often leased out to tithe farmers. Occasionally these leases were on an annual basis, but more commonly they were fixed for a number of years irrespective of the actual output in any one year. There would not, therefore, be an immediate response in the tithe record to changes in production but rather a lag of time depending on the length of the lease. Problems, however, do not end with leasing. The distinction between great and small tithes could change through time, as could the rate of tithe, the area titheable, the units of measurement, and the attitudes of tithe owners towards collecting tithe and of tithe payers to rendering it.

In short, there are a number of problems in using accounts of tithe payments to measure production, although the idea has great attraction by virtue of its apparent simplicity. But, with the rich ecclesiastical collections in their departmental archives, French agrarian historians have been able to subject tithe series to careful critical analysis, reject the doubtful returns, and use only those where good documentary evidence on rate, area, and produce titheable are available. For example, Joseph Ruwet found seven excellent series amongst the thirty extant for the Namur region of north-eastern France.⁸ It is also apparent that in France, as in England, it is not possible to speak of a single "tithe system."⁹ Tithe regulations

and customs in the Paris basin, for example, were much more complicated than the simpler system which applied in the south.¹⁰ Some of the best tithe series in the whole of Europe are to be found in Andalusian Spain. Tithe payments here were largely unaffected by religious wars or strife, and the rate of tithe remained constant at a strict 10 per cent. The only problem is that, with many collections still in the hands of private individuals and local church institutions, access can be difficult, and classification sometimes non-existent.¹¹

Figs. I and II are examples of the type of local study from which it is hoped to build up regional, national, and, eventually, European trends. In general terms, all three of the Lyonnais chapelries studied by Head-König display a certain parallelism. There were high points of production in the years 1660–80, a rapid fall to a low between 1706 and 1711, and then a slow recovery to a high point, 1760–5. This was succeeded by twenty years of regression at the end of the eighteenth century.¹² In Andalusia Pierre Ponsot puts the seventeenth-century high point in the decade 1650–60, but there was a similar early eighteenth-century decline followed by growth to 1770 and then regression to the end of the century.¹³ On the basis of the seventeen papers published in 1972, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie has produced, with the assistance of Joseph Goy, a first sketch of a periodization of production trends in France from the beginning of the fifteenth century to the end of the eighteenth.¹⁴ This is summarized briefly overleaf:

XVIII^e siècle et sa suppression, Bordeaux, 1912; E. J. Evans, *The Contentious Tithe: The Tithe Problem and English Agriculture, 1750–1850*, 1976.

¹⁰ M. Baulant, 'Du bon usage des dîmes dans la région parisienne', in Goy & Ladurie, *op. cit.*, pp. 25–43.

¹¹ P. Ponsot, 'En Andalousie occidentale: les fluctuations de la production du blé sous l'Ancien Régime', *ibid.*, pp. 304–5.

¹² A.-L. Head König, 'Rente foncière et dîmes dans le Lyonnais aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles: leur concordance', *ibid.*, pp. 159–61.

¹³ Ponsot, *loc. cit.*, pp. 310–11.

¹⁴ E. Le Roy Ladurie & J. Goy, 'Première esquisse d'une conjoncture du produit décimal et domanial, fin du Moyen Âge—XVIII^e siècle', in Goy & Ladurie, *op. cit.*, pp. 334–74.

⁷ M. Morineau, 'Histoire sans frontière: Prix et "révolution agricole"', *Annales E.S.C.*, xxiv, 1969, pp. 403–23; E. Le Roy Ladurie, 'Les comptes fantastiques de Gregory King', *Annales E.S.C.*, xxiii, 1968, pp. 1086–102.

⁸ J. Ruwet, 'Pour un indice de la production céréalière à l'époque moderne: la région de Namur', in Goy & Ladurie, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁹ H. Marion, *La dîme ecclésiastique en France au*

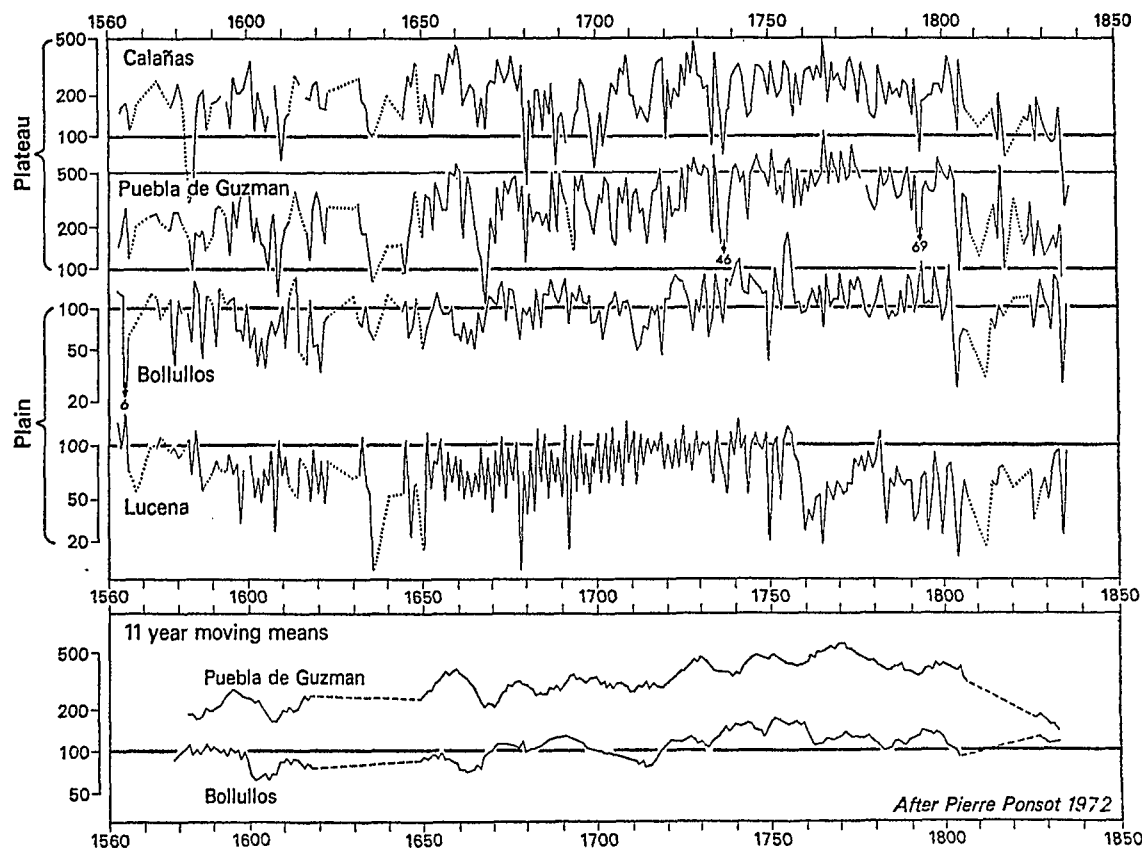


FIG. 1.

1400-50: there was a dramatic fall in production in the Paris basin between 1420 and 1445 which was mirrored in the tithe records of Forez and Provence, but, on the other hand, Artois and Flanders were hardly affected by this "crisis of the Hundred Years War."

1451-1500: a period of recovery everywhere to pre-war levels.

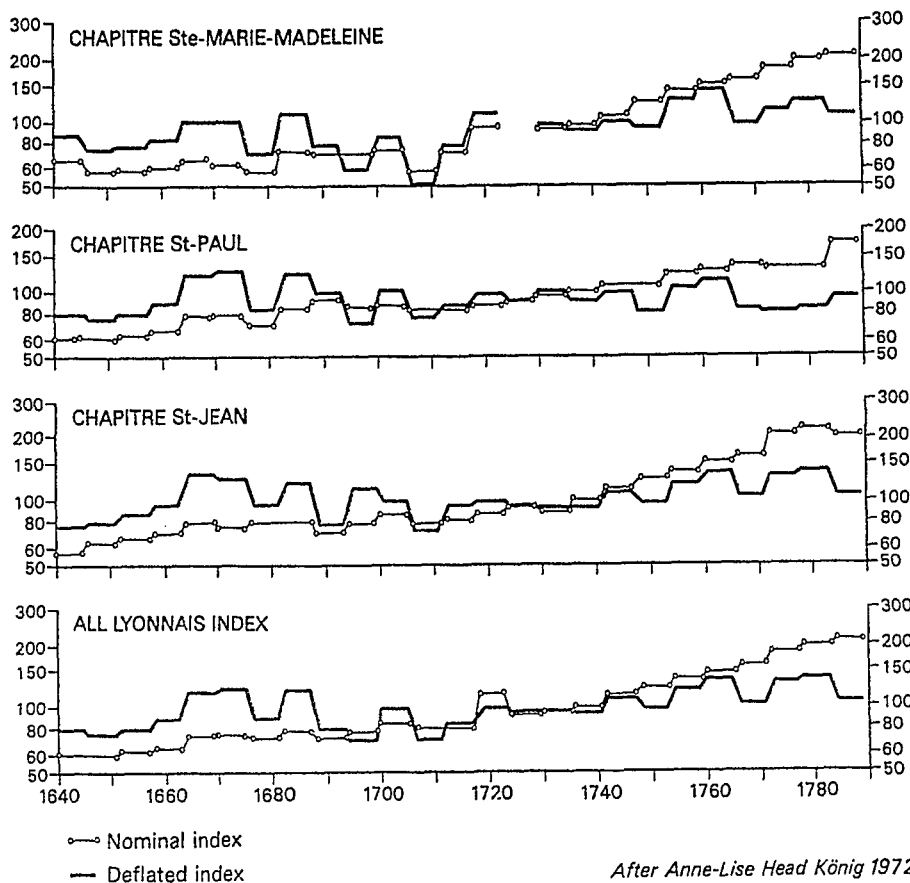
1501-50: a national high point in tithe revenues was reached 1510-20, and again 1540-50, with the exception of Alsace, which lagged behind other areas, and Languedoc, where livestock production fell away in the 1530's.

1551-1600: civil war after 1560 and tithe strikes both reduce the value of tithe as an indicator of production, but there is little doubt that there was a general fall in production to reach low points around 1590. Again Alsace stood apart from this general trend.

1601-50: all France was affected by expansion through to 1625-30, but only rarely were the sixteenth-century high points exceeded. After 1630 decline associated with the Thirty Years War set in, starting in the north-east, and the geography of this decline reflected in general terms the geography of the war.

1651-1700: growth through to the 1670's, with new high points reached in Languedoc, Provence, Bordelais, Périgord, Lyonnais, Auvergne, and Haut-Normandie, and a post-war recovery in the north-east. But after about 1680 the "crisis of Louis XIV" began in earnest, and tithe revenues fell as rapidly as they had done in the Thirty Years War.

1701-1800: after 1720 the real growth associated everywhere with the eighteenth century began, although there is no implication of an agricultural revolution in the technological sense of the term.



After Anne-Lise Head König 1972

FIG. 2.

Papers presented at the 1977 colloquium show that the late seventeenth-century crisis was in fact a continental, not just a French, phenomenon, and that most of the eighteenth century was a period of growth in output.

By contrast with our French colleagues, English agrarian historians have made relatively little use of pre-nineteenth-century tithe accounts and have concentrated instead on the mid-nineteenth-century tithe surveys. The only reference that the author of this paper has found by an English historian to the general idea of using tithe payments as a surrogate for production data is in N. J. Pounds's *Historical Geography of Europe*, where he remarks that "The listing of tithe payments should be a fairly accurate measure of the nature and volume of agricultural production, though it was sometimes customary not to exact the tithe of certain

crops."¹⁵ But there is no English equivalent of the pioneering studies in France of J. Ruwet or E. Le Roy Ladurie.¹⁶ P. K. Mitchell is one of the few English agricultural historians to make extensive use of parish tithe accounts: he used them in his doctoral thesis to reconstruct the pattern of crop yields in west Cleveland,¹⁷ Amongst other places, other more local studies have been made of Ecclesfield in Yorkshire, Rossendale in Lancashire, and Sheldon in Warwickshire.¹⁸ One reason for this limited

¹⁵ N. J. G. Pounds, *An Historical Geography of Europe, 450 B.C.-A.D. 1330*, Cambridge, 1973, p. 372.

¹⁶ J. Ruwet, 'Mesure de la production agricole sous l'Ancien Régime', *Annales E.S.C.*, xix, 1964, pp. 625-42; E. Le Roy Ladurie, *op. cit.*, 1966.

¹⁷ P. K. Mitchell, *West Cleveland Land Use, circa 1550 to 1850*, unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Univ. Durham, 1965.

¹⁸ D. Hey, *The Village of Ecclesfield*, Huddersfield, 1968; G. H. Tupling, *The Economic History of Rossendale*, Manchester, 1927; V. H. T. Skipp, ed., *Discovering Sheldon*, Birmingham, 1960.

use is that in England and Wales the record itself is very fragmentary. Some notes on the availability of tithe accounts in English repositories are presented in the final section of this article. A further and equally compelling reason is to be found in the nature of the English tithe "system." The following section is a review of some aspects of tithe collection and payment which might affect the value of English tithe accounts for monitoring agricultural production.

III

In broad outline the history of tithes in Britain is similar to that of continental Europe. Many of the general objections to the use of tithe as a measure of agricultural output noted in the French context apply with equal force to Britain. These are notably questions concerning the uniformity of the tithed area through time, and the rate of tithe itself.¹⁹ But there are a number of factors unique to Britain which can affect the simple equation which in theory relates tithe to output. Much of the following discussion relates to England and Wales, for although there were similarities in the English tithe system to those of Scotland and Ireland, there were also some important differences between them.

In Scotland tithe ceased to exist in 1633, when an Act of Parliament made over all Church lands and revenues to the state, and granted parochial incumbents a stipend for their support.²⁰ In Ireland commutation came much later, but again earlier than in England: Irish tithes were abolished by the Irish Tithes Composition Acts of 1823 and 1832.²¹ Prior to these Acts, the articles titheable and the manner of paying tithes were governed by a variety of local customs. Neighbouring parishes, and for

that matter neighbouring lands, differed in their tithes and the manner of tithing. A fairly general arrangement in many parts of Ireland prior to 1823 was to pay an acreable rate, fixed over long periods of time.²² As Dr Doyle, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, remarked in his evidence before the Select Committee on Tithes, 1832, this meant that, "In some places the tithe exceeded one tenth part of the produce and in other places that it was not half as much."²³ Clearly, in these circumstances a very careful study of parish tithe customs must be made where there is documentary evidence. Where this is not available it would be unwise to make any assessment of the relationship between production and tithe.

In England and Wales the overriding principle was that the "custom of the parish" was the final arbiter of the manner of tithing.²⁴ There was the usual distinction between the great or rectorial tithes, and the small or vicarial tithes. The great tithes were usually of hay, corn, and wood, and the small tithes all the rest. But the division between the great and small tithes was by no means fixed and unalterable.²⁵

¹⁹ R. C. Simington, 'Tithe Applotment Books of 1834. Agricultural Returns: Produce and Prices', *J. Dept. Agriculture, Dublin*, xxxviii, 1941, pp. 239-52.

²⁰ B.P.P. 1831-2, XXI, q. 3164.

²¹ The parish tithe files (P.R.O. I.R.18) are probably the best sources for unravelling the complexities of local tithing practices. See also the following list of articles which describe customs in various parts of the country: Anon, 'Tithing Customs at North Somercotes, A.D. 1588', *Lincs. Historian*, x, 1952, pp. 375, 381; R. M. Barton, *Life in Cornwall in the Nineteenth Century*, Truro, 1970, pp. 105-6, 110, 119-20, 128-9, 202-3; R. F. Dickinson, 'Tithing Customs in West Cumberland in the Eighteenth Century', *Trans. Cumb. West. Antiq. Arch. Soc.*, n.s., LX, 1960, pp. 130-4; W. E. Godfrey, 'A Stavelly Tithe Book of the Rev. James Gisborne', *J. Derbys. Arch. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, LXXI, 1951, pp. 38-46; R. Hansford Worth, 'The Tenants and Commoners of Dartmoor', *Trans. Devon Assoc.*, LXXVI, 1944, pp. 187-214; C. A. F. Meekings, 'St Teath's Tithes—1295', *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries*, xxxii, 1972, pp. 168-70; F. C. Morgan, 'Bosbury Tithes and Oblations, 1635-1641', *Trans. Woolhope Nat. Field Club*, xxxviii, 1965, pp. 140-8; D. Gethin Thomas, 'The Gelligaer Parish Tithe Customs', *Gelligaer*, vii, 1970, pp. 11-17; A. V. Woodman, 'Dunton Tithe Procedure', *Records of Bucks.*, xvi, 1960, pp. 363-4. See also Evans, *op. cit.*; G. F. A. Best, *Temporal Pillars*, Cambridge, 1964; C. Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church*, Oxford, 1956.

²⁵ Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁹ Frêche, *loc. cit.*, 214-44.

²⁰ J. A. Symon, *Scottish Farming Past and Present*, Edinburgh, 1959, pp. 81-3; C. S. Orwin & E. S. Whetnam, *History of British Agriculture 1846-1914*, 1964, pp. 185-6.

²¹ J. H. Johnson, 'The Irish Tithe Composition Applotment Books as a Geographical Source', *Irish Geography*, III, 1958, pp. 254-62; R. C. Simington, 'The Tithe Composition Applotment Books', *Analecta Hibernica*, x, 1941, pp. 295-8.

All the ancient treatises classify hay as a great tithe, but in twenty-three out of thirty-four parishes in Staffordshire studied by Evans, tithe hay, or its composition in lieu, was collected as a small tithe. Even corn tithe, usually guarded most jealously because of its great value, was not always collected by great-tithe owners in eighteenth-century England.²⁶ The division between great and small tithes was further complicated by the introduction of new crops. Changes in farming systems in response to price movements and technical innovation could distort the relationship between tithe and agricultural production as non-titheable crops entered into rotations, or the balance between great and small tithes changed. It can be argued that in many parts of southern and eastern England a record of tithe payments would be an index of production with very little meaning from, say, the seventeenth century onwards.²⁷

Tithes might be collected in kind, a method which became less common with time; or they were compounded for, in which case collection was usually leased out to a tithe farmer; or they were taken as a modus, which was fixed at a cash value per acre or per farm for all time. Tithe in kind was either calculated in gross terms as the "in field" value, or parish custom might dictate some reduction in the costs of collection if it was rendered direct to the tithe barn or when the value of a cash composition was calculated.²⁸ Collection costs in large, hilly parishes could amount to 40 per cent of the annual value of tithes, but the customary values varied from parish to parish and from incumbent to incumbent in the same parish.²⁹ Methods of assessing the level of compositions varied a good deal. By the end of the eighteenth century most tithe was paid in cash, but the wide variation in the manner of assessment

meant that some tithe owners got much closer to the "tenth" than others. Many compositions were set for a number of years during which the rate did not vary with output. For example, some tithes were calculated on the basis of compositions which remained unchanged for almost forty years, while the existence of a prescriptive modus might freeze the value of tithe for all time at a mid-sixteenth-century, or even earlier, value.³⁰ Compositions could be raised to take account of increasing output, and of course could also be reduced where the landowners were strong enough. But invariably most compositions lagged well behind changes in output or the prevailing level of prices. Before considering tithe payments as an index of production, it is important to be aware of the discrepancy perceived by tithe owners between the value of their tithes and the produce of the land. It is important also to be aware of the scale of differences that might be involved. The value of the Kendal tithes was increased some sixfold as a result of twenty years of dispute and legal wrangling.³¹ In the words of Eric Evans, "A modus set aside or a valuable crop established as titheable could treble or quadruple tithe income."³²

The reformation produced a considerable redistribution of tithe property and affected the manner of tithe payment. After the sale of tithes forfeited to the Crown in the 1530's, about one-third of English great tithes were held by lay impropriators. But there was considerable regional variation in the scale of impropriation. In Yorkshire, for example, the proportion of impropriate tithe was as high as 63 per cent.³³ As the attitude of lay tithe owners to tithe collection was often quite different from that of clerical owners, this uneven distribution could affect the relationship between tithe and agricultural production from one part of the country to another. Another factor particular to England was enclosure. The effect of en-

²⁶ E. J. Evans, 'Tithing Customs and Disputes: The Evidence of Glebe Terriers, 1698-1850', *Ag. Hist. Rev.*, xviii, 1970, p. 22.

²⁷ Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-2; J. A. Venn, *The Foundations of Agricultural Economics*, 2nd edn, Cambridge, 1933, pp. 150-65.

²⁸ Evans, *op. cit.*, 1976, pp. 21-6.

²⁹ R. J. P. Kain, *The Land of Kent in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century*, unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Univ. London, 1973, pp. 140-351.

³⁰ Evans, *op. cit.*, 1976, pp. 26-8.

³¹ E. J. Evans, 'A Nineteenth Century Tithe Dispute and its Significance: The Case of Kendal', *Trans. Cumb. West. Antiq. Arch. Soc.*, LXXXVII, 1974, pp. 159-85.

³² Evans, *op. cit.*, 1976, p. 42.

³³ Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

closures in the pre-parliamentary period on the value of tithes depended on how the economy of a village was changed after enclosure. Enclosures for grass often reduced great tithe revenues by anything up to 90 per cent while enclosure of land to form parks could lead to the total disappearance of tithes. On the other hand, enclosure could produce the opposite effect, as in seventeenth-century Buckinghamshire, when old coppice woodland was replaced by enclosures for corn.³⁴ The parliamentary enclosure movement of the eighteenth century had a much more sweeping effect on the payment of tithes. About 70 per cent of the enclosure Acts passed between 1757 and 1835 included some provision for at least partial tithe commutation. In over 2,000 mainly English midland parishes tithe ceased to reflect agricultural production after part, or perhaps all, was replaced, usually by an allotment of land.³⁵

IV

Many elements of the English tithe system discussed in section III were by no means unique to the British context, though some of them operated to a different degree compared with the Continent, often diminishing the effectiveness with which tithe payments might be expected to indicate the trend of agricultural output. In summary, the theoretical relationship between tithe and agricultural production as set out in section II may be seriously distorted in England by the wide variety of tithing customs which obtained; and by enclosure, technical innovations, and the introduction of new crops, which all affected land use and cropping patterns, thereby altering the balance between great and small tithes. It seems unlikely, therefore, that tithe evidence will be as useful a measure of pre-industrial agricultural production for this country as for France, Spain, Italy, and Switzerland, for example. But as yet there has been no study undertaken to test the tithe-production relationship in an English context.

³⁴ Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-4.

³⁵ W. R. Ward, 'The Tithe Question in England in the Early Nineteenth Century', *J. Eccles. Hist.*, xvi, 1965, pp. 67-81.

There is also the problem of the fragmentary nature of the surviving record of pre-nineteenth-century tithe payments in England, alluded to in section I. An ideal documentary situation would be a collection of annual series of tithe payments, preferably taken in kind and continuous for a century or more, from parishes representative of their local region. A search for such account books could begin with parish chests, progress to parochial and diocesan records deposited in county record offices, and then go on to other diocesan, institutional, and estate archives. A survey of English county record offices has revealed the existence of what appear to be quite reasonable accounts in a number of counties. In Devon, for example, there are records for Kilmington from 1618 to 1700, for Malborough from 1606 to 1719, and for Stockland from 1657 to 1741. In addition, there are a number of shorter series which when ranged alongside each other might produce a composite picture. The Oxfordshire County Record Office has accounts for a number of parishes, but they are mainly for short runs of years. A similar situation obtains in Cornwall. In the Buckinghamshire Record Office there is a three-volume account book for Monks Risborough running from 1744 to 1788. In Berkshire there are accounts for four parishes covering more than fifty years. These few examples suggest that the record, although not a rich one in county record offices, would seem worth exploring, as would other repositories of diocesan records like the Department of Western Manuscripts of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.³⁶ One problem with many of these accounts is that on close inspection some may well be records of only the vicarial or small tithes, and, therefore, rather limited indicators of total agricultural production. The most promising sources of rectorial- or great-tithe

³⁶ I should like to thank all the county and diocesan archivists who so kindly replied to my inquiries. The examples refer to particular information supplied by the archivists of Devon Record Office, Oxfordshire Record Office, Cornwall County Record Office, County of Buckingham Record Office, Berkshire Record Office, and the Keeper of Western Manuscripts of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

accounts are probably the records of the great institutional, collegiate, and aristocratic lay improprators.

It would, though, be foolish to pretend that the English documentary record is as rich as in some continental countries, or as suited for the direct measurement of agricultural output. By way of a postscript to this review, and in view of the great advances made in France, for example, towards filling this important *lacuna* in agricultural history, perhaps English agricul-

tural historians might submit a few tithe series to the sort of statistical analysis employed by some continental econometric historians to try to identify variables accounting for fluctuations in tithe payments.³⁷ It may then be possible to speak more positively about the value of tithe as an index of the output of English agriculture in the pre-industrial period.

³⁷ C. Pfister, *Agrarkonjunktur und Witterungsverlauf im westlichen Schweizer Mittelland, 1755-1797*, Bern, 1975. See also Morineau, in Goy & Ladurie, *op. cit.*

Notes and Comments

DR G. E. FUSSELL

Dr G. E. Fussell, past President of the British Agricultural History Society and doyen of agricultural historians, celebrated his ninetieth birthday on 10 September this year. Members of the B.A.H.S. will wish to join with all his many other friends and colleagues in expressing our congratulations and sincere good wishes.

George Fussell's many important contributions to agricultural history are well known, and though it may be inappropriate to pick out only two or three of them, we might mention particularly his *Old English Farming Books*, *The Farmer's Tools*, and *The English Dairy Farmer*. To the list of more than 500 publications which are detailed in the 1967 bibliography of his writings, many more recent additions must now be made. And still he writes!

Many happy returns.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM, 1979

The twenty-seventh conference of the Society was held at the College of Ripon and York St John, Ripon, north Yorkshire, on 9-11 April 1979. Papers were presented by Dr P. Roebuck, 'The rise of the large estate: the evidence of the Yorkshire baronetage'; Dr E. J. T. Collins, 'English woodlands since charcoal iron, 1750-1914'; Mr R. T. Fieldhouse, 'Agriculture in Wensleydale and Swaledale from 1600 to the present day'; Mr D. Byford, 'Agriculture in the south Yorkshire marshlands and Cornelius Vermuyden'; Mr S. A. Caunce, 'Farm horsemen in the East Riding at the turn of the present century'; and Dr J. A. Chartres lectured on the local landscape and conducted an excursion

to Norton Conyers, Well, Thorpe Perrow, Jervaulx, and Masham.

The A.G.M. was held on 10 April and made a change in the constitution of the Society, enlarging the Executive Committee from twelve to sixteen elected members. Miss Edith Whetham retired as President, and was replaced by Professor W. H. Chaloner. Mr Andrew Jewell retired as Treasurer after sixteen years in office and received the thanks of the meeting for his great efforts on behalf of the Society. Dr E. J. T. Collins was elected as Treasurer and Dr J. A. Chartres re-elected as Secretary. Nine vacancies on the new Executive Committee were filled by the election of Dr D. Howell, Mr G. Ordish, Dr R. Perren, and Dr W. J. Rowe for terms of four years; Mr D. Byford and Dr M. E. Turner for three years; Dr M. Overton for two; and Dr J. Betty and Miss Edith Whetham for one year.

The Chairman, Dr W. J. Rowe, reported a slight decrease in membership during the year from 835 to 820 but, allowing for those suspended for non-payment, this represented little real loss. He looked forward to the publication of the translation of Professor Abel's *Agrarkrisen und Agrarkonjunktur* by Methuen, possibly before the next A.G.M.

The Treasurer reported a reasonably satisfactory year as a result of the economies made in the production of the *Review* and the benefits accruing from the last increase in subscriptions. The balance on the year was £916, and reserves stood at £6,894.

The Editor reported the receipt of twenty articles during the year, and a backlog of sixteen waiting for publication. Publication delays now remained at under two years.

(continued on page 109)