

The Economic Development of a Middlesex Village*

By DOUGLAS MOSS

IN the region that R H Hilton calls 'market-oriented south-east England', striking divergencies are to be expected from the normal pattern of economic development during the late Middle Ages. My own investigations of the Middlesex village of Tottenham provide an example of such abnormalities. By a fortunate chance a vast collection of Tottenham manorial documents has survived, commencing in 1318 and becoming almost continuous from 1375. Not only court rolls, but extents, rentals, accounts, custumals and a terrier have been preserved: all the materials necessary for tracing in detail the evolution of the economy of the village.

Proximity to the great city of London, the only place in England which could compare with the larger Continental urban centres, must have been a prime factor influencing this evolution. An account of Tottenham's history from Domesday to the late fifteenth century shows how, as the years went by, the influence of the capital shaped the life of its tiny neighbour. This was particularly so after the Black Death drastically reduced the population of England. Demand for grain fell, grain prices dropped, demesnes formerly producing cereals for the market were leased: this is an old story. As the price of cereals fell,

meat prices rose. Léopold Genicot gives a table comparing the two contrary changes in price-level in England.¹ It is thought that rising wages, together with the fact that less money had to be found for bread, provided a surplus available for the purchase of meat, thus inducing the increase in the price of that commodity. The number of cattle kept on the Winchester estates rose.² Supplies of meat for London came in from East Anglia and Essex. Most significant, fresh meat and live animals were regularly purchased at Guildford market all the year round (except during Lent) by Lady Margaret Beaufort in the 1470s.³ There is no apparent reason why Guildford market should have been exceptional in this respect.

The problem, as Professor Genicot points out, is that of knowing how the animals were fed during the winter months and so kept alive in sufficient quantity. He suggests that increased production of legumes and their use as animal food was one way.⁴ The research, respectively, of F R H Du Boulay, P F Brandon and W G Hoskins shows that in Kent, Sussex and Leicestershire, among other regions, legumes were one of the main crops in the late Middle Ages.⁵ Although as a smaller proportion of the whole crop than in the aforementioned counties, legumes were cultivated in both Hackney and Tottenham.

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¹ L Genicot, 'Crisis: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times', M Postan (ed), *Cambridge Economic History of Europe I*, Cambridge, 1966, p 687.

² D L Farmer, 'Grain Yields on the Winchester Manors in the Later Middle Ages', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd Ser, XXX, 1977, p 563.

³ *Westminster Abbey Muniments 12181-90*. For this information I am indebted to Mrs Jennie Thurgood.

⁴ L Genicot, *op cit*, p 717.

⁵ F R H Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury*, 1966, pp 208-90, P F Brandon, 'Cereal Yields on the Sussex Estates of Battle Abbey during the Later Middle Ages', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd Ser, XXV, 1972, pp 405-6.

Secondly, Genicot believes that large areas of arable land may have been converted to pasture so that there could be sufficient nourishment for animals, even in the winter months.⁶ Thereby what might almost be called a minor agricultural revolution was achieved. One would expect the neighbourhood of the great London market to provide examples of such a process, if it did take place. The following account of the changes in Tottenham — made possible by the abundance of documents — is, therefore, of general interest to students of medieval economic history. But in addition it shows in very great detail how those changes actually happened in one particular village. Associated with these developments there were others (to be described) which radically altered the life of its inhabitants.

I

Nowadays Tottenham forms part of the London Borough of Haringey. Tottenham is situated in the northern part of the Greater London area, astride the A10 (the Roman Ermine Street), and stretches from Highgate and Muswell Hills on the west down to the River Lea on the east. The Lea forms the boundary with Essex; beyond is the borough of Walthamstow. Medieval Tottenham also included modern Wood Green, thus covering a total area of 4642 acres. Originally it had been forest; in 1459 a large wooded area still remained in the north-west quarter (the present-day Wood Green). The soil is basically London clay to the west of the A10, apart from an area of Taplow gravel round Bruce Castle. On the east side of the highway brick earth predominates until the alluvial soil of the Lea Valley is reached.

Until 1254 the township had long been a possession of the Scottish crown. In that year there was no direct succession and the manor was divided into three parts, owned respectively by Robert de Brus, John de Balliol and Henry de Hastings, Earl of

Pembroke. The Balliol manor, in 1295, and the Brus manor, in 1306, were forfeited to the English crown in consequence of the rebellion of their lords. By mid-fourteenth century the Balliol manor was in the possession of the Daubeney family, the Brus manor was in the hands of the Fawkoners. In the course of the years several sub-manors appeared, chief of which were Mocking and Twyford. Between 1427 and 1449, the year of his death, all were re-united in the hands of John Gedeney, a London alderman and member of the Drapers Company.

The fact that Tottenham was a settlement which arose as a clearing in forest country, was to influence its future field structure and agricultural system. Exactly when one, Tote, made the first clearing, probably near to the river Moselle as it follows its circuitous route towards its junction with the Lea, we do not know. The first appearance of the village in recorded history was due to Edmund Ironside, advancing in 1016, by little-known paths through Clayhanger, in the wood of Middlesex, to attack the Danes. Sir Frank Stenton identifies the place referred to in this statement of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle with Clayhanger in the south of Tottenham, which is approximately where Stamford Hill Station stands today.⁷ By 1086, only seventy years later, Domesday Book implies that there were some 1200 acres of cultivated land.⁸ The Inquisition Post Mortem of 1254, when the direct succession to the ownership of Tottenham by the Scottish royal house terminated, enumerates 527 acres of demesne arable and 1200 acres of villein arable.⁹ The terrier of 1459, to which further reference will be made, shows that the amount of land held by free tenants was at least 1000 acres, and probably much more, of cultivated arable.¹⁰

⁷ F M Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, Oxford, 1943, p 386.

⁸ *Domesday Book, Middlesex*, 130d XXIV, Terra Juditae Comitisse.

⁹ W Robinson, *History of Tottenham*, 1840, pp 163–4.

¹⁰ *Bruce Castle Museum Archives* (after, Bruce) MR 75.

⁶ L Genicot, *op cit*, p 270.

II

How was this arable land cultivated during the early Middle Ages? As far back as 1913 H L Gray noted the small, irregular fields of the lower Thames basin, so different from the large open fields of the midlands.¹¹ There the two- or three-field system prevailed. In Tottenham, if one accepts at face value the documentary evidence, there were as many as eighty-two fields, and many crofts and pightills besides, all the result of the slow clearing of the woods by individual families. Many of the fields bore a personal name, that, presumably, of the family who had made the initial clearance: Aylwynsfeld, Baldwyns, Collierscroft, Younsfeld, Pagesgrene, are examples.

In the paper Ian Murray and I published entitled 'A Fifteenth Century Middlesex Terrier',¹² we made an attempt to produce some order from this congeries of fields. Having noted that the 1459 terrier was divided into twenty-four sections, we compared the description of these sections, and the field names in each, with the map made in 1619 from the Dorset Survey. It quickly became clear that the twenty-four sections corresponded with twenty-four distinct areas on the map, these areas divided from one another by a system of lanes. (Apart from one or two new roads of the last century these lanes are still with us, forming the present-day road system, St Anne's Road, White Hart Lane, Lordship Lane, West Green Road, Broadlane, Green Lanes, and so on.) Each section contained several 'fields'. In only five out of the twenty-four were we unable to trace a clearly defined boundary. We judged that the twenty-four areas were the real medieval fields, the other fields subsections of them, but, to avoid confusion, called the twenty-four areas 'sections', which is in line with contemporary field-system

nomenclature when dealing with a region of this type.

Even so, twenty-four fields are very far away from the two- and three-field systems of the older textbooks. These tell us that common agriculture as practised in the Middle Ages must have had the following characteristics. Firstly, strip cultivation, each tenant having his land divided into a number of small scattered strips, of a half to one acre, intermingled with those of his fellows. Secondly, a fallow course at regular intervals, every other year in the two-field system, every third year in the three-field. Thirdly, the throwing open of the fields for general cropping of the stubble after harvest by the animals of the whole body of tenants. Finally, more or less even distribution of each tenant's strips throughout the whole arable area. For, in the absence of this last requirement, we are told, the peasants would periodically find all or most of their land fallow, with no crops, and be unable to sustain life.

How does the Tottenham scene, as revealed by the documents, fit into this? There were undoubtedly intermixed strips in the fields: we read of Nicholas Terry with two acres of arable 'whereof three rods in Homfeld, three in Wodecroft and half an acre in Longfeld'. Richard Taylor surrenders a piece of land 'lying in Longcroft between the land of Richard Brok on either side'.¹³ A fallow course every third year is frequently mentioned, usually in an incidental manner. There are, too, indications of the throwing open of the fields after harvest and of the meadows after mowing, after the feast of St Peter ad Vincula.¹⁴ It is when we come to even distribution of strips that we find a significant departure from the standard picture of the 'typical' manor.

From the 1459 terrier we learn that invariably any tenant with more than a few acres had his holdings concentrated within a relatively small section of the fields, fairly

¹¹ H L Gray, *English Field Systems*, 1959, p 402.

¹² D Moss and I Murray, 'A Fifteenth Century Middlesex Terrier', *Trans London and Middlesex Arch Soc*, XXV, 1974, pp 287-8.

¹³ *Tottenham Manorial Rolls* (after, TMR), I (Borough of Tottenham, Libraries and Museums, 1956) p 2.

¹⁴ Bruce, MR 47, mem 7.

close to one another, though not necessarily adjacent. How then, could the usual medieval rotation system function? It has often been assumed that distribution of holdings throughout all the fields was essential, if rotation was to be achieved.

The clue enabling Ian Murray and me to solve the puzzle was provided by the researches of Professor D Roden into medieval farming in the Chilterns and parts of Hertfordshire and North Essex.¹⁵ There, too, were the same numerous smallish common fields that we found in Tottenham, ten, twenty, even as many as thirty in a single township. In them, too, the holdings of individual tenants were confined to a small part of the total area. But Dr Roden found evidence, which we do not have for Tottenham, showing how the fields were sown. This evidence makes it clear that in the later Middle Ages an extremely complex system of rotations was operating, several different rotations existing side by side, one individual field, even, providing a unit of cultivation. Complicated permutations of the rotations, varying from year to year, ensured that no peasant, however localized his holding, could have all his land fallow in any one year. All this activity had to be co-ordinated so that there was uniformity in the throwing open of the fields for common pasturing, which speaks well for the capacity for social organization of, doubtless, uneducated medieval countrymen. While for Tottenham the records are not so complete, it seems probable that this was the agricultural system of the township and the one which, probably, operated throughout the lower Thames basin.

III

At the close of the fourteenth century we find in Tottenham an economy which was mainly arable, producing wheat, oats, and some barley by means of a complicated system of rotations. Some cattle and a large number of

sheep were reared. The lords, now three since the sub-division which took place in 1254, sold varying quantities of hay and timber, produce of their demesnes. But the greater part of the demesnes, the home farms, had long been leased to tenants in, mostly, small parcels. True, John Northampton, lord of the Daubeney manor, had in 1392 tried to restore some demesne cultivation with the accompanying labour services, but the experiment seems to have been a failure. It was not repeated.¹⁶ For the tenants, some 120 or 130 in number, that is, a total population of five to six hundred souls, were not docile. Though living under a comparatively easy regime, they were ever ready to assert their rights in the manor courts. Quite apart from the unrest prevailing in the years immediately preceding the great rising of 1381, we have several instances of refusal to perform services, of villein flights from the manor and other manifestations of independence. They were by no means a ground-down bunch of docile helots.

There is an implication arising from the division of the manor between three or more lords, and the fact that many tenants held land in more than one of these manors. As the territories of the different manors were, to some extent at least, intermixed, it follows that this was one of those manors where Postan and Titow assume that there must have been some joint body of tenants who arranged the agricultural programme. None of the three manors could have done this individually. There is no written record, anywhere, of the deliberations of such bodies, but some economic historians at least are sure they must have existed. (Fifteenth-century documents tell of co-operation in a 'fraternity', which possessed a chest looked after by two 'custodes', but this, of course, would have been a social or religious, not an economic, association.)

Before proceeding to relate the changes

¹⁵ D Roden, 'Demesne Farming in the Chiltern Hills', *Ag Hist Rev*, XXII, 1969, pp 10-23.

¹⁶ D Moss and I Murray, 'Land and Labour in Fourteenth Century Tottenham', *Trans London and Middlesex Arch Soc*, XXIV, 1973, pp 213-14.

which the coming of the fifteenth century brought to the village, let us visualize the characteristics of the English rural economy as a whole in the later Middle Ages. To begin with, after the three great outbreaks of plague in the fourteenth century the population fell catastrophically. After the plagues attempts were made by landlords to restore the status quo, by statutes whose aim was to keep wages down, and by intensifying services due from the tenants. These efforts, generally speaking, failed; R H Hilton believes because of the stubborn resistance of the English peasants and labourers. Domesday cultivation had what Bridbury visualizes as its Indian summer, which fitfully maintained it till the mid-1370s because a succession of poor harvests sustained grain prices.¹⁷ Once harvests became plentiful demesne farming for the market became quite uneconomic. Higher grain output with fewer mouths to be fed, high wages, falling profits, recalcitrant peasants, flights of labourers from the land, all combined to produce demesne leasing at an accelerating rate in the last years of the fourteenth century. In general there was a contraction of the total arable area cultivated.

Demesnes might be leased to manorial officers, to the whole village community, or to individual peasants. Prosperous peasants were increasing in number. Whereas in the thirteenth century, according to Postan, half the peasants held eight acres or less and only 3 per cent held more than thirty acres, as the fifteenth century progressed a different stratification appeared. There were fewer small peasants and, on the other hand, many hardworking and acquisitive individuals were adding acre to acre, frequently accumulating a hundred acres or more; Postan calls them an English *kulak* class. Concurrently, villein tenure was gradually evolving for all peasants, rich and poor alike, into a free copyhold tenure. With food prices low and wages high we may still accept, by and large, Thorold

Rogers's description of the fifteenth century as the 'Golden Age' of the English labourers. Not till the last quarter of the century did rising population, rising prices and, in some areas, enclosure of land for pasture, contrive to erode this prosperity.

Meanwhile, within the confines of open field husbandry many modifications and improvements were being made in arable farming. Improved rotations appeared, incorporation of legumes into the rotations, for instance; leys were introduced, single sections of fields became cropping units, scattered holdings were consolidated into a single large area. Finally, in many rural areas, including northern Essex, the numbers engaged in manufacture increased, participating in the expanding manufacture of woollen cloth. And this led to much rearing of sheep for their fleeces in all the pastoral country. In what respects did life in Tottenham resemble, and in what differ from, this general pattern?

IV

From the commencement of the fifteenth century there were great changes in its life, and it is proposed to list these in some detail, under seven heads.

Firstly, there was the increasing intrusion of Londoners into the village. The purchase of land in Tottenham by Londoners was of long standing. The buying of land in the surrounding countryside by dwellers in towns, whether for investment, for farming (in the modern sense) or to secure a country residence, perhaps as an escape from the plague, was quite common. Sometimes whole manors might be purchased, as, indeed, by John Northampton, John Gedeney, Adam Fraunceys, and others in Tottenham and district. This might be done as a means of social advancement and could result eventually in the rise of a new noble house. The Russells, the Osbornes, the Pulteneys, the Cecils furnish examples of this. These were exceptional men. We are concerned

¹⁷ A R Bridbury, 'The Black Death', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd Ser, XXVI, 1973, pp 577-92 *passim*.

with small-scale purchases, designed probably to obtain a secure investment, easily negotiable, based on the rent of land. Sylvia Thrupp mentions Edmonton and Enfield as favourite Middlesex locations where citizens bought country houses, manors and plots of woodland, pasture and agricultural land.¹⁸ She might well have included Tottenham also.

From 1400 there was not just an acceleration of this process in Tottenham but also, one might say, a qualitative change. The documents reveal that between 1413 and 1450 members of various London crafts, listed below, purchased land there, and at this point I should like to observe that these figures are minimal. So often a man would be mentioned several times before it was felt necessary to say that he was a draper of London, or whatever, that I feel sure there were a number of Londoners present of whom the fact was never recorded. The crafts mentioned and the numbers from each were: one armourer, one tailor, one mason, one saddler, one surveyor, one Chandler, one skinner, one baker, one sheerman, one hurer (cap-maker), one 'tymbermonger', one goldsmith, one capper, one carpenter, one draper, one mercer, two dyers, two barbers, two 'girdelers', two 'bruers', three curriers, and — ten 'bochers'. A total of thirty-seven craftsmen, ten of them butchers; a completely new feature.¹⁹ (In the 1450s four more butchers appear in the court rolls.)

Special mention must be made here of one outsider who did not come from London, Robert Holder, a drover from Yardley in Worcestershire, who in 1434 purchased 21½ acres of enclosed land from Richard Hertilpole, one of the butchers.²⁰ What was a drover from the midlands doing in Tottenham? Can we assume that already cattle from the midlands were coming on the

long trek to supply food for the London market? We know that this happened later, but in the early fifteenth century?

A factor which may have influenced citizens of London in the fifteenth century, and induced them to buy customary land in Tottenham, was the lords' formal abrogation of the right to require labour services, apart from a few connected with haymaking. The labour services had not been particularly heavy; the holder of an entire virgate could be required to plough only 4½ acres. In practice, by the late fourteenth century they were in any case commuted. Nevertheless, it still theoretically rested with the lord whether he demanded such services, and it will be recalled that John of Northampton briefly tried to enforce them.

It must have been felt advantageous to the tenants, therefore, when in 1407, in return for an increased rent of 7d an acre, the lord of Bruce manor agreed to the following. The tenants 'should pay to the lord and his heirs for their tenement and for each acre of land which they hold from him, 7d for all rents, services and works except suit of court and mowing and haymaking and carriage and stacking the lord's meadow according as it was by ancient custom'.²¹ This entailed an increase from 4½d to 7d an acre. As was usual, work on the meadow persisted longer than other services. By 1437 this arrangement obtained throughout all the manors, as a court roll of that year makes clear by listing in full those tenants who were obliged to perform these sole remaining labour services.²²

Secondly, in fourteenth-century Tottenham, as everywhere, one meets with instances of peasants being fined for overburdening the common pasture or wood with their beasts. Generally two or three bullocks were mentioned; once even twelve were implicated. Quite frequently scores of sheep were being introduced by guilty

¹⁸ Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, Chicago, 1962, pp 118, 284–6.

¹⁹ These details are to be found in *Bruce*, MR 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 43, 47, 48, 67.

²⁰ *Bruce*, MR 33, mem 8.

²¹ *Ibid*, MR 10, mem 29.

²² *Ibid*, MR 33, mem 10.

persons. In the following century the pattern soon altered. As early as the reign of Henry IV Henry Cook, who may be described as the pioneer London butcher, is frequently mentioned as trespassing with seven, eight, even fifteen and seventeen bullocks.²³ By the 1430s, 1440s and 1450s where figures are given, the cattle overburdening ran into the thirties and forties. Sheep still appeared in the court rolls; more than a hundred in excess of the permitted number were ascribed to such butchers as John Johnson and William Fowler, 220, even, to John Crok.²⁴ One must on no account fail to mention the heinous offence of Thomas Eloy, butcher, who 'overburdened the common pasture of the lord beyond his tenure and, under cover of the said tenure which he holds, pastured diverse animals of diverse men under his own name to the grave hurt of the lord and tenants'. How many beasts of how many fellow-butchers Thomas Eloy imported into Tottenham we do not know. We do know, however, that for this presumably serious transgression the fine was 12*d*. Did the lord and community really wish to prevent it?²⁵

Thirdly, there is evidence of an increase of pasture at the expense of arable land. When in 1392 John Northampton became lord of Daubeney manor he had a list made of all those to whom portions of his demesne were leased and the acreage each farmed. In all, 155 acres were leased for the total sum of £2 11*s* 7*d*. The greater part by far of this was arable.²⁶ By the 1440s the greater part of the leased demesne of the now reunited manors was used as pasture. The total rent obtained in 1440 by John Gedeney was £34; only about £2 of this was for arable. Downhills, Bradwater, Wodereding, and Stonyfeld, all under crops at the opening of the century, were designated pasture in the 1440s.²⁷ It does not follow that there was a trans-

formation of the land of the tenants on such a scale, but references to customary land described as pasture do increase as the century advances.

Fourthly, there was an increase of enclosure. There are a few references to this in the reign of Richard II. For instance, Pagesgrene and Parkfeld were already enclosed.²⁸ As the years went by references to crofts and closes in the court rolls progressively rise. Land transfers in the reign of Henry V mention nine crofts and closes among the holdings sold. In the first eleven years of Henry VI twenty-five are recorded, in the second eleven years thirty-nine.²⁹

More frequent, too, are references to attempts at enclosure. Only four instances occur under Richard II, all four being attempts by manorial lords, Twyford, Cavendish, Northampton, and Innocent, and every time it was ordered that the land become common again.³⁰ (The custom of the manor overruled the will of the lord.) But by 1411 a different attitude prevailed. For enclosing Mockynsfeld with hedges and ditches Henry Thornton was fined the trivial sum of 2*d*.³¹ And be it noted, there was no reference to removal of these hedges and ditches. There are two references to attempts at enclosure under Henry V, with fines which can only be called derisory. In the next reign the attempts multiply, apart from many cases of enclosing of stubble. John Johnson, 'bocher', encloses four acres in High Hanger, Thomas Hancock encloses common pasture at Marklan, Richard Hertylpole, most important of the butchers, encloses Redland, Hillfeld and Catteslond, one of the Edrych family encloses twenty acres.³²

Incidentally, as Mingay emphasized when discussing similar piecemeal enclosure in the eighteenth century, this continuous, relatively small-scale enclosure illustrates the flexibility

²³ *Ibid*, MR 27, mem 26.

²⁴ *Ibid*, MR 43, mem 36, MR 47, mem 23, MR 67, mem 14.

²⁵ *Ibid*, MR 34, mem 4.

²⁶ *TMR*, 11, p 122.

²⁷ *Bruce*, MR 10, mem 4, MR 27, mem 16.

²⁸ *TMR* 11, p 147.

²⁹ *Bruce*, MR 33 *passim*.

³⁰ *TMR* 11, pp 179, 307, 323, 326.

³¹ *Bruce*, MR 27, mem 8.

³² *Ibid*, MR 34, mem 6.

of the traditional farming system. The older collective system of agriculture seems, for the time being, to have survived the removal of those of its parts which became privately owned, but it was being undermined nevertheless.

Fifthly, as the fifteenth century advanced there was much consolidation of holdings. The 1459 terrier indicates that, although many one-acre or two-acre strips survived, there were also thirty-four parcels of ten acres or more, several of them closes. The largest was the 200-acre enclosure which the Prioress of Clerkenwell held in Hanger.³³ At the same time there was a growing gap between the larger and smaller tenants. The larger included a number of ecclesiastics. The Prioress of Clerkenwell held, in all, 260 acres of free land, the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's 220 acres, the Prior of Holy Trinity, Aldgate, thirty-seven acres but also nine parcels where the terrier fails to give the area, the Prior of the Carthusians had forty-six acres and two parcels of indefinite area. Among the laymen John Drayton had amassed 185½ acres, John Pye 'of London' had ninety-six acres, Robert Stubbe eighty-one acres, John Foulter, a London butcher, sixty-one acres. The Edrych family, one of whom was described as 'a bruer' of London, and another as 'of Iseldon', held between them 155 acres plus two indefinite parcels.

There was much investment in house property by a few individuals. Peter Caldcot, 'of London', had six properties and one of the inns. John Drayton and John Newman senior, four cottages apiece, John Pye 'of London' ten cottages, two tenements, two messuages and an inn, Robert Stubbe a tenement, a messuage and three cottages.

At the other end of the spectrum we find that of the 120 tenants (or 114 if six of the names are variant spellings of other names), thirty-seven had four acres or less and ten of these nothing but a cottage. As far as one can tell from the incomplete details of the

fourteenth-century holdings there was no such great disparity then. Fortunately for them there must have been no lack of work for these poorer peasants as servants of the richer or in the industrial occupations which we shall come to later. But it will be seen that, with respect to peasant stratification, Tottenham does not resemble the normal pattern.³⁴

Sixthly, in 1410 we have the first mention of Totenhamstrete.³⁵ This was to become quite quickly the principal village centre, straddling the high road near to the Edmonton border and over half a mile from the village church. W G Hoskins and others have pointed out that it was common in the Middle Ages for villages to be moved to the high road, leaving behind a more or less isolated church.³⁶ There appears good reason to believe that the Tottenham village was moved about the year 1410, and that somewhere in the neighbourhood of Bruce Castle there lies a buried village awaiting the hand of the archaeologist to reveal it.

The high road was, and is today, one of great importance, a main artery into and out of London. There must have been a continuous flow of people and goods along it, on foot, on horseback and on cumbrous wagons. Along this road must have come supplies of food and other necessities for the already great city. Perhaps the ease of travel of those using it was facilitated by the Crown's efforts to improve the highway, in the 1360s, '70s and '80s, between the church of Shoreditch and Edmonton. 'It was so deep, muddy and dangerous that men, horses and carts can scarcely pass by it.' So a penny a week was to be paid by every cart called a tranter, and a farthing a week for every pack horse, to obtain funds for necessary repairs.³⁷ (Incidentally, similar efforts were

³⁴ D Moss and I Murray, 'A Fifteenth Century Middlesex Terrier', *op cit passim*.

³⁵ Bruce, MR 27, mem 13.

³⁶ W G Hoskins, *Local History in England*, I, p 205.

³⁷ *Calendar Patent Rolls, 1364-67*, pp 88, 190; 1367-70, p 217.

³³ *Ibid*, MR 75.

made in the first part of the fifteenth century to improve the passage of the River Lea from Ware to the Thames, 'being a great river by which boats used to go down and would still do so but for faulty weirs, mills, stumps and kidells therein.'³⁸

Road repairs and consequent increased traffic may have been the cause of this removal of the village which I have postulated, so that advantage might be taken. It is interesting to see that at the same time we find in the court rolls the first mention of common lodging-house keepers and of common huxters, at first described as selling ale, but later on as selling ale and other commodities, sometimes as selling oats, wheat and other articles.³⁹ All this is of significance for the general picture of Tottenham, as it then was.

Finally, we come to the consequences of John Gedeney's acquisition, and eventual union of several Tottenham manors. Gedeney was a wealthy member of the Drapers Company, one who was alderman and mayor of the City of London and who represented it in the House of Commons. It would also seem that he was an excellent man of business. Within a few years of his becoming in rapid succession lord of all the manors, Bruce, Daubeney, Pembroke, and the large sub-manor of Mockyng, he succeeded in raising the manorial surplus to hitherto unheard-of heights. Surpluses of over £100 a year were continuous in all surviving accounts between 1433 and Gedeney's death in 1449. During Henry V's reign the combined surpluses of Bruce and Daubeney were less than £40, and while we possess no compotus rolls for Pembroke it seems unlikely that it would, by itself, have yielded as much as this. Mockyng was a very small manor and must have produced a correspondingly small income. Yet in some years after Gedeney had become lord surpluses of £120 and more were

realized, probably representing a rise of more than 50 per cent over the figures of twenty years earlier.⁴⁰ All this at a time when, it is believed, estate incomes in general were falling. Moreover, these revenues provide a sharp contrast to the situation in neighbouring Hackney, where, from the 1380s, a steady decline in manorial yield had set in. It must be added that three accounts surviving from the 1450s, after the death of Gedeney, show Tottenham manorial surplus falling somewhat, and large arrears re-appearing. Even so, much was being spent on repairs to the fulling mills and on a new oven for the brickworks (MR 52, 64, 65). (The first record, as soon as Gedeney became lord, of payments to an accountant, may well be an indication of tougher control of finance. These payments rose from 53s 4d to £9 per annum.)

Gedeney very quickly raised his tenants' rents. He leased the demesne in some years as a unit, in others in a few very large parcels and at a greatly increased and increasing rent, as we have already seen.⁴¹ He succeeded in eliminating arrears in the payments of his bailiff, surely a sign of tough administration.⁴² Sales of timber began to be supplemented by large sales of hay from the late 1420s, these rising to £24 10s 0d in 1450. A brickworks appeared,⁴³ and a fulling mill joined the older water mill which had ground the manor's corn.⁴⁴ Later a second fulling mill was added. For many years London drapers had been wont to make use of the several fulling mills along the Lea.⁴⁵ Gedeney, it seems, decided to install his own mills on his estate. Yet another connexion with industry is found in several references to a malting house, jointly owned by a number of

³⁸ *Calendar Close Rolls*, 1413-19, p 516.

Calendar Patent Rolls, 1416-22, p 78; 1422-29, p 402; 1436-41, p 371.

³⁹ *Bruce*, MR 26, mem 2, MR 27, mem 11; MR 47, mem 26.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, MR 10, mems 1-13.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, MR 10, mem 11.

⁴² *Ibid*, MR 10, mems 1-10.

⁴³ *Ibid*, MR 10, mems 3, MR 52.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, MR 10, mem 9, MR 64.

⁴⁵ K G T McDonnell, *Economic and Social Structure of Bromley, Hackney, Stepney and Whitechapel from the Thirteenth to the Sixteenth Centuries*, unpublished Univ London PhD thesis, 1958, pp 97f, 170.

tenants.⁴⁶ Messrs Whitbread inform me that this may have been supplying malt to brewers who did not possess their own malt supply and, indeed, there is at least one reference to malt being sold to a London brewer.

A man of Gedeney's type would be likely to encourage all attempts at more efficient farming and more profitable use of land, not worry overmuch about enclosure and welcome citizens of London who might have progressive ideas. He was an active agent in promoting the great changes Tottenham underwent in the first half of the fifteenth century.

V

Great these undoubtedly were. I visualize Tottenham in 1450 and 1460 as a very different place from what it had been in 1400. Situated on a busy high road, with common lodging houses, six inns, embryonic shops (if that is what is meant by the term 'common huxters' — actually, in the 1450s, there are references to shops),⁴⁷ it must have been continually subject to outside influences. References in the court rolls to 'tenants and residents'⁴⁸ suggests, even if some of these residents were transients, that the population may have been much greater than would be indicated by the 120 tenants and their families. I imagine it must have been a very bustling village. There is even evidence from 1440 sad to relate, of brothels, 'bordel houses', where 'men of evil fame and evil governance come by night and day to the hurt of the neighbours'. One was kept by a Thomas Aylmer, and a lady rejoicing in the name of Joan Christmas seems to have been the main attraction.⁴⁹ Aylmer was, indeed, one of the principal tenants, serving on juries and inquests. Perhaps his fellow tenants privately thought he provided a useful

amenity. A second brothel belonged to John Baldwyn, after 1450 the lord's bailiff.

As is to be expected in such a main-road community, a money economy was well established. There are many statements as to the sums of money involved when customary land changed hands, the instances rising from six during the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV combined, to seven in the reign of Henry V and twenty-two in the first twenty-one years of Henry VI. Whether this rise represented a rise in money transactions or a more frequent need to have the transactions registered by the court I do not know, but probably the latter is the likelier explanation. A great deal of borrowing of money for different purposes went on: for instance, in a single court held in 1450 there were eight 'pleas of debt'. Geoffrey Hancock sued John Baldwyn for 11s 3d, Richard Turnaunt sued Robert Floocher for 34s 4d, John Sawyer sued Ralph Bagley for 10s, and so on.⁵⁰ The peasants also must have obtained the money which they needed for various purposes either as wages or by selling surplus products on the market. And there were the numerous wives of tenants who brewed ale and, contrary to the statute, sold it by cup and glass. Familiarity with the use of credit in business transactions had obviously grown too, as borrowing to overcome a temporary cash shortage and the buying of land by deferred payments, a growing practice, make clear.⁵¹

It will have been realized, though, that the fundamental change in fifteenth-century Tottenham was the wide substitution of a pastoral for an arable economy. The evidence makes this undeniable. The rearing and pasturing of cattle and sheep for the supply of the London market was a major occupation. Why, otherwise, were all those butchers purchasing Tottenham land? We know that under the Tudors cattle-rearing was the chief

⁴⁶ TMR 11, p 221.

Bruce, MR 33, mems 7, 10, 12.

⁴⁷ Bruce, MR 10, mem 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid, MR 67, mems 12, 16.

⁴⁹ Ibid, MR 47, mems 4, 19, 25.

⁵⁰ Ibid, MR 47, mem 21.

⁵¹ D Moss and I Murray, 'Signs of Change in a Medieval Village Community', *Trans London and Middlesex Arch Soc*, XXVII, 1976, p 283. Many more instances than those mentioned in this paper occur in the succeeding reigns.

Tottenham occupation, that by the end of the sixteenth century Tottenham, by then practically all enclosed, was predominantly pastoral. I believe that the transformation was well under way before 1450. And it was not butchers alone who were engaged in cattle rearing. John Drayton, that long-lived gentleman, first appeared on the scene in the days of Henry IV, described as clerk and secretary to Roger Walden; before his death in 1459 he had entered the ranks of the gentry, had interests in other parts of the country and even in Ireland⁵² and, it will be remembered, held 185 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres of Tottenham land. He was fined for overburdening the common with as many as thirty-eight beasts.⁵³ He, like Henry Hebblethwaite later in the century, appears to have been a grazier on quite a large scale in addition to all his other activities.

The explanation for this change in agricultural activity appears to be as follows. Dr K G T McDonnell noted that in the fourteenth century many London butchers went into Stepney and Stratford to meet the droves of cattle coming into London from the eastern counties, to forestall, to search out and buy the pick of the bunch and to fatten their purchases on the Thames and Lea marshes.⁵⁴ No butchers appear to have gone to Tottenham then. But London continued to grow. It has been estimated that it rose from 35,000 inhabitants in 1377 to 67,000 in the early sixteenth century (the latter figure is from J C Russell, well known for his tendency to underestimate population). Very likely much of the increase happened in the late fifteenth century when population generally was rising again, but as London was all the time developing as a commercial city its population must have risen even in the earlier years of the century. And the falling prices of cereals meant more money was available for buying animal produce. Therefore cattle from the eastern counties had to be supplemented by cattle from the midlands. Some came

down Ermine Street, and London butchers in the fifteenth century went into Tottenham, perhaps into Edmonton and Enfield too, for the same reasons that had earlier induced them to move to Stepney and Stratford. They too were intercepting cattle, coming, this time, from further north, buying those they fancied and grazing them on the meadows of the Lea and Moselle. Remember also in this connexion the movement to the high road and the presence of Robert Holder, that Worcestershire drover, both facts of significance.

In conclusion: in many respects Tottenham's development in the fifteenth century differed considerably from that of the majority of English townships. The proximity of London with its demand for meat, the busy high road which passed through the manor and on which its main village was situated, the lush marshes on the banks of the Lea — and, one must not forget, the personality of John Gedeney too — were all factors contributing to this. Consolidation of holdings and the rise of a class of wealthy peasants were features, as elsewhere, but it was growth based on cattle-grazing and an over-all increase in prosperity, for the lord as well as these wealthy tenants, which are seen as the fundamental features. And all this was in marked contrast to neighbouring Hackney, where there was very little expansion, very little move from arable to pasture, not a great amount of enclosure even in the sixteenth century.⁵⁵ It would appear that while Hackney was in a backwater, on a route which led to nowhere in particular (the village was at the Mare Street Narrow Way, as it is called locally), Tottenham, in its small way, and perhaps temporarily, was in the mainstream of economic advance. Of course, whether this was advantageous to the average peasant family is another matter: this depends on whether one believes that economic progress is all.

⁵² *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1422–29, p 411.

⁵³ *Bruce*, MR 43, mem 36.

⁵⁴ McDonnell, *op cit*, p 95.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pp 125f, 133, 257.