

The Extent and Nature of Parliamentary Enclosure

By JOHN CHAPMAN

IN SPITE of the recent advances in our knowledge of the Parliamentary enclosure movement, notably through the work of Dr Michael Turner,¹ the details of precisely what land was affected remain somewhat obscure. Turner's edition of Tate's 'Domesday' offers figures for most of the English enclosures² but, quite apart from those where no figure is given, many are based on the act and award estimates, which can be wildly inaccurate. This has been demonstrated in detail elsewhere for Northern England,³ but is by no means restricted to the remote uplands, as might be assumed. Substantial errors occur in Sussex,⁴ and an examination of some Leicestershire material produced surprising errors even there. Comparison of the sums of the allotments with the award estimates given in Turner for sixteen awards revealed that although eleven fell within 2 per cent the remaining four were all over 14 per cent out, rising to 23.5 per cent at Congerstone. Strangely, in the two worst cases the act estimates were far closer to the true figure. A similar exercise on eleven Kesteven awards found eight without any award figure; one, Eagle, completely accurate; and two over 20 per cent out. The situation with regard to Wales is still worse, for the only list covering the whole country, that of Bowen,⁵ is incomplete, in addition to

suffering from the same problems as the 'Domesday'.

With regard to the breakdown into types of land affected, the situation is far worse. The act estimates are quite useless from this point of view, since only a tiny handful give this type of detail, and the summaries given in the awards are only marginally better. Though there are now a number of major studies available of some individual counties, or substantial parts of them, these are neither numerous enough, nor necessarily calculated on a sufficiently comparable basis, to give any overall picture of the movement as a whole.⁶

I

This paper seeks to remedy some of these problems by presenting the results of a national survey of the Parliamentary enclosure awards.⁷ The data were collected from a 10 per cent sample of all English and Welsh awards, full details of every individual allotment being abstracted for each selected award.⁸ In view of the known and suspected variations in enclosure awards in different parts of the country,⁹ a simple unrestricted random sample was statistically unacceptable, since there was a substantial danger of drawing, for example, a disproportionate

¹ M Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosure*, Folkestone, 1980, and *Enclosures in Britain 1750-1830*, 1984.

² W E Tate, *A Domesday of English Enclosure Acts and Awards*, M E Turner, editor, Reading, 1978.

³ J Chapman and T M Harris, 'The Accuracy of Enclosure Estimates: Some Evidence from Northern England', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 8, 1982, pp 261-264.

⁴ J Chapman, 'Some Problems in the Interpretation of Enclosure Awards', *Ag Hist Rev*, 26, 1978, pp 111-112.

⁵ I Bowen, *The Great Enclosures of Common Lands in Wales*, Chiswick, 1914.

⁶ For example, the recent work of E and R C Russell, *Landscape Changes in South Humberside: The Enclosures of Thirty-Seven Parishes*, Hull, 1982, and *Old and New Landscapes in the Horncliffe Area*, Lincoln, 1985.

⁷ Subsequent to the unions of the respective Parliaments with the English one, there appear to have been one enclosure for Scotland and ten for Ireland. These have been omitted.

⁸ I am grateful to the ESRC, then the SSRC, for their financial assistance for this work, and to Dr T M Harris, then my research assistant, for his invaluable help on the project.

⁹ Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosure*, pp 32-62.

Distribution of sample enclosures

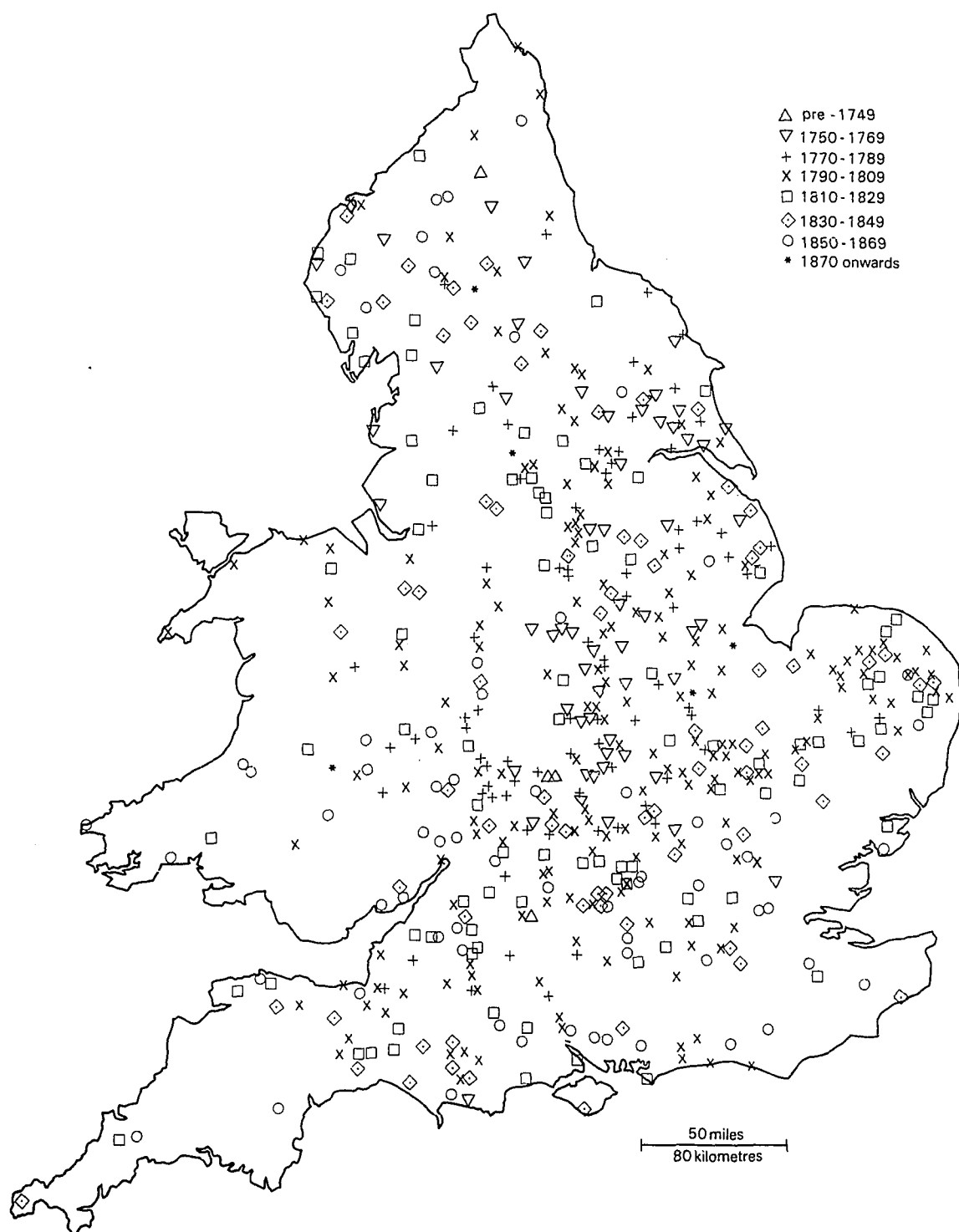


FIGURE 1

number of large northern enclosures, or of Midland open field ones. The sample was therefore drawn separately from each county, or, in the Welsh case, group of adjacent counties, thus producing a regional stratification, and ensuring that each region was proportionately correctly represented in the whole. (See Fig 1.)

The definition of an 'enclosure' which was used was that adopted originally by Tate,¹⁰ multiple awards under a single act being regarded as part of the same enclosure. A number of awards examined proved not to fall within the normal definition of enclosure, for example because they consisted entirely of exchanges of already enclosed land¹¹ or because they were simply regulatory,¹² and these were replaced by reserves, as were any awards which were lost or too defective to be usable.

The adjusted totals of enclosures proved to be 5570, 5341 in England and 229 in Wales. Owing to the effects of rounding in individual counties, the sample consisted of 559 awards, 535 from England and 24 from Wales. As this involved a slight overrepresentation of Wales, and subsequent analysis demonstrated a number of significant differences between English and Welsh enclosures, most calculations were performed separately for the two countries before figures were amalgamated to produce grand totals. This had the added advantage of permitting comparisons with existing published figures, which normally refer to one or other country individually.

In total, the sample awards affected 892,089.25 acres of land, including old enclosures exchanged or reallocated. 768,449.95 acres lay in England and 123,639.30 in Wales. Taken at face value, these would imply totals of approximately 1.18 million acres for Wales and 7.67 million

for England, or a grand total of just over 8.85 million acres for the whole Parliamentary enclosure movement. In practice these figures must be regarded as representing an upper limit, for doubts must be expressed about the validity of some of the enclosures making up the grand total. If the proportion of spurious enclosures discovered in the sample were to be matched in the overall total for England, some seventy awards would be rejected, giving a projected total of 7.57 million acres. The Welsh figures would be unaffected since almost all Welsh awards were examined and the total contains only those meeting acceptable criteria. The same is also true of several English counties, so that although a figure of 8.75 million acres might be taken as the lower limit of the range it seems likely that the true figure would lie closer to the upper limit of 8.85 million.

It must be noted that these figures refer to the total land affected by enclosure, and as such do not equate exactly with the total amount of open or common land abolished by the process. It was a frequent practice at enclosure for landowners to exchange small patches of old enclosed land for the new allotments in order to eliminate awkward detached pieces of their estates, and provision for this was normally included in the acts. Some acts, however, went further, and specified that all detached fields of less than a particular size, usually three acres, should be thrown into the melting pot,¹³ while others similarly incorporated any land within the same fence which was owned by more than one owner.¹⁴ Though the acreage involved was usually small, it was by no means negligible, and cases involving larger areas are not rare.¹⁵ In consequence, the total land allotted by the awards exceeds the amount theoretically available for enclosure. Dis-

¹⁰ See, for example, W E Tate, 'A Handlist of Sussex Enclosure Acts and Awards', East and West Sussex County Councils, *Record Publication*, 1, 1950.

¹¹ e.g. Evington, Leicestershire; and Carisbrooke and Godshill, Isle of Wight.

¹² e.g. Luton, Bedfordshire.

¹³ e.g. Llanybi, Monmouthshire. Gwent County Record Office, Enc 1.

¹⁴ e.g. Bosham and Funtington, Sussex. West Sussex County Record Office, Rm 3 DC7; Broadwater, Sussex, PRO CP43/911.

¹⁵ e.g. Romsey Extra, Hampshire. Hampshire County Record Office, Enc 89; Bury, Sussex. West Sussex County Record Office, QDD/6/W18.

regarding certain doubtful areas, which will be considered later, 33,146 acres, or 3.94 per cent of the sample, consisted of such already-enclosed land, and for England separately the figure is proportionately higher, at 4.19 per cent. The totals actually enclosed were thus 736,267 acres for England and 122,676 for Wales, giving implied totals of 7,253,955 and 117,030 respectively. The grand total enclosed would appear to have been over 8.42 million acres.

For England alone the amount of open or common land abolished by enclosure would therefore appear to fall in a range from 7.25 million acres, assuming a maximum number of erroneous enclosures, to 7.35 million, assuming none. Such a figure considerably exceeds those given by many previous authorities, and used in subsequent analyses of the movement. The total of six million acres which has been widely used, for example by Chambers and Mingay and by McCloskey, represents an understatement by almost 18 per cent, and Tate's 1967 figure of 6.5 million is almost 11 per cent under.¹⁶ Even the most detailed recent calculation, that of M E Turner at 6.8 million, is some half a million acres less than the total suggested by this study.¹⁷ For Wales, these figures would lend support to the one million acres which Turner implies may be too high.¹⁸ The implications of this stretch beyond the question of Parliamentary enclosure itself, for if Parliamentary enclosure dealt with more land than previously suggested, the impact of non-Parliamentary enclosure must have been proportionately less. Wordie's recent calculations of seventeenth-century enclosure, for example, appear to make inadequate allowance for that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and

hence overstate the earlier changes, quite apart from any other objections which might be raised.¹⁹

II

With regard to the type of land involved, the overwhelming majority of awards specify clearly whether the land concerned in any particular allotment was open field, meadow, or common waste. While this division may beg certain questions about the real nature of some open field land immediately prior to enclosure, and the degree to which common waste had been encroached and cultivated, the legal situation, at least, is usually clear. Where the text failed to identify the land type clearly, it was often possible to resolve most of the ambiguities or repair the omissions with the aid of the maps. There remained, however, a hard core of problem cases, where the land fell into more than one category, but the proportions could not be accurately determined. Initially these amounted to 8.66 per cent of the sample and were strongly clustered regionally in East Anglia and the Northamptonshire-Oxfordshire-Buckinghamshire area. Use of estate maps, tithe documents and other records allowed the missing figure to be reduced to 5.8 per cent, a figure which is acceptable, though the regional concentration is a little disturbing. The problem in East Anglia, however, appears to arise largely from the well-known peculiarities of field-systems and tenure patterns in that area.²⁰ Significantly, many Norfolk acts avoid the conventional references normally made elsewhere to 'open and commonable fields', referring instead to 'intermixed lands', and the use of the various ancillary sources mentioned

¹⁶ J D Chambers and G E Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880*, 1966, p 77, suggest 'over' six million. See also D N McCloskey, 'The Economics of Enclosure: a Market Analysis', in W N Parker and E L Jones, *European Peasants and Their Markets*, Princeton, 1975, p 128; W E Tate, *The English Village Community and the Enclosure Movements*, 1967, p 87.

¹⁷ Turner, *Enclosures in Britain*, p 21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p 27.

¹⁹ See J R Wordie, 'The Chronology of English Enclosure, 1500-1914', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd series, XXXVI, 1983, pp 483-505; J Chapman, 'The Chronology of English Enclosure, a comment' and reply by J R Wordie in *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd series, XXXVII, 1984, pp 557-562.

²⁰ See, for example, M Postgate, 'Field Systems of East Anglia', in A R H Baker and R A Burlin, *Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles*, Cambridge, 1973.

earlier confirms the view that much of the unspecified land in this county was already enclosed. The movement here was thus more akin to the modern French *remembrement* or the Dutch *ruilverkaveling*, rather than the conventional English enclosures. Such an interpretation would be consistent with Yelling's comments on Norfolk enclosures²¹ and, if accepted, would reduce the amount of unspecified land to some 2.5 to 3 per cent.

Excluding the unspecified areas, the remainder was classified into four broad categories: field land; meadow; common waste and pasture; and old enclosed land. The fourth of these has already been referred to, though it may be noted that its relative importance is marginally understated, not only because of the East Anglian problem, but also because old enclosures voluntarily exchanged were sometimes simply 'lost' in larger allotments. Furthermore, many acts specified that recent encroachments on the common, normally under twenty-one years old, should be regarded as part of that common, and the awards then often treated them as such without any special mention. It is unlikely, however, that this could have added more than 0.1 per cent at most to the total.

The question of common meadow is one which has received short shrift in the literature of the enclosure movement. In all the discussion over the relative importance of arable and pasture in the process, the fact that some enclosures consisted entirely or largely of meadow has tended to be ignored. In fact, only three of the sampled awards consisted solely of common meadow, but 228, or over 40 per cent contained at least some and sixty-one, or almost 11 per cent of the sample, were more than 10 per cent meadow. Overall less than 3 per cent of the sample total fell into this category, but locally its significance was greater. It contributed more than 10 per cent to the total

for the Holland division of Lincolnshire and almost 10 per cent for neighbouring Huntingdon. It was thus more important than field land in the former, and than pasture in the latter.

The temporal pattern of meadow enclosure follows closely that of open field, which will be discussed shortly. Briefly, it shows a general downward trend, falling from just over 5 per cent of the pre-1750 total to just over 1 per cent in the second half of the nineteenth century. Though the smallness of the figures makes analysis by decade somewhat dubious, a similar trend is detectable at this level, even to the extent of a small percentage rise after the passing of the 1836 General Enclosure Act. Such a close parallel with open field enclosure seems readily explicable, first because meadow was usually, though by no means exclusively, enclosed as part of the general abolition of some kind of open field system, and secondly because legally the process bore a close resemblance to field enclosure: the exact proportions of land held by each individual before enclosure were normally quite clearly established. It is perhaps for these reasons that both at the time and subsequently, meadow has simply been lumped in with field land, though in agricultural terms its role complimented the pasture and waste as a support for stock.

In spite of this, it is obvious that the Parliamentary enclosure movement as a whole was primarily concerned with open arable and open pasture. For England and Wales 33.47 per cent of the identifiable sample was field land and 59.67 per cent pasture, or approaching the one to two proportions postulated by Philpott.²² For England alone, as would be expected, the arable percentage was higher, at 39.13 per cent. Thus, even with due allowance for the problems already specified and for an element of sampling error, it seems clear that

²¹ J A Yelling, *Common Field and Enclosure in England, 1450-1850*, 1977, pp 12-13.

²² G Philpott, 'Enclosure and Population Growth in Eighteenth Century England', *Explorations in Economic History*, 12, 1975, p 36.

Parliamentary enclosure was primarily concerned with common pasture and waste. For any individual county, the maximum arable percentage was 79.25, for Huntingdonshire, though this was only marginally higher than a group of other Midland counties.²³ At the opposite end of the scale, the sample revealed no arable in nine English counties.

III

A clear geographical pattern emerges from these figures. From a core area of adjacent Midland counties the percentage of arable involved in the enclosure movement falls in a series of steep steps outwards to the extremities of the country. Conversely, waste and pasture rapidly comes to dominate the movement outside this Midland core with, on a county basis, sharp juxtapositions between counties showing a high arable dominance and those highly dominated by pasture. Such a pattern accords in general terms with that outlined by Slater and by Gonner in the early years of this century, and refined more recently by Turner.²⁴ However, the rate of fall in the proportion of arable is much steeper than implied in these earlier writings, and in particular the arable-dominated core emerges as a smaller, more restricted zone. Even counties such as Oxfordshire and Nottinghamshire fall outside this zone, though arable is marginally the biggest individual component in the former.

Such a pattern carries implications of some form of spatial diffusion process, and thus lends support to the suggestion made but not developed in detail by Turner.²⁵ However, the nature of the county limits is such that any process of this kind can be obscured, or indeed overemphasized, by the peculiarities

of their boundaries. The data were therefore reorganized on the basis of distance from the supposed centre. Inspection of the figures indicated a location somewhere in north-central Northamptonshire as the geographical centre of the high arable area, and an arbitrary choice was made of an exact point in this area from which measurements were made. The distance of each of the sample enclosures from this selected point was then calculated, and the awards were regrouped according to the distance band within which they fell, the boundaries of the bands being at 50-kilometre intervals. The totals for each land type were then recalculated for each of these 50-kilometre bands. The pattern which emerged from this strongly reinforced the original conclusions (see Fig 2). The percentage of arable involved in enclosures clearly falls sharply with each succeeding band, apart from a minor hiccup at 300–350 kilometres, where the number of awards involved had fallen greatly.²⁶ It may be noted that only in the two innermost bands does the amount of arable exceed that of pasture and that in all the five outermost pasture accounts for more than 75 per cent of the total. There is thus a very sharp spatial division of the enclosure movement between a relatively small central area of the country where arable enclosure was the norm and a much larger outer area where attention focused essentially upon common waste.

There is obviously also a temporal, as well as a spatial, aspect to this pattern. The mean date of enclosure for these distance bands rises steadily and consistently from 1792 in the innermost to 1825 between 300 and 350 kilometres; only the outermost band, with a mere two enclosures, breaks this pattern. This may be illustrated more clearly by reorganizing the data into 20 year periods, for the arable percentage then falls steadily from 63.63 before 1750 to nil after 1870 (see Fig 3). In this case the one exception to the

²³ Buckinghamshire, Leicester, Northampton, Rutland and Warwick all exceeded 75 per cent.

²⁴ G Slater, *The English Peasantry and the Enclosure of Common Fields*, 1907; E C K Gonner, *Common Land and Inclosure*, 1912; Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosure*.

²⁵ *Ibid*, pp 99–100 and 126.

²⁶ The outer ring at 350–400 km has been omitted, since it contains only two awards.

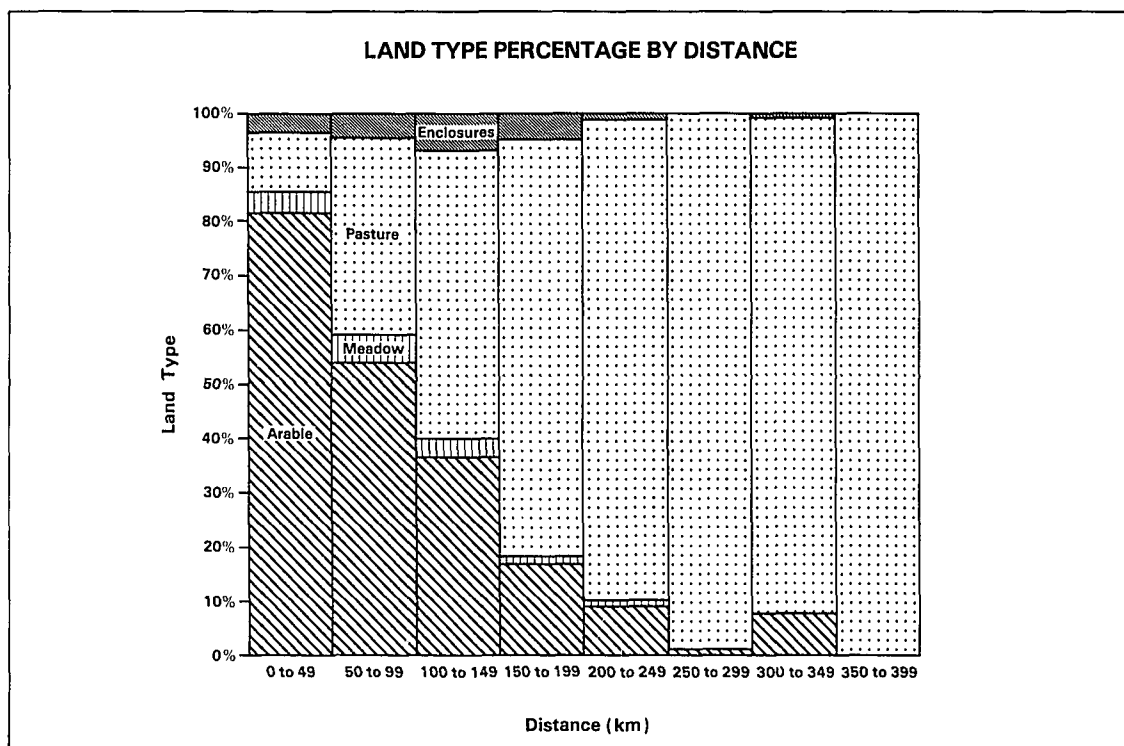


FIGURE 2

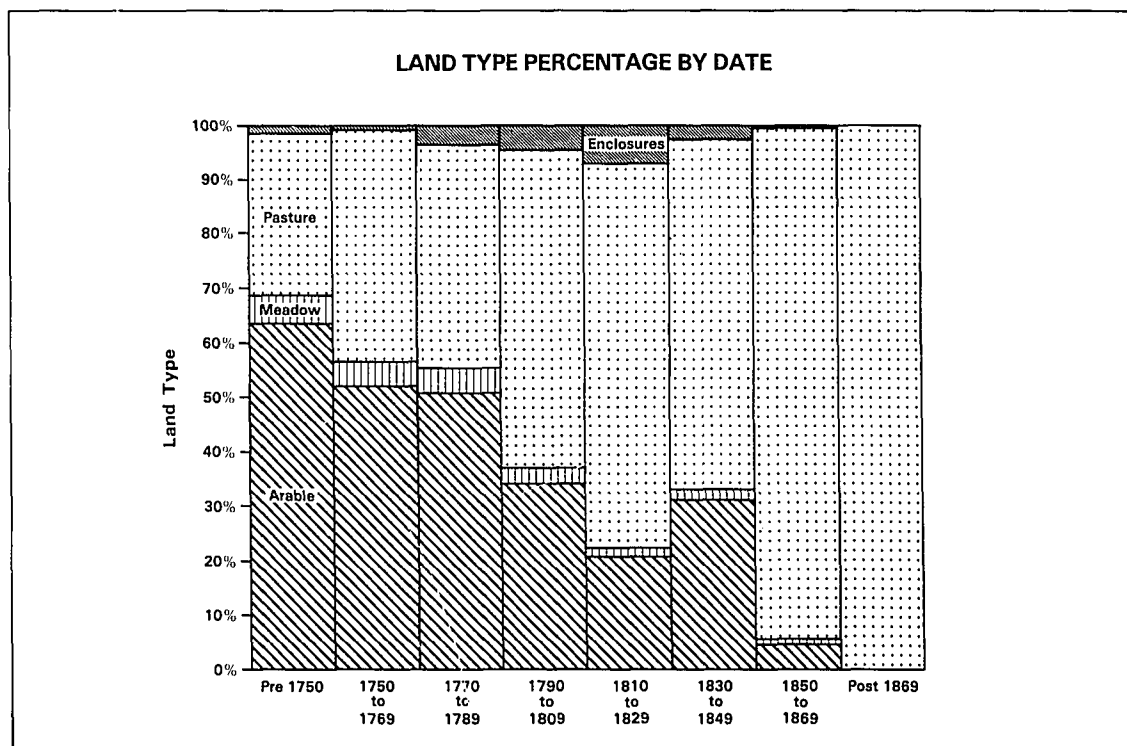


FIGURE 3

trend, as might be expected, is in the period 1830 to 1850, when the effects of the 1836 General Act produced a slight rise. Although the decline in the relative importance of arable in the process with time has been well documented in the literature,²⁷ these calculations emphasize a number of points. First, it seems clear that the decline was a steady and continuing one, rather than reflecting a sudden response to any external event, such as the Napoleonic Wars.²⁸ Secondly, even the 1836 General Act, specifically designed to boost field enclosure and indeed theoretically restricted solely to it, failed to produce any dramatic change, for the proportion, though rising briefly, never attained as much as one third of the total. Thirdly, even at the time of maximum emphasis on arable, not far short of 40 per cent of the land involved fell into other categories.

IV

It might be argued that these conclusions are simply a reflection of the obvious fact that the amount of open arable available to enclose declined sharply with distance from the Midland core. If the use of Parliamentary enclosure exhibited a simple diffusion process, spreading outwards with time from the centre, then clearly the percentage of arable dealt with in each time period would fall for that reason alone. In reality the situation appears more complex.

One of the more surprising features revealed by this investigation was the degree to which individual enclosures were strongly polarized into those which were largely concerned with open arable and those which were largely of open waste. Most contained either more than 60 per cent arable, or less than 25 per cent, with only

fourteen awards, or 2.5 per cent of the sample, falling between these figures.²⁹ It thus becomes possible to regard most enclosures as falling into either an 'essentially arable' or an 'essentially pasture' group.

The implications of this finding may perhaps be best illustrated by means of boxplots showing the distribution by date of the predominantly pasture and predominantly arable enclosures for each 50 kilometre band (see Fig 4). This allows a direct visual comparison, not only between arable and pasture within the same region, but also between the patterns for either group in different regions. In accordance with convention, the limits of the boxes have been drawn at the 'hinges', or quartile values, and the 'whiskers' representing the outlying values have been omitted in order to focus attention on the main time period involved for each group.³⁰

From this it can be seen that in all cases the median enclosure year for the 'arable' group is much earlier than for the 'pasture', with only one case where the gap is less than ten years. In other words, at any given distance from the central core, a predominantly arable enclosure was likely to be undertaken at a substantially earlier date than a predominantly common waste one. Furthermore, arable enclosures tend to cluster much more closely about the median. Thus, within any given area, field enclosure took place within a relatively limited timespan, whereas enclosure of common and waste was a far more drawn-out process.

Comparison of the plots for the same category through time reveals further significant features. For the arable group, though there is a marked time-lag between

²⁷ *Ibid*, pp 63-93.

²⁸ This point was developed more fully in a paper entitled 'Structural Change in Eighteenth-Century English Agriculture', presented to the *Permanent European Conference for the Study of the Rural Landscape*, Rastede, 1985, and to be published in the *Proceedings* (forthcoming, 1987).

²⁹ These figures may be marginally affected by those awards containing substantial amounts of unspecified land.

³⁰ The limits of the boxes are represented by the 'hinges', or quartiles. See P F Velleman and D C Hoaglin, *Applications, Basics, and Computing of Exploratory Data Analysis*, Boston, Mass, 1981, pp 73-74 and 79-81. The values outside the boxes have been omitted for clarity. The notches included on the diagram give an indication of the confidence levels of the conclusions, but only for comparisons between any two pairs. See R McGill, J W Tukey and W G Larsen, 'Variations of Box Plots', *The American Statistician*, 32, 1978, pp 12-16.

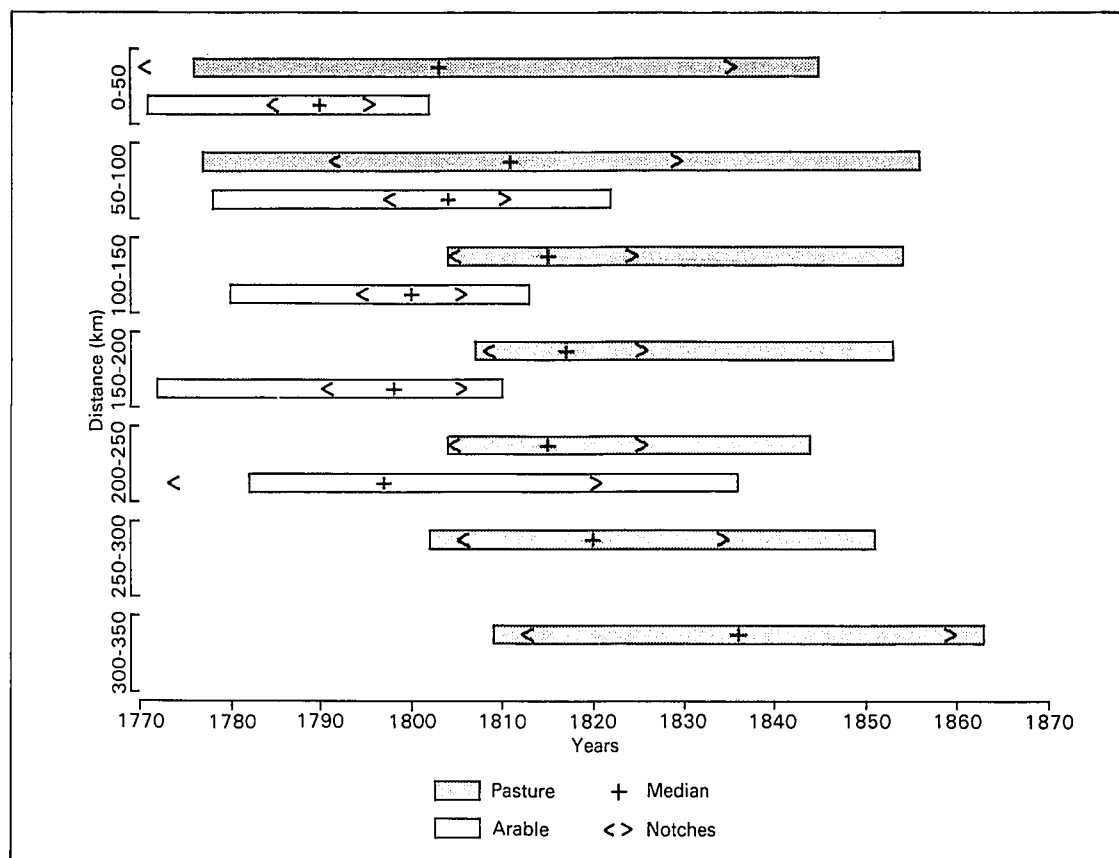


FIGURE 4

the centre and the next ring, subsequent rings show an almost identical median date. In contrast, the waste group shows a general increase in date with distance. Thus it would seem that the use of Parliamentary means to enclose open field, though it began earlier in the midland core, spread rapidly to all parts of the country, with distance from that core being of no significance; for waste enclosures, on the other hand, the further the area to be enclosed lay from the core, the longer the delay in enclosing was likely to be.

Taken together, these two conclusions inevitably mean that the time lag between arable and waste enclosures widened with distance. As can be seen from the boxplots, the main part of the arable movement within the central core can be dated to 1771, with waste following only five years later; similarly the median dates are only thirteen years apart. In the 200 to 250 kilometre band,

however, the beginning of the main arable movement may be dated at 1782, twenty-two years before the waste, and the time-lag of the median values is eighteen years.

V

In summary, a number of suggestions about the nature of the Parliamentary enclosure process emerge from this investigation. First, it would seem that the total amount of land affected by the movement, and even the amount of open or common land actually enclosed, was somewhat larger than most of the published figures would suggest. Secondly, it is clear that the movement, taken as a whole, was principally concerned with land reclamation, and the reorganization of open arable into compact, individually held plots was a secondary feature. The enclosures of the Midland open field

belt, often regarded as the 'typical' enclosures, are unrepresentative. Thirdly, arable dominated the early part of the movement, though to nothing like the extent to which waste dominated the later; from the start of the Napoleonic Wars onwards the waste was the principal target of the enclosers. Fourthly, the patterns of enclosure for mainly arable and mainly waste enclosures show significant regional differences, with the former tending to occur throughout the country at roughly the same date, apart from a small core area, whereas the latter lagged markedly with distance.

These conclusions must emphasize the need for caution in seeking general explanations for the Parliamentary enclosure movement. Many of the recent macro-level analyses have tended to focus almost exclusively upon the utility or otherwise of the open fields, and the consequent advantages and disadvantages of their abolition.³¹ If, however, common and waste dominated the movement, as this paper has attempted to demonstrate, the whole question of the functioning of the open fields, though important, becomes of lesser significance. Much of the explanation for the general form of the Parliamentary enclosure movement must be sought in factors encouraging an extension of the cultivated acreage.

However, the different patterns of field and waste enclosure might suggest that the movement was not one but two, and that two different explanatory frameworks are required. The clustering of most field enclosures within a relatively short timespan would appear to answer one of the principal criticisms raised by Dahlman against the work of Cohen and Weizman and of McCloskey, namely that if the open field system reached some sudden crisis point landowners would have reacted rapidly.³²

Most appear to have done so, especially since it can be shown that some apparent laggards had in fact been attempting to obtain enclosures for long periods before the final passing of the acts, but had been delayed by local complications.³³ It may therefore be postulated that open-field agriculture was generally under stress by the 1760s,³⁴ and that once the concept of using an act of Parliament had become firmly established in the minds of landowners, it was adopted nationwide. As for the initiation of the use of acts of Parliament in the Midland core, the evidence from this work would support Turner's contention that the system was under particular stress in this area, and that here shortage of pasture was the trigger.³⁵ Certainly the vast majority of the early sample in the Midlands was characterized by very small areas of common waste, and any desire to exploit a market for stock products on a large scale would have made enclosure imperative.

For waste enclosure, any explanation must incorporate an attempt to account for some element of spatial diffusion through time. The mechanisms responsible for this are not clear, but since some waste was normally included in field enclosures the idea must have been widely familiar in the Midlands at an early date. Its transfer to mainly waste enclosures would thus have been a minor and obvious step. Elsewhere, where open fields were relatively more sparsely distributed, the procedures for Parliamentary enclosure were often unfamiliar at an early date, and outside landowners had to instruct their local agents in how to go about the business.³⁶ In these areas, no general body of local expertise was built up by the occasional early field enclosures; nor were the wastes – large moorlands, for

³¹ e.g. D N McCloskey, 'The Enclosure of Open Fields', *Journal of Economic History*, 32, 1972, pp 15–35.

³² C J Dahlman, *The Open Field System and Beyond*, Cambridge, 1980, pp 58–64; J S Cohen and M L Weizman, 'Enclosures and depopulation: a Marxian analysis', in Parker and Jones, *European Peasants and Their Markets*, pp 161–178; McCloskey, 'The Economics of Enclosure'.

³³ See, for example, J Chapman, 'The Parliamentary Enclosures of West Sussex', *Southern History*, 2, 1980, pp 85–87.

³⁴ The relative merits of the explanations for this offered by Cohen and Weizman and by McCloskey are beyond the scope of this paper.

³⁵ Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosure*, pp 145–151.

³⁶ e.g. West Tanfield. North Yorkshire County Record Office, associated papers to enclosure.

example – necessarily very similar in physical character to the commons absorbed as part of the open field system. It may be postulated that actual demonstrations of the effectiveness of enclosure of commons *in the locality* were necessary to stimulate a major enclosure movement, and that this idea spread but slowly.

Such suggestions do not negate the idea that the overall form of the process was stimulated by, for example, interest rates,³⁷

nor do they deny the obvious truth that the decision as to when to enclose, or indeed whether to do so, was ultimately made for each locality by individuals, on the basis of their own judgements and perceptions. However, neither of these explanations on its own would appear to offer a satisfactory explanation of the patterns presented here and these speculations might help to fill the gap.

³⁷ McCloskey, 'The Economics of Enclosure'.

Notes on Contributors

MR SIMON A C PENN read medieval and modern history at the University of Birmingham before receiving an SSRC research studentship enabling him to work towards a PhD thesis on fourteenth-century Bristol. The thesis is now in the final stages of completion. Until recently he was a research fellow at the University of Birmingham working on a study of wage-earners and wage-earning in late fourteenth-century England. This forms part of the ESRC research programme on the history of prices and incomes in pre-industrial England.

DR GAVIN BOWIE works for the Hampshire County Museum Service, and is currently curator of the new Eastleigh Museum, which opened last year. He has been researching into and lecturing about aspects of modern agricultural history since 1978, mainly in his spare time. He has just completed an assessment of the role and function of watermeadows in the rural economy of Wessex, 1640–1850, and is currently investigating the world of enriching and exciting manures in English agriculture in the first half of the nineteenth century.

DR JOHN CHAPMAN is a Senior Lecturer in Geography at Portsmouth Polytechnic. He has published papers on the development of the Portsmouth area and has undertaken research on agricultural change in Britain in the nineteenth century. For some years his principal research has been concerned with a nation-wide survey of Parliamentary enclosure, and has produced a number of articles on this topic.

DR E J T COLLINS is Director of the Institute of Agricultural History and Museum of English Rural Life, and member of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Management in the University of Reading. Having published extensively on modern British agricultural history, notably on labour and technology, he is currently editing volume VII of the *Cambridge Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1850–1914*, and completing his research project on the history of agricultural edge tools, and a historical and contemporary survey of five agricultural estates in southern and midland England for the Ernest Cook Trust.

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