

Crown Property and the Land Market in South-East Wales in the Sixteenth Century¹

By MADELEINE GRAY

IT IS now nearly twenty years since John Kew disrupted the placid lives of those engaged in the compilation of interminable theses on 'The dispersal of monastic land' (or, more recently, 'of Crown land') 'in Blankshire' with his declaration that it was pointless to study the market in Crown property in isolation from the land market as a whole.² From his findings on the land market in Devon it appeared that conclusions on the social and economic mobility of individuals and groups based on their acquisition of Crown land might grossly misrepresent the true position since they ignored the extent to which such individuals and groups may have sold other property, whether to invest in Crown land or for other reasons, and also fail to take account of the purchase of land from other sources by different individuals or groups. Dr Kew was fortunate in that his chosen county had not only ample collections of private deeds but also a unique set of Quarter Sessions enrolments of conveyances by bargain and sale under the Statute of Enrolments. In the absence of such sources, particularly in the counties of the north and west where even private deeds for this period are scarce, historians have continued to study the market in Crown property as a

well-documented segment of the whole land market, though with increasing awareness of the limited scope of their findings.

The paucity of sources is particularly unfortunate since we have no justification for assuming that the pattern of landholding and land ownership which prevailed in the better-documented lowland areas of south-east England necessarily extended to the upland zone of the north and west; this is even more so for Wales, where the Acts of Union of 1536 and 1543 were only partly successful in imposing English land law in a country whose concepts of land ownership were, in theory, completely different. It is possible to supplement the information on this area from deeds enrolled in central courts of record, notably those on the dorse of the Close Rolls,³ but these enrolments are uncalendared and largely unindexed and as a result present considerable difficulties to the researcher. One way of approaching the problem, the approach which has been adopted in this study, seemed to be to use these enrolled deeds and such estate papers as have survived to place the acquisition of Crown land by local families in the context of their acquisitions from other sources and the development and administration of their whole estates. Such an approach would be facilitated by the brief indexes to the Close Rolls compiled at the time of enrolment, which index purchasers of property throughout the sixteenth century and vendors after 1574. To confine the study to

¹ This article is based on the writer's thesis 'The dispersal of Crown property in Monmouthshire, 1500-1603', Wales PhD 1984 ch. 3 (ii). For details of the process by which the Crown's estate in the county was sold off, see ch. 3 (i) of the same thesis. The old county name of Monmouthshire has been used throughout, as Gwent, historically speaking, refers only to part of the modern county of that name, and most sources relate to the old county boundaries.

² 'The land market in Devon, 1536-1558', Exeter PhD thesis, 1967; see also *idem*, 'The disposal of Crown lands and the Devon land market, 1536-58', *Ag Hist Rev* 1970, 93-105.

³ For a more detailed study of these, see the present writer's article 'The Close Rolls as a source for sixteenth-century history', *Archives* xvii no. 75, April 1986.

individuals who were involved in the market for Crown land begs important questions about the state of the land market as a whole, but at present it seems the only way of tackling the development of land ownership, even in a restricted area, over a fairly lengthy time span. The alternative would be to take a larger geographical area and a shorter time span and to scan all the Close Rolls for that period, extracting any references to the chosen area. It is to be hoped that, when the importance of enrolled deeds as evidence for changes in the structure of local society has been understood, local record societies may also feel inclined to calendar those deeds relating to their own areas to make them available for more detailed study.

There is also a need for more detailed studies of the market in Crown property after it left Crown hands in order to determine its impact on the local market and the structure of society. Some of the evidence suggests that landowners were more willing to resell land which they had bought than inherited land, though this runs counter to Kew's conclusion that many Devonshire families sold their patrimony in order to invest in Crown land. In either case, the injection of Crown land must have had an effect on the local market, leading to at least some increase in trading.

Studies of subsequent dealings in Crown land should also enable us to disentangle the genuinely local property market from the activities of dealers and speculators. No accurate impression can be obtained of the velocity and significance of the local market when the picture is confused by the activities of outsiders who traded in land as a commodity without social significance. This distinction between commercial dealing and the local market is both more important and more difficult to draw when the dealer was also a local landowner acting on his own behalf as well as that of friends or neighbours. It is in any case difficult to draw a firm line between speculators and

investors in land; a speculative purchase of land for resale had the incidental advantage that if the property remained unsold it would still produce some profit, while a property bought as an investment might well be regarded as available for resale at the right price. The subsequent history of the property and a knowledge of the purchaser's other activities may throw some light on this question of the original grantee's attitude to his purchase.

There is still debate, however, on how much further the dispersal of this property should be traced through the local land market. On the one hand, Joyce Youings has argued that it may be misleading to take too long a view of the history of former monastic property, as it was soon absorbed into the local market and, if subsequently returned to the Crown, was described in official records not as ex-monastic property but as the property of the most recent owner. Its resale was thus of no more significance than any other private land transaction. On the other hand, as Joyce Youings herself points out, it is vitally important to pursue the history of ownership to discover the genuine purchasers of property⁴ and in the case of speculative purchases this may involve looking at transactions some years after the initial grant.⁵ It was originally intended to end the present study in 1603 but several significant trends from Elizabeth's reign were found to have continued at least until the 1620s, notably the Crown's gradual abdication of control over the processes of land alienation and the increasing power and initiative of agents and dealers. Unfortunately, lack of time prevented an exhaustive study of the relevant sources for this period: they are in

⁴ *The Dissolution of the Monasteries*, London 1971, pp 19, 130-3; *ibid.*, pp 126-9.

⁵ E.g. the property in Mounton granted in fee farm to Ralph Crewe and Richard Cartwright on 28 Oct 1598, sold by them to Richard Budd on 29 Nov and by Budd to David Phillips, apparently a local man, on 27 July 1613; Public Record Office, C/66/1492 mm 14-19, Gwent Record Office (hereafter GwRO) D.501.452. References are to documents in the Public Record Office unless otherwise stated.

any case less fully listed, and some sources such as particulars for grants and leases, enrolments and other copies of leases, are scarce after 1603. It was therefore decided to confine the study for statistical purposes to the years 1500–1603, while giving consideration in more general discussions to developments in the early seventeenth century.

I

There was virtually no dealing in former Crown property in Monmouthshire in the earlier phases of its dispersal when grants were made, usually on generous terms, in response to individual petitions. Gifts and concessionary grants were obviously less likely to be resold, and there was no scope for agents or middlemen to become involved in these transactions. It does, however, give some indication of the stability of the estates established or augmented by the Crown's generosity and suggests that the Crown's gifts were generally used for estate-building rather than for profit. Even the manor of Llanfair, given to Winifred Hastings by Mary and always forming a remote part of the estates of her husbands, Sir Thomas Hastings, brother of the Earl of Huntingdon, and Sir Thomas Barrington of Barrington Hall, Essex, was retained by her family until 1614 when it was sold by her grandson to Nicholas Kemeys of Caldicot.⁶

Some alienation of monastic land had been envisaged in the two dissolution statutes and in the act which set up the Court of Augmentations, but the scale of dispersal changed in 1539 with the issue of the first of a series of commissions for the sale of land at the full market price, initially twenty times the net annual value. The advent of free sales under these commissions encouraged purchases by local gentry and lesser landholders who were unwilling or unable to master the intricacies of a purchase

through the Court of Augmentations or to live in London while the lengthy process was completed. These problems could be dealt with by purchase through a courtier or official or through or in partnership with a more knowledgeable neighbour who was also buying for himself. Thus Giles Morgan made his modest purchase of the site and lands of Newport Friary through Sir Edward Carne, who was also buying for himself. Roger Williams bought on behalf of himself, his brother-in-law and several neighbours in 1544 but exchanged land with the Crown through the Earl of Pembroke in 1553. William Morgan began by buying through the Earl of Bedford, rapidly graduated to buying in his own name and in 1563 took John Morris, another Monmouthshire gentleman, into partnership for a purchase for themselves and several others. But the more usual solution was to hand over either the securing of the grant or even the whole process of suing out and rating particulars to one or more agents. Sales by commission also opened a way to investors buying land as a disposable asset to be managed or resold for profit. There was little enough of this in the country as a whole and even less in Monmouthshire, but the activities of a few such 'speculators' did give the local land market a little more flexibility by providing a small reservoir of land available for resale to those who were not prepared to buy from the Crown even through agents as well as to local landowners buying to consolidate an estate. Often these investors or speculators were the same men who were buying as agents for others, and it can be wellnigh impossible to decide in what capacity they were acting in any one transaction. Nor can we assume that any of the dealers or agents known to have bought Crown property confined themselves to this limited sector of the market, though we may suspect that was where they were most active because their skills were most needed and that there their greatest profits lay.

⁶ GwRO D.435.264.

These profits, where they can be ascertained, ranged from modest to astronomical, and in some cases at least the implication is that the valuation the Crown put on its property was a gross underestimate. However, the losses which some purchasers made, and the fact that well-placed men like David Lewis, the Admiralty judge, chose to buy from dealers rather than from the Crown, argue another side to the picture. The length of time taken to purchase land from the Crown might equally deter the provincial landowner and the busy Government official. Even when fees and expenses were separately paid for, the purchaser gained in the economies of scale of a single large purchase and in the expertise of the agent. This was particularly important when the rating of properties became negotiable. Richard Budd, the most important of the agents active in Wales in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, was able to advise on prices, availability and the best time to negotiate, check on the existence of reversionary leases on property and look out for and circumvent other prospective purchasers, as well as knowing who to bribe and how.⁷ Purchase through an agent or speculator might also extend the time available for repayment. When Leonard Meyrick bought the Llandegfedd chantry lands from Richard Budd he paid in six-monthly instalments over a period of five years.⁸ This advice and financial assistance was particularly useful to the smaller purchasers; indeed, without it, few of the minor gentry, yeomen and artisans who bought Crown land in South Wales would have been able to tackle the complexities involved in dealing with Chancery and the Exchequer.

II

In what was to emerge as a characteristic pattern, however, and in spite of the

activities of these dealers, the land market in Monmouthshire was slow at first in its response to Crown stimulus and it was not until 1543, four years after the first commission, that the Crown sold any land in the county for cash. By this time, changes were being made in the conditions of sale of the property, changes which should have facilitated the development of a commercial market in Crown land.⁹ By January 1547, however, in spite of its apparent determination to dispose of its property for cash, the Crown had sold land worth only £310 a year net in Monmouthshire, 27 per cent of the total held or acquired during Henry VIII's reign. This is a remarkably low figure: even when all secular property is removed from the calculation the amount of monastic land alienated is only fractionally over 45 per cent of the total acquired. Moreover £101 of this had been alienated in fee farm and was therefore still producing at least some income for the Crown. Outright alienations of monastic land amounted to only £209 yearly, 30 per cent of the total revenue from this source. This is a striking contrast to figures which have been produced for the whole nation ranging from 'over half' to as much as seven-eighths¹⁰ and to the situation in Glamorgan where 'more than half' had been sold by 1547.¹¹ No figures are available for other Welsh counties but the impression gained from reading H A Lloyd and G Dyfnallt Owen¹² is that sales in West Wales were equally slow. Even after the massive alienation to the Earl of Pembroke during Edward VI's reign less than two-thirds of the available land in Monmouthshire had gone. These figures do not indicate an acute shortage of land in the county, nor a correspondingly intense desire to acquire what was available: nor do

⁷ National Library of Wales (hereafter NLW) MSS 9054E no. 518, 9055E nos. 649, 656, 662.

⁸ NLW, Llangibby Castle A.941, 24 Oct. 1611.

⁹ For details of these changes and their effects see, e.g., Joyce Youings, *The Dissolution of the Monasteries*, London, 1971, ch. 5 and references therein.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 117-18; R B Pugh, *The Crown estate: an historical essay*, 1960, p. 10.

¹¹ Glanmor Williams, *Welsh Reformation Essays*, Cardiff, 1967, p. 100.

¹² *The gentry of south-west Wales, 1540-1640*, Cardiff, 1968, pp. 31-40.

they provide any evidence of the rampant speculation imagined by Tawney. Once the special grants to the Earls of Worcester and Pembroke are removed, we are left with a fairly steady trickle of purchases from 1543, peaking in 1546 and again in 1553 but at no point becoming a flood.

There were no outright sales of Crown land in 1547, and response to the commission for sales of chantry land in April 1548 was as usual slow. It was not until July that James Gunter, acting for the rector of Llanwenarth, sued out particulars for £1 6s 8d worth of chantry land in Llandeilo and Llanwenarth.¹³ Chantry land was generally slow to sell in Monmouthshire, in sharp contrast to the unrestrained competition for such property in London and the south-east.¹⁴ Of a total of about £70 net acquired from this source £40 1s worth had been sold by 1553, but £34 2s 6d of this was comprised in one grant to William Herbert and had already been returned to the Crown by 1553. Several reasons have been suggested for this. Chantry property consisting of small tenements and fragments of land may have been overpriced. It is difficult to see a pattern in the few available particulars but rates varied from 24 years' purchase in 1548 to 20 in 1549 and 1550 and 23 in 1553, with William Herbert of course securing the lowest rating on his grant in 1551. As the chantries had been valued more recently than the monastic estates and values should not therefore have been seriously affected by inflation, these rates were possibly rather high. Furthermore at this date it is probable that the likely purchasers of small chantry tenements, the minor gentry and yeomanry and the townspeople, had neither the resources nor the initiative to seek out land for investment. Monmouthshire had no land agents as enterprising as John Bellow, the Augmentations surveyor for the East

Riding of Yorkshire, who went about his area proclaiming publicly that 'yf any woolde bye any lande, the king was disposed to sell landes and he [Bellow] woold help them to hit'.¹⁵ James Gunter dealt extensively on his own behalf and that of others, including some of the leading local gentry, but his own financial position was at times precarious. He could ill afford to allow his clients time to repay the money he had spent on their behalf, and the high prices he charged in most of his resales put his services beyond the reach of the minor landowner. It was not until the end of the century, when the benefits of the economic revival in Wales had become fully apparent, that men like Richard Budd were prepared to encourage small purchasers by offering them facilities for payment by instalments and to buy small parcels of land on their own account for sale to such purchasers.

By 1565 most of the large and consolidated properties had been sold. The existing gentry families were presumably satisfied and the available capital and initiative for the establishment of new estates had apparently been mopped up. Further grants and sales consisted mainly of smaller monastic properties and fragments of chantry land. The initial recipients of these grants were in most cases courtiers and their nominees or agents and dealers. Some smaller properties went to round off and consolidate existing large estates but an increasing number were eventually resold to the minor gentry (who in South Wales were very minor; some may have been buying their first property in fee) and even to yeomen. Such purchasers could be found in the 1540s and 1550s but now for the first time they became numerous, thanks partly to their increased wealth and partly to the enabling activities of agents and dealers. It was during this period also that individual urban tenements became popular, although

¹³ 'Agrarian conditions and changes in West Wales in the sixteenth century with special reference to monastic and chantry lands', Wales PhD thesis, 1935, pp 366-88.

¹⁴ E/318/1461: grant to Thos. Butcher and Henry Tanner, 9 Sept., C/66/811 mm 53-55.

¹⁵ C J Kitching, 'The disposal of monastic and chantry lands' in Heal and O'Day, eds, *Church and society in England, Henry VIII to James I*, 1977, pp 119-36 (p 133).

many were not sold until the early seventeenth century. Most of those whose descent can be traced passed through the hands of agents and dealers to the burgesses, tradesmen and minor town gentry, men like Richard Clayton of Chepstow and Maurice Nicholas of Newport, the latter being already tenant of much of the property which he bought in 1604.¹⁶

The activities of agents and dealers may well give a false impression of an active land market, especially when land passed through the hands of several dealers or partnerships before finding a permanent owner.¹⁷ As far as local society is concerned, however, it is more important to discover how much land was bought and sold after having reached a buyer (probably, though not necessarily, a local man) who regarded it as a long-term investment. There were of course many instances of property remaining with the Crown's grantee; indeed, because those who received most, the peers and the more enterprising gentry, were also those best able to negotiate their own grants, these instances dominate in terms of the value of the land acquired though not of the number of grants. Of a total of 85 grants worth £951 8s, 27 included at least some property retained by the original grantee and at least some of the property in 58 is known or believed to have been sold, but the property known to have been retained by the grantee or his direct descendants until 1603 amounted to £724 14s or 76 per cent of the total.¹⁸ A further £149 14s worth is only known to have been resold once and over £100 of this is known to have remained with the descendants of its last identified purchaser until 1603, though some was

resold soon after. Property worth £12 10s was sold at least twice, three properties worth a total of £14¹⁹ were resold three times and a few smaller properties worth £5 3s were resold four times. No property can be shown to have changed hands by sale more than four times between its alienation by the Crown and 1603. When the activities of agents and middlemen are disregarded a staggering 87 per cent of property sold by the Crown during this period is known to have remained with the descendants of its original purchaser until 1603.²⁰

It is particularly difficult to ascertain whether there was any difference in dispersal patterns between larger and smaller properties. Larger properties — secular and monastic manors, substantial demesnes and granges — were more often given or sold directly to the intending purchaser, and were granted subject to tenure in chief. They will therefore appear in licences to alienate and inquisitions post mortem and their ownership through the century can be checked. Smaller properties give the impression of being more mobile as they may have passed through the hands of several agents or speculators before reaching a permanent owner. As they were commonly sold under socage tenure after 1544 their subsequent ownership can be virtually impossible to trace. Subject to these restrictions, however, and to several exceptions, the general impression from those smaller properties which were alienated early and therefore held by tenure in chief, or whose history has been preserved by the fortuitous survival of their deeds, is that the market for smaller properties was freer than that for the more important manors, granges and rectories. The latter, if they changed hands at all, were more likely to do so by the demographic processes of the failure of

¹⁶ C.J. Kitching, 'Studies in the redistribution of collegiate and chantry property in the diocese and county of York at the Dissolution', Durham PhD thesis, 1970, p. 114.

¹⁷ C/66/1581 mm 1-13; C/54/1713, 1770; NLW TP/91/92.

¹⁸ The manor of Courtfield in Welsh Bicknor, at that time a detached portion of Monmouthshire, was sold by the Crown to two London gentlemen, Thomas Reve and George Cotton, on 14 March 1553, sold by them to John Pollard of Nuneham Courtenay in Oxfordshire and Thomas Mynde on 30 March and by Pollard and Mynde to Edward Campion of Welsh Bicknor in 1555: C/66/857 mm 17-21, C/54/492 no 40, NLW Courtfield 239.

¹⁹ These figures exclude assignments between parties, redeemed mortgages and settlements: they have been corrected to the nearest shilling.

²⁰ Including the rectory of Monmouth, which was twice shared between partners but with only three complete changes of ownership.

male heirs and the marriage of heiresses, which is arguably only a change of name and not of ownership. We cannot therefore assume that the lack of movement in the market for Crown land reflects a similar sluggishness in the rest of the land market, in which small properties were more likely to predominate.²¹ Only a detailed study of all land transactions in the county could prove or disprove this assumption, and such a study is very likely impossible because of the paucity of surviving original deeds.

III

Deeds and enrolments are even more scarce for assignments of leases, and in their absence it is difficult to reach any conclusions at all about the extent or significance of dealing in leases. Agents are known to have been active in this area of the property market but their methods can only be illustrated by examples from other counties.²² As for private dealing in leases, all that can be said is that of identifiable properties leased more than once (a fraction of the total) and excluding leases to agents, leases in reversion and head-leases of whole estates including property already held by lease, 16 leases rented at £296 2s (53 per cent of the total) were renewed to the lessees or their heirs; 14, rented at £126 2s (23 per cent of the total) were renewed to the assignees of the first lessee; and 14 leases, rented at £134 2s (24 per cent of the total), were made to persons having no known connection with the first lessee. Mesne assignments are seldom recited in Crown leases and the survival of leases and assignments from this period is even more fortuitous than that of conveyances, but the existence of three

further assignments rented at a total of £21 18s and not mentioned in the subsequent grants may suggest a more active market than that indicated by the Crown's records. Even the lower figures, if representative, show that the market for leases was appreciably greater than that for land held in fee. This accords with the suggestion that the stability of the land market was largely due to a prejudice against selling land. The average size of leases renewed to the lessee and his heirs is almost exactly twice that of leases granted or renewed to others, providing some possible evidence for the greater stability of larger estates in this area, whatever the picture may be for the whole country. H A Lloyd suggests²³ that the gentry of south-west Wales preferred to deal in leases because they lacked the capital to invest in purchasing land, but the only consideration which has survived for the assignment of a Crown lease, £200 paid by Edward Kemeys of Cefnmabli to William James of Llanddewi Rhydderch for the residue of his term of 21 years in the rectory of Caldicot at £16 yearly,²⁴ indicates that buying leases on the private market may have been considerably more expensive than buying them from the Crown.

The small percentage of Crown property which changed hands after reaching a genuine purchaser is further reduced by the activities of men like Gunter who bought apparently for themselves but were prepared to sell at a profit. Apart from these transactions, a mere handful of properties was resold in the course of the century. Some of these sales may be explained by financial difficulties. Howell Thomas Lewis had thrice mortgaged his farm at Gregoes in Llantrisant before mortgaging and eventually releasing it to the Earl of Pembroke.²⁵ Robert Brayne's lands in Hadnock and a fishery in the Wye were taken over by his brothers-in-law after his death to

²¹ According to Kew, *art. cit.* and thesis pp 107-12, the land market in Devon was becoming more active in the 1530s before the impact of ex-monastic land, and the private land market consisted mainly of smaller properties.

²² E G Jones, ed, *Exchequer proceedings (Equity) concerning Wales, Henry VIII-Elizabeth*, Cardiff, 1939, p 120, T I Jeffreys Jones, ed, *Exchequer proceedings concerning Wales in tempore James I*, Cardiff, 1955, pp 233, 238 for Richard Budd's securing of leases for clients in Carmarthenshire and Merionethshire; Gwynedd RO, E.R.D.9 for a lease apparently taken by him on his own account and reassigned six months later.

²³ *The gentry of south-west Wales...* pp 39-40.

²⁴ LR1/233 f 22.

²⁵ C/66/1335 m 25, C/54/638 no 91, 765 no 49, C/66/1064 m 44.

reimburse themselves for their payment of his debts.²⁶ The strange circumstances of Andrew Powell's bargain and sale of the tithes of Monkswood and Stavarney to the Earl of Worcester for £40 in return for a lease to Powell and Andrew Jones for their lives may also indicate necessity rather than profit.²⁷ Gregory Price may have been forced to sell his property in Llangatwg feibion afel, Rockfield and Llanfihangel ystum llewern (formerly of Monmouth priory) at a loss in 1564,²⁸ but he is not known to have been in difficulties at that time and he may have been getting rid of an unsuccessful investment in order to buy property nearer the centre of his estates in Hereford and Brecon. The circumstances of the other sales are not known. In all, Crown property worth a total of £32 5s (3.4 per cent of the total sold) at 1536 prices is known to have changed hands by sale after reaching its first genuine purchaser. As some properties changed hands more than once the total value of these transactions is in fact £38 8s. This compares with £64 15s worth which changed hands as a result of demographic processes, the failure of male heirs to the Gwilym of Whitfield and Welsh Bicknor; Brayne; Herbert of St Julians; and Herbert of Wonastow and Grace Dieu estates and their transfer to the husbands of the heiresses; the remarriage of Winifred Hastings; and the deaths without heirs of cadet members of the Somerset family. The low proportion of resales testifies both to the reluctance of local landowners to sell land except as a last resort and to the remarkable stability and endurance of estates established out of Crown property. It is more difficult to explain the low rate of change of ownership as a result of failure of heirs without comparable figures for other estates not including Crown lands and without invoking

Divine approval for the beneficiaries of the Dissolution. Obviously, the longer the perspective one takes, the greater the number of families selling up or dying out, but the fact of sacrilege according to Spelman does not seem to have had any appreciable effect on Monmouthshire by 1603. It would certainly be rash to assume that these statistics would be reflected in the private land market. Kew found that in Devon more land was transferred by female inheritance and marriage than by sale before 1536 and that the figures were roughly equal from 1536 to 1558, but in both cases his figures are appreciably higher than those for Monmouthshire.²⁹

A longer perspective would also make more clear the process by which much of this land was absorbed into a few major estates, a process which did not reach its culmination until the eighteenth century.³⁰ Its small beginnings can be seen in the acquisition of the advowson of Llangybi by the lord of the manor, Roger Williams, and by a few transactions of the Somerset family. The site and lands of St Kynemark's Priory in the Earl of Worcester's lordship of Chepstow were sold by John Farnham to a younger son of the second earl, Thomas Somerset, on whose death without issue in 1586 they appear to have passed to the third earl.³¹ In 1596 the fourth earl acquired the tithes of Stavarney and Monkswood, the area covered by Tintern's Pelleni grange which he already held. In 1588 another brother of the third earl purchased from Walter Spicer and his assignees three-quarters of the rectory of Monmouth, which he devised to his nephew the fourth earl.³² The remaining quarter was bought by the fourth earl's younger son, Sir Charles

²⁶ C/66/1081 mm 34-35, 1113 mm 15-16, 1432 m 6, 1436 m 17; C/66/1091 mm 7-8, C/54/795, C/66/1411 m 4, 1480 mm 37-38; *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society*, vii, 1882-83, 237-44.

²⁷ NLW Badminton II, 9980, 2 May 1596.

²⁸ C/54/681 no 51.

²⁹ *art. cit.*

³⁰ Peter Roberts, 'The decline of the Welsh squires in the eighteenth century', *National Library of Wales Journal* xiii, 1963-64, 157-69; H J Habakkuk, 'English landownership, 1680-1740', *Econ Hist Rev* x, 1940, 2-17; F M L Thompson, 'The social distribution of property in England since the sixteenth century', *Econ Hist Rev*, 2nd ser, xix, 1966, 505-17.

³¹ NLW Badminton 52, LR6/141/9.

³² NLW Badminton 8141, C/142/266/12.

Somerset of Troy, in 1610, and also appears to have passed into the Raglan estate.³³ The process continued in the early seventeenth century with the fourth earl's acquisition of the rectories of Cilgoegan and Newchurch and the tithes of Raglan.³⁴

Of more significance in the sixteenth century, however, was the way in which smaller estates could be built up or augmented by second-hand purchases of Crown property. David Lewis was already a Master in Chancery and Member of Parliament for the county in 1554 when he made his first purchase of former Crown land in Abergavenny but he always dealt at second hand or through agents. At his death in 1584 he left a respectable estate including the manor of Llwyn-ddu (bought from James Gunter's son in 1564) and some land in Abergavenny formerly of the priory, as well as the manor of Llanddewi Rhydderch and other property in Abergavenny, Llanwenarth and Llandeilo Bertholau acquired from other sources.³⁵ Later in the century the Aldey family of Hardwick, who had already leased property in Hardwick from the Crown and had accumulated a number of conventual leases, substantially augmented their estate by a series of purchases of Crown land in Hardwick, Chepstow and Moun-ton from Richard Budd.³⁶

By this time no great distinction was being made between Crown and other land; the purchaser looked for land which suited his purposes and bought what was available from any source. However, Crown land still offered advantages to the aspiring estate-builder. By the end of the sixteenth century

the land differed little from that on the private market but it was more readily available. Even in the intervals between commissions there was the possibility of arranging a purchase through a grantee in fee farm or by exchange or from the stock of land held by a dealer. The purchaser still had a reasonable choice of land from these sources. Even when land was sold many years after its initial grant and by someone who had originally bought with the intention of retaining his purchase, it is quite likely that a vendor could more easily be persuaded to sell land he had bought than land part of his patrimony. The inquisitions post mortem for the county contain examples of similar estates built up piecemeal from private land³⁷ but this was inevitably a longer and more painstaking process and likely to result in a more fragmented estate. The market in private property does appear to have expanded by the end of the sixteenth century. This may have been influenced by the market in Crown property, either through the activities of landowners selling other estates in order to buy from the Crown or from the general example of a market in one sort of land encouraging the buying and selling of land in general. However, the nature and extent of these influences could only be established by a full study of the local land market and, as explained above, this would be difficult if not impossible.

IV

Lack of information also makes it difficult to establish the extent to which purchasers of Crown land were also involved in the market for other property: indeed, one of the continuing justifications for studies of the market in Crown property is that, in South Wales at least, other property is so poorly documented. It seems that, as far as Monmouthshire was concerned, the London-based agents confined themselves

³³ NLW Badminton 8142; cf J A Bradney, *A History of Monmouthshire*, 1904-33, vol. i p 11

³⁴ NLW Badminton II 11451, 1 Oct 1603, 9526, 26 Mar. 1606, 10735, 1 Sept. 1612.

³⁵ C/66/1028 mm 33-34; Bradney, *op. cit.* vol. i p. 283; C/54/1187; C/142/244/95; for his dealings in other lands see, e.g., C.54/857, 913, 917, 957 (no mm nos); for a recent biography see S T Bindoff, ed, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1509-1558*, 1982, vol. II pp 524-25

³⁶ E/309/17 Eliz./12 no. 28; LR2/237 ff. 31-42; C/54/1468, 1710, 1772, 2163 nos. 6, 7, 8, 9; see Bradney, *op. cit.* vol IV pp 20-21 for their other estates in Hardwick.

³⁷ E.g. C/142/249/58, 493/103.

to dealing in Crown land, though some are known to have bought other land elsewhere, possibly for retention by themselves.³⁸ As one would expect, most of the major purchasers of Crown land in Monmouthshire also bought private land, though their other purchases may well have been dwarfed by the size of the estates they bought from the Crown. The Earl of Pembroke dealt on a large scale in both Crown and private land, but his estate was inevitably dominated by the gifts he received during Edward VI's reign. Roger Williams and his descendants bought extensively in Llangybi and elsewhere in the Usk valley, and seem to have paid more to private vendors than they did to the Crown, but their efforts were largely devoted to the consolidation of their existing estates in the area and in particular to buying out some of the numerous freehold tenants on their manor of Tregrug.³⁹ William Morgan's early investments were all in Crown land, but when he bought the manors of Porton and Whitston in 1572 he increased his estates by about a third, and some at least of the other property mentioned in his inquisition post mortem was bought rather than inherited.⁴⁰

These, the principal grantees of Crown land in the county, all began the process of estate-building with gifts or purchases from the Crown, and former Crown land remained the most important part of their holdings. For others, Crown land was significant but not dominant: Sir Thomas Herbert of Wonastow inherited some land from his father and made his first purchase from the Crown but the largest single property in his estate was the manor of Wonastow, bought from his brother's heirs in 1558, and he made several other purchases of land in and near Monmouth from private landowners.⁴¹ Similarly, Giles Morgan of

the Friary, Newport, established himself by his first purchase from the Crown but subsequently bought land worth far more from others.⁴² Some purchasers seem deliberately to have sought out former Crown properties in preference to private land, even when its advantages for building up and consolidating an estate were not immediately apparent. Over a period of ten years, William Morgan bought at first and second hand most of the property formerly of Llantarnam Abbey, including the remote grange of Penrhys in the Rhondda Valley. He considered buying Llystalybont Grange, near Cardiff, but eventually declined, possibly because of shortage of capital. He also failed to persuade the Earl of Pembroke to sell him Mynyddislwyn Grange, though the Earl was willing to part with Wentsland and Bryngwyn, a divided manor which was not so convenient for the rest of his estate.⁴³ For many purchasers, however, the land which the Crown offered for sale was only one part of a range of available options. Dr David Lewis of Abergavenny⁴⁴ and Richard Seyborne of Sutton St Nicholas, Herefordshire, who had bought the manor of Caldicot Priors in 1557,⁴⁵ both invested in Crown and private land at the same time and without apparent discrimination. James Morgan, the lawyer who bought chantry land in Caerleon from William Morgan of Llantarnam for £40 in 1565, subsequently paid £500 to Thomas Parry of Wellford in Berkshire for the manor of Brym and land in Undy and 'Llanvyhangell nether Gwentsland' (Llanfihangel Roggiett).⁴⁶ Walter Aldey bought several parcels of land in Hardwick and Chepstow from and through Richard Budd but bought his mansion and main estate in Hardwick privately.

³⁸ E.g. Richard Budd's purchases in Oxfordshire and Hampshire (C/54/1823 and 1991); see also C/54/451 nos. 23 and 37 for James Gunter's purchases in Abergavenny, Llangatwg Dyffryn Wysg and Llanddewi Rhydderch in 1547.

³⁹ NLW Llangibby Castle *passim*.

⁴⁰ C/54/887; C.142/196/16; Gw.R.O. D.43.5501, 6122.

⁴¹ NLW, Milborne 24, 888, 316.

⁴² NLW, TP/46, 7/1, C.142/155/169.

⁴³ E/318/2445; C/66/993 mm. 28-31 (Penrhys); LR2/84 f. 78 (Llystalybont); C/66/957 mm 4-6, 967 m 32 (Mynyddislwyn, Wentsland and Bryngwyn).

⁴⁴ NLW, Milborne 308; C/54/857, 913, 957, 1187 (1571-84).

⁴⁵ C/142/773/201; Bindoff, *Commons 1509-1558*, III, 285-86.

⁴⁶ C/54/684 no 52, 808 m 7.

As far as the motivation of the individual purchaser is concerned, the acquisition of former Crown land by private conveyance from its previous owner some years after the original grant should probably be considered as a purchase on the private market, but the fact remains that the dispersal of Crown property increased the amount of land on the market as well as providing types of property (tithes, large marcher manors) which would not otherwise have been available. As for those who bought directly from the Crown or through agents or dealers, the young man with an inheritance or marriage portion to spend or the retiring merchant or lawyer wishing to establish his family as landed gentry could invest in large properties and integrated estates and avoid the tedious process of building up a holding from scattered local sales; for the smaller purchaser, more suitable land might well appear on the private market, but the Crown had a wide range of properties always available for those who knew whom to contact. It would not, therefore, be surprising if estate-builders tended to look first to the Crown when buying property.

It is equally difficult to assess the extent to which purchasers of Crown or other land had sold property they already owned in order to raise capital for further investments. Since so many were younger sons or from cadet branches of landed families, they had in any case little that they could sell. According to his marriage settlement, the wealthiest of the major purchasers, William Morgan of Llantarnam, inherited freehold and leasehold property worth about £53 6s 8d a year including his mother's jointure.⁴⁷ Property corresponding to this valuation can be found in his inquisition post mortem and we have no record of substantial sales by him. The money for his initial investment almost certainly came from the dowry of his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Rice

Mansel, who was himself one of the greatest purchasers of Crown land in Glamorgan; William Morgan's marriage settlement specified that the dowry was to be invested in land. He may also have been able to borrow money from his father-in-law to fund further purchases, and he built his estate up slowly so that income from earlier acquisitions may have provided the capital for later investments.

Roger Williams, another minor land-owner who invested heavily in Crown land, appears to have had some legal experience and held office with the Earl of Pembroke and the Court of Augmentations.⁴⁸ His early grants included extensive purchases on behalf of others and the property he intended to keep could have been paid for largely out of his profits on the other transactions.⁴⁹ He alienated his patrimony of Biddhey, in Llangwm, and some of his earlier purchases, in a complicated exchange with the Earl of Pembroke which secured him Usk Priory's scattered 'manor' of Usk and other property in the Usk valley, but his family remained as tenants of Biddhey and his descendants eventually repurchased it. James Gunter, as the younger son of a family of minor local gentry, had even less chance of raising money from his inheritance. Although he was a lawyer and a moderately eminent monastic and Crown official, and although his wife's family were apparently fairly wealthy,⁵⁰ he seems to have needed to deal in land to raise capital to invest for himself. His career also illustrates the limitations of the property market as a means of making money: in spite of his extensive and lucrative dealings, the mortgages to which he was forced to resort suggest that he had difficulty in making enough to retain the land which

⁴⁷ GT Clark, *Cartae et alia munimenta quae ad dominium de Glamorgancia pertinent*, Cardiff, 1910, V, 1987-90.

⁴⁸ Bradney, *op. cit.*, vol III, pp 97-103.

⁴⁹ E/318/1225; C/66/760 mm. 37-38, 764 m 19, 759 m 5; E/318/1769; C/66/820 mm 7-11.

⁵⁰ For his career see Bindoff, *op. cit.*, II, 267-68; for the will of his mother-in-law Elizabeth Wescott see Ida Darlington, ed., *London Consistory Court wills, 1492-1547*, London Record Society, 1967, pp 139-40.

he had bought for himself and raise enough capital for future transactions.

V

Historians of Wales have tended to assume that the county of Monmouthshire was from its creation one of the most developed as well as the most anglicized areas of the country. If the velocity of the land market is any indicator of economic development this judgement may well need revision. Studies of other counties in South Wales indicate that Monmouthshire was less advanced than Glamorgan, where the power of the great lordship of Glamorgan and the rich agricultural lands of the Vale had fostered the development of a gentry élite capable of grasping the advantages offered by economic revival, the Acts of Union and the financial problems of the Crown.⁵¹ Monmouthshire was more like the counties of south-west Wales, less wealthy and apparently less ready to adopt new ways of seeking wealth.⁵² It may be, however, that it was Glamorgan which was the anomaly and that Monmouthshire was more typical both of Wales and of the north and west of England, areas which have been neglected in studies of this kind because of the sparseness and difficulty of the evidence.

Judged against other areas in which the market in Crown land has been studied in detail, Monmouthshire was perhaps even more atypical in the comparatively low social class of the eventual purchasers of that property. True, two of the county's peers, the Earls of Worcester and Pembroke, got the lion's share; but the senior representatives of the county's leading families — the Herberts of Troy, the Morgans of Machen, Tredegar and Pencoed — bought little and late, and almost invariably at second and third hand. The only member of the county élite to make extensive purchases direct

from the Crown was George Herbert of Wonastow, and even he was at the time of his first and largest investment a younger brother with no certainty of inheriting the family estate. The other major purchasers were all lesser gentry, younger sons or members of cadet branches of the greater families. It was impossible to be a gentleman in Wales at that time and not to claim descent from a handful of royal houses and kinship with the leaders of local society, but in terms of land owned and offices held the men who profited from the dispersal of Crown property in Monmouthshire were of surprisingly low status. Even the Earl of Pembroke was the younger son of a gentleman from the Welsh district of Herefordshire and received much of his Monmouthshire land while he was still Sir William Herbert and a courtier.⁵³

The reasons for this are difficult to establish. Explanations of individual cases are possible, but do not account for the general pattern and may not be entirely valid in themselves. Sir Charles Herbert of Troy was in severe financial difficulties by 1552, but in the early 1540s his extensive estates and his offices in the Duchy of Lancaster should have put him in a good position to buy.⁵⁴ Sir Thomas Morgan of Pencoed and his son Sir William seem to have preferred fighting to estate management, but this need not have prevented them from investing in property; Nicholas Arnold served with Sir Thomas Morgan as a gentleman pensioner and was allowed to take part of his grant of Llanthony in fee farm presumably as a reward for services; while Sir Rice Mansel of Penrice and Margam is perhaps the classic example of a soldier who raised his family to a position of local pre-eminence by the purchase of estates from the Crown. Military service

⁵¹ Glanmor Williams, 'The dissolution of the monasteries in Glamorgan' in *Welsh Reformation Essays*, Cardiff, 1967, 91–110; *idem*, *Glamorgan County History* vol. iv: *Early modern Glamorgan*, Cardiff, 1974.

⁵² H A Lloyd, G Dyfnallt Owen, *op. cit.*

⁵³ For details of the purchasers of Crown land in Monmouthshire see ch. 4 of the present writer's thesis, and her chapter 'Change and continuity: the gentry and Church property in south-east Wales in the sixteenth century' in J Gwynfor Jones's forthcoming book on *Society in Tudor Wales*.

⁵⁴ Bindoff, *Commons 1509–1558*, II, 336–37.

could be expensive, as the Morgans of Pencoed found, but it could also be exploited to provide great gains.⁵⁵ Henry Lewis of St Pierre had increased his estate by a more traditional method when he married Bridget, daughter of Thomas Kemeys of Caldicot.⁵⁶ In many cases, though, we simply do not know enough about the circumstances of local families to explain their inaction.

In the same way, we can suggest superficial explanations for those who bought. Nicholas Arnold's family had been involved in the administration of Llanthony-juxta-Gloucester during its last years and in its dissolution; he, his father-in-law and his brother-in-law, Arthur Porter, all invested in former property of that house. William Morgan may have been inspired by the example of his father-in-law, Sir Rice Mansel. Legal training or a period of residence in London may have widened some men's horizons: Nicholas Arnold had been educated at Lincolns Inn⁵⁷ and Walter Aldey at the Middle Temple.⁵⁸ According to Bradney, Roger Williams's father may have been a lawyer, and Roger himself spent some time in London as servant of the Earl of Pembroke.⁵⁹ Giles Morgan, the purchaser of Newport friary, was one of Thomas Cromwell's lesser servants in the late 1530s,⁶⁰ and Nicholas Arnold also served Cromwell for a time.⁶¹ The purchasers of Crown property in Monmouthshire were most of them comparatively young men but during the period (roughly from 1540 to 1560) when the largest properties in the county were being sold, most families had at some time a young representative. The main purchasers, however, if they were connected with the leading families of the

county, tended to be younger sons or to come from cadet branches. It is almost as though there was an agreement on the proper size for a gentleman's estate, to which further additions would be superfluous. In a more practical sense, families who felt they had an adequate income from existing estates would have less incentive to invest in further purchases capital which could have been spent on such forms of conspicuous consumption as a new or enlarged house. Nor, it seems, did they have any desire to modify the location or structure of their estates by selling land on the private market in order to buy Crown land.

This may in itself have contributed to the sluggishness of the market for Crown property. If the wealthiest men in the county were reluctant to buy, the field was left open for the minor gentry and lesser landholders; but these were obliged by the slenderness of their resources to build up their estates slowly, acquiring a manor at a time instead of buying up whole monastic estates. Nor was the diversion of this capital into land entirely beneficial to the local community. The redistribution and dispersal of former ecclesiastical and Marcher property brought new families into the county hierarchy and widened the basis of property-owning, but money tied up in land was necessarily withdrawn from local circulation. We can probably ignore the argument that the sale of Crown lands damaged the local economy simply by diverting money to the government: if the Crown had been unable to raise money by selling land it would have been obliged to do so by raising taxes or managing its own estates more ruthlessly, both of which expedients would have had a similar effect on the local community. Even the gifts of land to absentees like the Earl of Pembroke and the dioceses of Bristol and Gloucester did no more than perpetuate an existing tradition of outside ownership of these properties. More damaging in its long-term effects was the way in which the land market

⁵⁵ Bradney IV, 213-215; Bindoff, *Commons 1509-1558*, II, 630.

⁵⁶ Bradney IV, 78.

⁵⁷ Bindoff, *Commons 1509-1558*, I, 330-31.

⁵⁸ H A C Sturgess, *Register of admissions to the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple...*, 1949, p 55.

⁵⁹ III, 97.

⁶⁰ *Commons 1509-1558*, II, 627.

⁶¹ *Letters and papers, foreign and domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII...* xiii (ii), pp 1184, 1223.

absorbed the money and energies of the county's more enterprising landowners, leaving little to spare for industrial development. The chronic problem of the Welsh economy has always been the extent to which it is controlled from outside. This is at least partly due to the agricultural poverty of the country, resulting in a failure to accumulate enough capital for expansion. In consequence, Welsh industries have tended to be geared to the needs of outside investment, producing basic materials at low cost which will be refined and processed elsewhere. It was therefore particularly unfortunate that, at a time when local landowners did have the capacity to invest, their capital should have been channelled into land, leaving the development of industry to outsiders.⁶²

The property market and the dispersal of Crown land thus produced several new families to take their place in the county hierarchy, but almost all of them had their roots in local society. Even the Earl of Pembroke, who was to become the county's greatest absentee landlord, belonged to one of the many illegitimate branches of the powerful Herbert clan. Local men bought more than half of what remained after the Earl's massive grants, and 42 per cent of former Crown land in the county was still in the hands of their descendants in 1603. The outsiders involved might be numerous but they bought almost entirely as agents or dealers and in most cases their purchases were small. Apart from the Earl of Pembroke the only individual outsiders to receive large grants were Nicholas Arnold, whose family came from nearby Breconshire and had a long-standing connection with Monmouthshire, and Winifred Hastings, who was given her grandmother's manor of Llanfair and Llangyfiw as part of a grant in restoration. The other major

absentee landlords were religious corporations, and their endowments merely continued the ownership of a few properties by religious houses outside the county.

There was thus no appreciable rise or decline in absentee landowning as a result of the seizure and subsequent sale of property by the Crown. The estates of March and Buckingham passed largely to another England-based family, the Earls of Pembroke; the holdings of monasteries outside the county endowed new and old bishoprics and the property of the county's own religious houses went mainly to the local gentry and the one resident peer. On the one hand, the lordships of Edlogan and Tregrug, the marcher manors of Llangwm, Llyswyri and Llebenydd, Keysham's manor of Wentloog and some of the property of Llanthony-juxta-Gloucester were returned to local families; on the other hand, the estates of Llanthony Prima passed for a time to an absentee landlord, though they were returned to local ownership at the coming-of-age of John Arnold. Among the lesser purchasers, Sir Richard Morgan of Blackbrook and David Lewis of Abergavenny spent most of their lives outside the county but their heirs were more local in their interests. There was thus in the long term a modest but perceptible transfer of land to owners living in the county, though again it is difficult to say what effect such residence had on the actual administration of the property.

As far as lesser landholders were concerned, there appears to have been a widening of the basis of property-ownership as tenant farmers took advantage of the opportunity to buy either their own tenements or nearby properties. This was facilitated by the development of a group of estate agents who could manage the complex processes of buying property from the Crown and assist their clients with loans or schemes for deferred payment. Without a comprehensive study of the land market in the county, however, we cannot say how

⁶² I reached this conclusion independently, but my thoughts on its implications benefited from discussions at a day-school organized by the Modern Wales Research Unit at Dyffryn House in May 1983.

far this extension of land ownership was typical, how many new small estates had their origin, nucleus or main strength in former Crown land and how many minor landowners were either acquiring or losing land on the private property market. While the rise of gentry estates in England is generally accepted as being the counterpart if not the consequence of the breakdown of larger estates, in Wales it has its origin in the amalgamation of many small estates, in the creation of a group of supergentry (who were the equivalents in status and wealth of the English gentry) out of the large class of petty landholders whose claim to gentility was based on pedigree rather than on income. If, therefore, the dispersal of Crown property in the sixteenth century did result in the creation of new small estates, this was not (as in England) part of a continuous development but a diversion in the process by which smaller holdings were amalgamated to create the great landed estates of the eighteenth century. In general, however, apart from the huge estate given to the Earl of Pembroke, the estates carved out of Crown land in Monmouthshire were comparable in size with others which had been inherited or built up by more traditional means. Since few of the buyers were already major landowners, no massive accumulations of inherited and purchased land were formed; during most of the sixteenth century the largest estates in the county were those of the Morgans of Pencoed and Tredegar Park who at that time owned no former Crown land at all.

VI

Since the changes in landownership in the sixteenth century did not dramatically affect the size of estates, the social class of landowners or the amount of land in the hands of outsiders, their impact on the local economy might be expected to have been limited. It is unfortunate that the survival of evidence relating to estates including or consisting mainly of former Crown land is

so uneven. The only estates documented fully enough to make any useful analysis of estate administration possible are those of the two peers, the Earls of Pembroke and Worcester, who cannot be regarded as typical of the county's landowners. Nor does the surviving evidence fall into any obvious pattern. Indeed, the administration of the Worcester and Pembroke estates was radically different, as might be expected when one was managed for most of the sixteenth century by a resident owner and the other was administered for a complete absentee the focus of whose interests was in his Wiltshire estates. The Earls of Pembroke regarded their Welsh lordships as a power-base and a fund to draw on as much as a source of regular income. In 1592 a scheme was suggested for the consideration of the second earl to raise money for investment in land nearer Wilton by selling Welsh tenements in fee farm for substantial considerations and virtually nominal rents.⁶³ This was never implemented, but much capital was subsequently raised by the charging of heavy fines for renewal on the surrender of leases for lives.⁶⁴ The second earl's estate management, though efficient, exhibited the conservatism of the typical absentee. Rents were generally steady in spite of inflation, fines were high, and the practice of retaining a lord's council continued when it had long gone out of fashion elsewhere. The nature of the power-base changed, however, during the sixteenth century: while William Herbert, the first earl, had boasted of his ability to put men in the field in defence of the Crown, his son and grandson placed a greater emphasis on political support and their relations with the upper gentry. By contrast, the third Earl of Worcester in particular administered his estates more like a traditional member of the gentry, receiving money from bailiffs and collectors in person and inspecting and signing account rolls.

⁶³ NLW, Bute box 93/163.

⁶⁴ E.g. NLW, Bute 4, 5, 27.

The lack of evidence also makes it difficult for us to see how (if at all) the administration of former Crown property differed from that of other estates, whether inherited or privately purchased. The records of the Worcester estate indicate that no such difference existed, but information from one atypical estate is not conclusive. In fact, the available evidence does not provide us with any recognizable pattern at all. Examples can be found of most of the traditional methods of estate administration and improvement: the negotiation of shorter terms and increased rents on leases; the conversion of copyhold tenures into leaseholds; the enclosure of large and small parcels out of the extensive upland wastes; forest management for profit; and the attack on customary tenants' rights. There is little evidence of a return to demesne farming, though the accounts of both the Pembroke and Worcester estates do suggest a deliberate policy of converting cash rents into rents in kind.⁶⁵ The absence of demesne farming makes it difficult to assess the extent to which agricultural improvements were related to changes in the land market. The first recorded use of lime to sweeten the acid soils of the county's upland zone was in the 1560s on the former monastic manor of Wentsland and Bryngwyn, then recently bought by William Morgan of Llantarnam from the Earl of Pembroke, but there is no reason to suppose that either the Earl or

William Morgan had initiated the change.⁶⁶ That the new practice was recorded is itself connected with the fact that the manor had passed through the Crown's hands, since this was probably the reason why an early seventeenth-century dispute over tenants' rights found itself before the court of the Exchequer.

Nor did the successors to the marcher lords ascribe much importance to the mineral resources which were to be the most valuable attribute of their lordships in the nineteenth century. In 1625 the Earl of Pembroke leased land in Machen and Basaleg for rents including sea coal and stone coal (to be delivered to Cardiff Castle), but no mention was made in the leases of mines on the property, while the lease of a tenement at Blaendare in Panteg with liberty to dig for coal was subject to a manorial type of rent of £13 6s 8d and two fat capons yearly and a heriot of the best beast.⁶⁷ The tenants of Wentsland and Bryngwyn claimed in 1615 the right to dig coals on their copyhold tenements, and quoted examples of coalmining by customary tenants on new holdings and on the wastes; the lord's interest was limited to attempts to extract fines for their encroachments and spoil heaps.⁶⁸ Coal was apparently still regarded as a useful adjunct to a farm rather than as a commercial proposition in its own right and it was probably mined by the farmer himself as a supplementary source of income.

There is of course no reason why the buyers of land and their descendants should have been innovative in any aspect of their estate management. Investing in land is estate improvement at its most conservative, and the income from new land could cushion a landowner from the effects of the declining value of money, thus making it less necessary for him to undertake other less congenial improvements.

⁶⁵ Such rents on the Pembroke estate were normally paid in cattle or sheep of a specified quality which could be driven to the earl's principal household at Wilton, though rents of oxen and butter as well as animals taken as heriots were also delivered to the lord's household in Cardiff Castle. The transporting of rents on the hoof was not an unusual practice. Eton College received part of their rent for the manor of Goldcliff in oxen, and complained about their quality. In 1575 part of the rent of the Earl of Pembroke's estate was used to buy oxen to be driven to Wilton but this interesting practice was not apparently continued. On the Worcester estates, by contrast, rents in butter, fruit, cider and perry as well as grain and all sorts of animals, were delivered to Raglan Castle for the use of the earl and his household there. NLW, Bute 1, 9255, 9363, 9664, for the Pembroke estate; Cardiff Central Library, MS 4.474 pp 13-68, transcripts by John Hobson Matthews, for Eton College; NLW, Badminton Manorial 1512-1538 for the Worcester estate; the references to cattle droving are in NLW, Bute 1.

⁶⁶ E/112/107/70/12 Jac. 1.

⁶⁷ NLW, Bute 126/9363 nos 54, 55, 65, 29.

⁶⁸ E/112/107/70/12, Jac. 1.

VII

The further one pursues the descent of Crown property from owner to owner the less significant its provenance becomes. What is significant, in Monmouthshire at least, is the length of time for which the market has to be studied in order for this process to become apparent. Estates built up by purchase were at least as stable as those established by Crown gifts, though maybe not for the same reasons. It may have been simple inertia which led the descendants of Winifred Hastings to hold on to her manor of Llanfair and Llangyfiw, but for the permanence of estates bought under the commissions for sales another explanation must be sought. Most of the major purchasers of land in Monmouthshire came from the county, and all established at least a secondary residence on their new estates. There was little of the investment by outsiders which could have encouraged a commercial market in land. Monmouthshire was a conservative county and one in which land ownership was of overmastering importance; this is reflected in the lack of investment by local landowners in any form of trade or industry. This may have contributed to the survival of a prejudice against selling even recently-acquired land.⁶⁹ There were no particular conveyancing difficulties. Monmouthshire was outside the area controlled by Great Sessions and may have been too far from London for bargains and sales enrolled there to have been convenient, but some deeds are known to have been enrolled at Quarter Sessions.⁷⁰ A surprising number of Monmouthshire fines were levied at Westminster,⁷¹ but fines could also be levied and common recoveries suffered locally.⁷² The old method of

conveyance by feoffment and livery of seisin was suited to local transactions if embarrassingly public. There is even one local example of a prototype lease and release in Gregory Price's lease for 1000 years to Anna Huntley of land in Hadnock late of Monmouth Priory in her occupation on 12 May 1573 followed by a quitclaim in perpetuity on 18 May.⁷³ In the Welsh areas of the county there may have been lingering doubts about the validity of conveyances under the newly-introduced English land law, but this could surely not have persisted until 1603 and would not in any case have affected the English areas of the county where much ex-monastic land was found. As with the other anomalies indicated in this study — the delayed pattern of sales of Crown property and the generally slow land market — part of the answer is probably to be found in the remoteness and traditionalism of the county. Economic pressures may have driven some landlords to sell, but even in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the major estates established by gift or purchase from the Crown in the sixteenth century were more likely to change hands by failure of heirs than by resale, so that several of the leading families of the county claimed their position by direct descent from Crown grantees. The economic security conferred by the consolidated estates which the Crown offered for sale in the sixteenth century seems to have made it difficult for them to mismanage their property so far as to lose it entirely.

This study ends with the death of Elizabeth in 1603, which is perhaps too early for a study of long-term trends. Demographic and economic processes combined to reverse some of the social changes effected by the sixteenth-century land market. The absorption of many fragments of Crown property into the major estates continued through the seventeenth century.⁷⁴ The

⁶⁹ For examples of this prejudice, particularly when applied to hereditary estates, see Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, Oxford 1965, pp 163–64.

⁷⁰ NLW, TP/56/145; NLW Courtfield 129.

⁷¹ CP25/2: for an unknown reason most Monmouthshire fines are omitted from the index.

⁷² NLW, TP/56/146 is a record of a recovery in the court baron of Dyffryn touching property in Basaleg, St Woolos, Marshfield and St Brides in 1581.

⁷³ NLW, Milborne 13, 9.

⁷⁴ E.g. NLW, Llangibby Castle B945, A1273.

estate papers of the Morgans of Tredegar Park contain deeds of several chantry properties in Newport:⁷⁵ some of these had been bought by Sir Thomas Morgan of Rhiwperra and passed to the Tredegar Park estate with the manor of Rumney and the lordship of Newport on the death of John Morgan 'the merchant' in 1715.⁷⁶ Edward Kemeys of Cefn Mabli bought the manor of Caldicot Priors at Michaelmas 1603 and his nephew, Nicholas Kemeys of Llanfair, bought the manor of Llanfair from Winifred Hastings's descendants in 1614: these became the foundation of the Llanfair estates of the Kemeys-Tyntes of Cefn Mabli.⁷⁷ The property of the Gunters of Abergavenny Priory passed by marriage to the Milbornes, heirs of the Herbert estates of Grace Dieu,

then with some of the Grace Dieu property to the Kemeys-Tyntes.⁷⁸ The lordships of Usk and Trelech were sold by the heirs of the earls of Pembroke in 1750 and came to the dukes of Beaufort in the late eighteenth century.⁷⁹ By this time, individual parcels of monastic and chantry land had been so far absorbed into the local land market as to have lost their significance as former Crown property. But the survival of whole estates based on purchases from the Crown and, in particular, the importance for the major estates of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of the great manors and marcher lordships which had passed through the Crown's hands in the sixteenth century, indicate the lasting impact on the social structure of the county of the dispersal of Crown property there.

⁷⁵ E.g. NLW, TP/80/58, 84.

⁷⁶ NLW, TP/62/51, 124/624; SC6/Chas.1/642; *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, 1959, pp 636-37.

⁷⁷ GwRO, D.43. 5569, 5624 *et seq.*

⁷⁸ Bradney I, 39; II, 122-25.

⁷⁹ Bradney II, 32; III, 9.

BLACKWELL

Rushall

The Story of an Organic Farm

BARRY WOOKEY

Rushall is one of the most successful organic farms in the United Kingdom, and in this book, Barry Wookey describes the conversion and day-to-day management of his 1650 acres. He shows that organic farming is not sentimental nonsense reserved for drop-outs or radicals, but that the organic farm of the 1980s is a modern, efficient enterprise, and a profitable venture too.

224 pages, illustrated, **£12.95** (0 631 15526 0)

From Farming to Biotechnology

DAVID GOODMAN, BERNARDO SORJ and JOHN WILKINSON

This book offers an original interpretation of the industrialization of agriculture and the evolution of the contemporary food system. It integrates and previously diverse approaches found in agricultural development studies, political economy, rural sociology and food policy research to reconstruct the process of agricultural industrialization since the mid 19th century.

224 pages, **£25.00** (0 631 14405 6)

The Purpose of Forests

JACK WESTOBY

For the last three decades, Jack Westoby has been the outstanding figure in international forestry. As the fate of the tropical forests becomes a matter for worldwide concern, this timely collection of Westoby's writings is a key to understanding and commenting on the world's forests in countries both developing and developed.

c.320 pages, c.**£25.00** (0 631 15657 7)

Basil Blackwell

108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JF

Suite 1503, 432 Park Avenue South, New York NY 10016