

Sheep and Enclosure in Sixteenth-Century Northamptonshire*

By JOHN MARTIN

Abstract

It is commonly accepted that there was a slackening of the enclosure movement, if not outright reconversion to arable, in England in the latter half of the sixteenth century. This is usually ascribed to lower wool prices making sheep-grazing less attractive. There are difficulties with this perspective linking prices and enclosure activity directly. The example of Northamptonshire, a county in the forefront of enclosure, suggests that there was no trend away from sheep-farming. Two surveys of sheep numbers on enclosed pasture, conducted in 1547 and 1564, indicate that sheep-grazing spread throughout the county, and that grazing was concentrated on deserted village sites. While there was some reduction in the size of large flocks, this was more than balanced by the proliferation of smaller flocks – overall sheep numbers increased in this period. By the end of the century, sheep flocks were grazing on enclosed pasture in half of the parishes in Northamptonshire.

SINCE Bowden's detailed work on wool prices for the period 1490–1610, it has been argued that, after the mid-sixteenth century, lower wool prices relative to those of wheat deflected graziers from sheep-farming and halted the process of enclosure, or even caused a considerable reconversion of pasture to arable land. Bowden himself considered that the most interesting aspect of the trend in wool

prices was its role in explaining the pattern of the Tudor enclosure movement. He sought to draw a dividing line down the middle of the sixteenth century on this basis.

The reason why farmers were enclosing their land for pasture in the first half of the sixteenth century and reconverting it to tillage in the second half thus appears to have been clearly associated with the changing relationship between the price of wool and the price of grain.¹

Such an interpretation has replaced the earlier one stressing that enclosure was an enduring problem throughout the sixteenth century. Gay's work was central in this respect. He made extensive use of the Enclosure Commissions of 1517–18 (drawing upon Leadam's studies) and those of 1607, together with substantial research into enclosure prosecutions in the prerogative courts throughout the century, and concluded that there was no slackening of the enclosure movement.² Tawney also

* This research was prompted by the discovery of a document from 1564 listing sheep numbers in the County, in the Northamptonshire County Records Office amongst the papers of Sir Edward Montagu, Deputy Lieutenant of the County and responsible for purveyance in its Eastern Division in the 1590s. (Northamptonshire County Records Office, Montagu Papers, second series, 'A Book of Fines and Estreats, Eliz. I and Jac. I', ff. 69–91, 112–18.) This stimulated an interest in locating a similar document of a different date to analyse changes for a county which was crucial in the enclosure movement. While reading the *Gazetteer of deserted villages in Northamptonshire* (K J Allison et al, *The Deserted Villages of Northamptonshire*, University of Leicester, Dept of Local History, Occasional Papers, XVIII, 1966) I became aware of an unreferenced source for numbers of sheep grazing on deserted village sites in 1547. I wrote to both Keith Allison and Maurice Beresford about the source but they did not know its whereabouts. The only hint was that the information had come from a 'purveyance' document. While reading Woodworth's article (A Woodworth, 'Purveyance for the Royal Household in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, new series, XXXV, 1945) in the feeble hope of some clue, I came across a reference to such a document – British Library, Additional MS 25084. This proved to be exactly what I was after – a comprehensive survey of sheep flocks in 1547, organized in strikingly similar fashion to the document of seventeen years later.

1 P J Bowden, 'Movements in Wool Prices 1490–1610', *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research*, IV, 2, September 1952, pp 122–3. Also see P J Bowden, *The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England*, 1962, pp 4–6.

2 E F Gay, 'Inclosures in England in the Sixteenth Century', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, XVII, 1903, pp 584–6.

argued for the continued importance of enclosure, largely on the grounds of continued government concern and popular disturbances and outcry over the issue.³

The crucial difficulty for the earlier perspective, based on Gay's work, was the lack of information for the period 1518–77, which was not covered by the Enclosure Commissions. The abortive Commissions of 1548 failed to yield information other than a few notes on enclosure in Warwickshire and Cambridgeshire, and that of 1566 entailed only partial coverage of Buckinghamshire and little else.⁴ Gay also drew upon the evidence of enclosure cases in the Courts of Star Chamber and Requests, and the extensive prosecutions under the Tillage Act of 1563 (involving land enclosed from arable since 1528).⁵ However, although supporting his position in general terms, these sources cannot offer the advantages of a systematic quantitative recording of enclosure activity, such as contained in the records of the Commissions. In fact Gay, like Tawney, bolstered his argument with reference to the continued complaint and agitation at that time. Other documented anti-enclosure activity in the Courts of Exchequer, Chancery and King's Bench in the period 1518–77 concerned prosecutions arising out of the enquiries of 1517–18, and thus does not indicate continued enclosure activity but rather the government's determination to follow up cases of enclosure recorded prior to 1518.⁶

In later work Bowden sought to relate more detailed supposed changes in the pace of enclosure to the fortunes of sheep-farming, in the sixteenth and early seven-

teenth centuries, on the basis of inspection of shorter-term trends in prices. Specifically he argued that

with the sharp decline of cloth exports and wool prices in the early 1550s the business of raising sheep lost much of its former attraction . . . Many large landowners who had been drawn into wool production during the earlier period of rising demand now decided to reduce the size of their flocks or to give up sheep farming altogether.⁷

This situation persisted until the early 1570s, according to Bowden, when the growth of the new draperies revived sheep-farming in the Midlands and East Anglia.

This view, associating enclosure activity and sheep-farming directly with annual movements in prices, has been influential in revising our understanding of the agrarian history of the period. Beresford integrated it into an explanation of the slackening of the desertion of villages in the sixteenth century, observing that there was a shift from depopulating enclosure towards enclosure by agreement which included smaller peasant farmers.⁸ More generally, it is now widely accepted that the enclosure movement itself was less intense from the mid-sixteenth century onwards until late in the century, because of the relative increase in wheat prices compared to wool.⁹

7 P J Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits, and Rents', in J Thirsk (ed), *op cit*, p 638.

8 M W Beresford, *op cit*, p 212. Also see M W Beresford, 'The Poll Tax and census of sheep (Part II)', *Ag Hist Rev*, II, 1954, p 28. For his view on the role of agreements, see 'Habitatation versus Improvement: the debate on enclosure by agreement', in F J Fisher (ed), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England*, Cambridge 1961. The extent to which enclosure by agreement was associated with depopulation in the Midlands is debated in an unpublished paper – J E Martin, 'Habitatation for the peasantry versus improvement by enclosure for the landlord'.

9 For example, see J Thirsk, 'Enclosing and Engrossing', in J Thirsk (ed), *op cit*, p 228. P Ramsay, *Tudor Economic Problems*, 1963, pp 25–7. However, in an earlier publication Thirsk was less certain, suggesting that Bowden's case for changes in land usage remained to be proved. J Thirsk, *Tudor Enclosures*, 1959, p 18. A recent article minimizes the extent of sixteenth-century enclosure. J R Wordie, 'The chronology of English enclosure, 1500–1914', *Econ Hist Rev*, second series, XXXVI, 4, 1983; J Chapman, 'The chronology of English enclosure' and J R Wordie, 'A Reply', both in *Econ Hist Rev*, second series, XXXVII, 4, 1984. Wordie argues that the seventeenth century was the crucial period of enclosure, basing this on a figure of

3 R H Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, 1912, p 11.

4 Gay, *op cit*, pp 577, 585.

5 *Ibid*, pp 590–1. J Thirsk in J Thirsk (ed), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, Vol IV: 1500–1640*, Cambridge 1967, pp 225, 227–8.

6 M W Beresford, *The Lost Villages of England*, 1954, pp 109–17. E F Gay, 'Inquisitions of Depopulation in 1517 and the Domesday of Inclosures', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, new series, XIV, 1900, pp 239–40. This concerns evidence of Court activity over the period 1517–99.

I

Yet certain difficulties remain. The wool price series is particularly weak in the mid-sixteenth century which is the most crucial period, and it is not largely drawn from the Midland counties, where the enclosure movement for permanent pasture was most concentrated at that time. Most importantly, the link between the movement in prices of wool and enclosure activity largely remains to be demonstrated. For the first point, Wright observed that no long-term price series is used for the period 1520–70; instead there is only a scatter of values based on not more than several points in every case, and there is in fact little conformity to the long-term constructed series.¹⁰ This is a critical period for Bowden's argument. If the mid-century price data are weak then the contrast between this, and earlier and later periods (with high wool prices) is less strong than it might appear. Secondly, not only is the wool series generally weak in mid-century, but it lacks a sustained Midland series in particular. The heartland Midland counties experiencing enclosure at that time (such as Northamptonshire and Leicestershire) are represented by eleven price values only. The linking of synthetic and generalized price data and enclosure presupposes that prices were national in character and varied in unison from one region to another, and secondly that enclosure was a simple response to this price mechanism felt equally throughout

England. This approach neglects regional differences in price trends and that motives for enclosure might be more complex than a simple response to national prices. Gould argues along these lines in suggesting there is a need for regional and county studies of prices, and crop and stock distributions and their changes.¹¹ Kerridge and Thirsk also argue for a more detailed regional perspective on the variety of forms of enclosure, some of which involved conversion to pasture, evictions and depopulation, while in other areas enclosure was less detrimental and represented the increased regional specialization of farming practices.¹² While Thirsk concedes that enclosure remained a social problem in the Midlands, Kerridge suggests that much enclosure there, especially on lighter soils, was in fact for 'up-and-down husbandry' rather than for permanent pasture as previously assumed.

Finally, the most important criticism is

¹¹ Gould suggests that Bowden, by adopting Rogers's wheat prices, used an index which reflects the growing metropolitan demand for corn in London. In areas such as the inner Midlands, the remoteness and difficulty of transporting corn may well have kept corn prices low, allowing the Midlands to remain as a centre of enclosure for conversion to pasture. J D Gould, 'Mr Beresford and the Lost Villages: a Comment', *Ag Hist Rev*, III, 1955, p 112.

¹² E Kerridge, *The Agricultural Revolution, 1660–1800*, 1967. E Kerridge, *Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After*, 1969. J Thirsk, *Tudor Enclosures*, 1958. J Thirsk, 'Enclosing and engrossing', in J Thirsk (ed), *op cit*. J Broad, 'Alternate husbandry and permanent pasture in the Midlands, 1650–1800', *Ag Hist Rev*, XXVIII, 1980. In Kerridge's view these changed practices represented a crucial part of the agricultural revolution. He suggests that 'up-and-down husbandry' expanded rapidly after 1560 in the Midlands, and particularly so in the period 1590–1660. However, he concedes that even by the mid-seventeenth century it was still not the most important system in the Midlands – this took another hundred years (*The Agricultural Revolution*, pp 194, 212). But Broad suggests that the very period in which 'up-and-down husbandry' was consolidating according to Kerridge, was a time when the practice was being superseded by permanent pasture farming. If this is indeed so, the overall long-term impact of this form of enclosure is much diminished, being squeezed between Kerridge's projection into the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and Broad's lessening of its impact post mid-seventeenth century. It is also worth considering that 'up-and-down husbandry' would probably require in total as much land as would be laid down in permanent pasture to support a similar number of sheep, even if Kerridge's suggestion that the carrying capacity was twice that of permanent pasture is accepted. This would mean that a similar amount of land would have been taken out of the common-field system for use in 'up-and-down husbandry' as if it had been enclosed for permanent pasture.

only 2 per cent for the sixteenth century (from Gay's Enclosure Commission figures). He relates this to a figure of 47 per cent of land enclosed at 1600, arrived at by very different means. Subsequently the 2 per cent is subtracted from 47 per cent, giving circa 45 per cent enclosed prior to 1500. This is not a very meaningful result which has arisen by relating two incommensurable forms of estimate. As Chapman points out (p 557), the sixteenth-century Tudor concern (reflected in Gay's figures) was with a very specific form of enclosure – the conversion of arable to pasture and depopulation – and it is invalid to relate this in a simple manner to the aggregate estimates which Wordie derives.

¹⁰ J F Wright, 'A Note on Mr Bowden's Index of Wool Prices', *Yorks Bull Econ and Soc Res*, VII, 2, September 1955. P J Bowden, 'Movements in Wool Prices – a Reply', *Yorks Bull Econ and Soc Res*, IX, 2, November 1957.

that Bowden fails to provide convincing evidence of a direct link between price trends and enclosure activity, but largely assumes the existence of the link. The lack of precise information for the period 1518–77 has made it difficult to assess the validity of the price-based perspective on enclosure. In particular, actual reconversion to arable remains almost entirely unresearched. Bowden cites three graziers who reduced the size of their own flocks or leased their pastures, two of whom (the Fitzwilliams and Brudenells) were from Northamptonshire and studied by Finch.¹³ But Finch's

study does not draw generalized conclusions about farming practices; it links the specific changes in these families' estate management to their own particular circumstances. The fact that these families chose to move out of direct sheep-farming to leasing of land says little about the use of that land which seems to have remained in sheep pasture.

II

In this article I wish to present some information for the County of Northamptonshire, which questions the existence of a trend away from sheep-farming and reconversion of pasture to arable in the second half of the sixteenth century. To my knowledge these two comprehensive, detailed and consistent surveys of sheep flocks some seventeen years apart are unique sources.¹⁴ The sheep returns for 1547 and 1564 provide detailed information on the progress of sheep-farming for a county which was at the very centre of the enclosure movement and at a time when, according to Bowden, grazing of sheep was on the wane and land was being recon-

¹³ M E Finch, *The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, 1540–1640*, Oxford 1956. Bowden specifically refers to the Fitzwilliams who leased out manors in 1549 and stopped sheep-farming at Milton, and to the Brudenells of Deene who stopped sheep-farming after mid-century. While Finch does refer generally to the possible impact that less steeply rising wool prices might have had in the latter half of the century, she gives no direct evidence of the impact of prices on these estates.

The Fitzwilliams were a recently-established Northamptonshire family, with modest resources and considerable complexities and difficulties in inheritance of the estate. The family's income was never enough to establish a substantial and secure estate. From the 1550s onwards, additional burdens were imposed by life at the Court on slender resources. This caused the family to go into debt, resulting in the mortgaging and sale of lands. This caused the family to go into debt, resulting in the mortgaging and sale of lands. In the 1570s, Sir William Fitzwilliam III attempted to rationalize the estate by new purchases and consolidation of lands, but again was beset by new inheritance demands and expenditure on a new house. The two manors Bowden refers to were Woodcroft (in Etton) leased in 1549, and Minskippes (one of eight manors in Castor) leased after mid-century. Woodcroft was lost by mortgage altogether and then repurchased shortly afterwards, in 1553. According to Finch, these two manors were the only ones leased by the Fitzwilliams. The Fitzwilliams held 170 acres of closes in Woodcroft, probably from 1537 onwards, on which about 350 sheep could graze. *Ibid.*, p 115. The leasing seems to have been associated with an increase in sheep numbers, the opposite of what Bowden would argue, since the sheep surveys show that the number of sheep on Woodcroft actually increased at this time, from 200 in 1547 to 500 in 1564! Bowden also mistakenly draws the conclusion that the Milton manor no longer supported sheep by 1576. However, Finch says nothing about the use of the by-then wholly enclosed manor, only observing that before 1576 the pastures were in part rented out and in part directly farmed for sheep by the Fitzwilliams. In that year all the pastures were leased out, presumably to continue in sheep pasture. By 1583 the Milton closes comprised about 860 acres. *Ibid.*, p 114. (Certainly when Milton was resumed at some time before 1607, it became the nucleus of the Fitzwilliams' sheep pastures.) The Fitzwilliams grazed 500 sheep at Milton in 1547 according to the survey, and this number remained in 1564.

The Brudenells suffered greatly from the fragmentation of their lands, which although increasingly enclosed, did not permit the large-scale consolidation and development of sheep-farming, such as was achieved by the Spencers. In the circumstances, it was more profitable for the family to lease out these pastures, surely to other capitalist sheep farmers. It is likely

that the land remained as pasture rather than reverting to arable cultivation. The surveys of 1547 and 1564 suggest that there was little change in sheep numbers where the Brudenells had pastures. While there were some decreases (Biggin, 500 to 400 – where they leased 1200 acres from the Abbot of Peterborough; Orlingbury, 200 to 100; and Titchmarsh, 200 to 100 sheep recorded) this was matched by the increases elsewhere (Stanion, no sheep to 100; and Weldon closes, no sheep to 300). The Finedon pastures continued to graze 100 sheep. The third example Bowden uses was from East Anglia where Sir Nicholas Bacon had leased all his foldcourses by 1561. Even if one grazier found it more suitable to earn an income from leasing land rather than sheep-farming, it is likely that these lands continued to be grazed.

¹⁴ M W Beresford, 'The Poll Tax and the Census of Sheep', Parts I and II, *Ag Hist Rev*, I and II, 1953–4, provides another source of information on sheep numbers for 1549, but this survey was incomplete and not successful in catching the larger graziers. Some 414 flocks were recorded, but the median flock size was only 142 sheep, in strong contrast to the data presented here. There is information for four counties, but only in Huntingdonshire and Nottinghamshire were many flocks recorded. No flocks were recorded near the illegal size of 2400 although Beresford noted that they would have existed.

verted to arable.¹⁵ The sheep surveys do not confirm a picture of reconversion of pasture to arable, nor even a halt to sheep-farming, from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. Instead, they indicate that grazing spread throughout the County and the total numbers of sheep increased, while at the same time there was some reduction in the number and size of large flocks specifically. These sheep returns suggest that a modification is necessary to a simple association of price movements and the pattern and pace of enclosure.

The County of Northamptonshire in the East Midlands provides one of the best examples of the mixed husbandry common-field system in its largely 'felden' western part and the Nene Valley¹⁶ (see Map 1). Further east and north were the forest areas of Rockingham and Whittlewood-Salcey, and the fens of the Soke of Peterborough. Much of the upland heavy cold clay areas – the Northamptonshire Heights, Whittlewood-Salcey and Rockingham – were in fact more fit for grass than crops. Both the Wolds (upland but with lighter soils), and the Nene Valley (with alluvial loams and gravels) were better suited to the mixed husbandry of the open common-field system. The forest

areas of Rockingham and Whittlewood-Salcey comprised large areas of common and wastes and many old closes, offering considerable grazing. Here arable farming was subsidiary to the raising of livestock. In the Fens in the far north-east of the County there was practised pastoral farming of a kind similar to the fen areas of Lincolnshire and Norfolk. This was based upon considerable and varied common and pastoral resources and few arable common fields.

The 1547 sheep survey

The 1547 survey 'A Booke of all the Townes and Hundreds with Pastures' listed all the flocks of fifty or more sheep on enclosed pasture in the Western and Eastern Divisions of the County of Northamptonshire, and was commissioned as a result of an agreement reached between the Crown and the County for the compounding of purveyance for the Royal Household (subsequent reference to 'flocks' is to those of fifty or more sheep).¹⁷ Instead of levying produce the practice was established of drawing up contracts with counties for a fixed price for the animals concerned. The parish where each flock was kept, and often the owner's name, was noted. Additionally, every 'town', that is parish, was listed and taxed at a flat rate of four sheep, with hamlets within parishes being exempt. The survey also included a list of those who were levied from one to three oxen from 'parkes and laundes'.

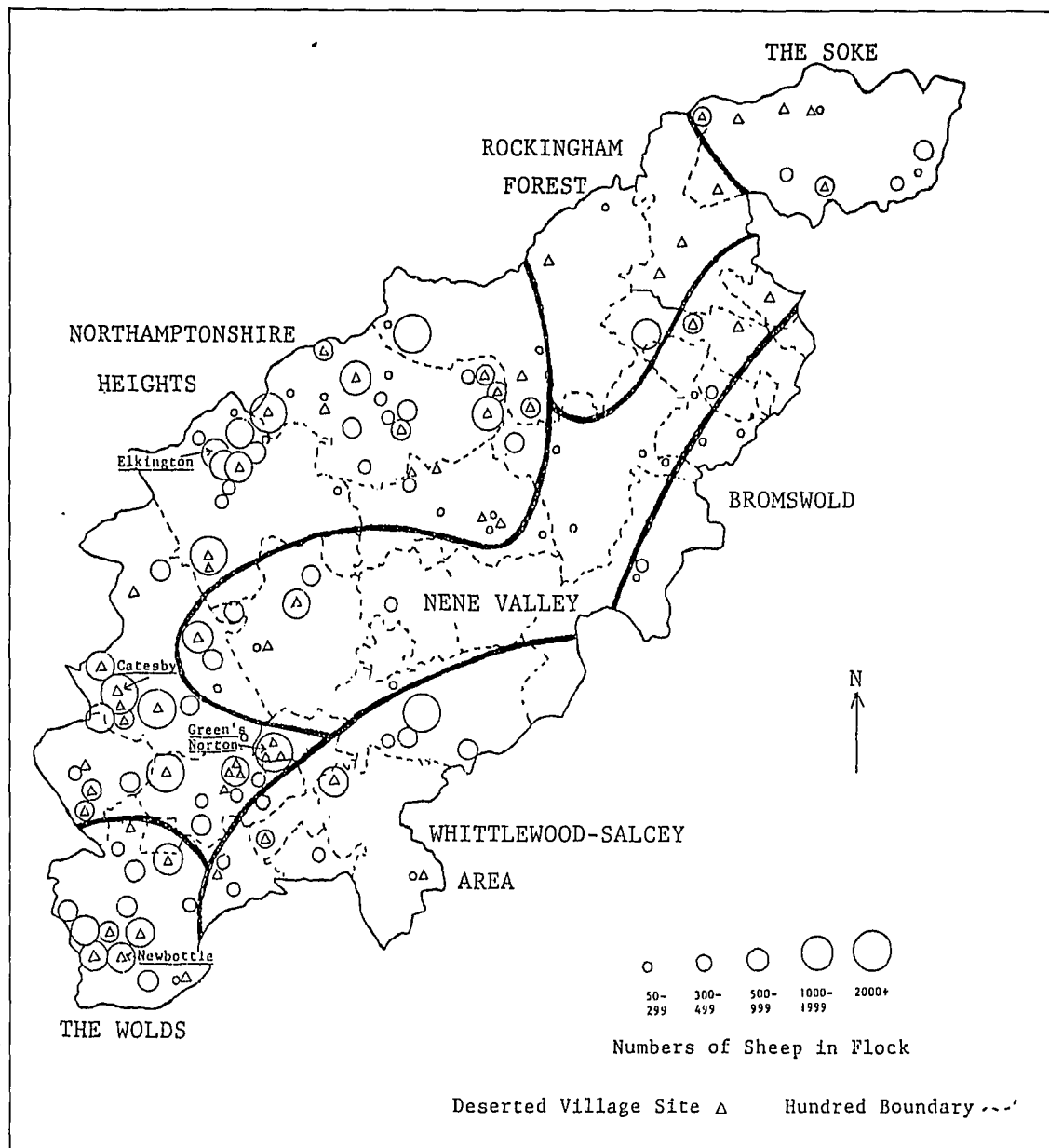
These sheep flocks were undoubtedly being run on enclosed pastures, even though the term 'enclosed' was not rigorously used.¹⁸ Those who kept large flocks were recorded individually and levied separately from the parishes. The later similar survey of 1564 often refers to closes specifically and the explicit reason for

¹⁵ Information from the Enclosure Commissions of 1517–18 and 1607 indicates clearly the centrality of Northamptonshire, alongside other inner Midland counties. In both enquiries the County ranked first in terms of area enclosed. E F Gay, 'The Midland revolt and the Inquisitions of Depopulation of 1607', *TRHS*, new series, XVIII, 1904. The latter enquiry covered the years 1578–1607 in which some 27,335 acres and 118 places were involved, according to Gay – by far the largest area recorded by county. Much of this enclosed land must have been turned over to the grazing of sheep. On the basis of about two sheep per acre (see Finch, *op cit*, p 139) perhaps an additional 25,000 to 30,000 sheep were pastured in this period. This accepts Gay's caveat that we cannot necessarily assume that acreage severed was in fact converted to pasture. The area explicitly recorded as enclosed and/or converted to pasture in the County over this period was 14,278 acres. Such estimates are based on a degree of confidence that the information collected did indeed represent real enclosure, unlike the argument mounted by Kerridge. See E Kerridge, 'The Returns of the Inquisitions of Depopulation', *English Historical Review*, LXX, 1955. For a critique of Kerridge's argument and support for the above view, see J Martin, 'Enclosure and the Inquisitions of 1607', *Ag Hist Rev*, XXX, Part 1, 1982.

¹⁶ This is based upon J Thirsk, 'The East Midlands', in J Thirsk (ed), *op cit*, and J M Steane, *The Northamptonshire Landscape*, 1974, Chapter 1.

¹⁷ British Library, Additional MS 25084. Woodworth, *op cit*.

¹⁸ The average Midland peasant flock grazing on the commons would have been no more than twenty to thirty sheep. Bowden, *The Wool Trade*, p 1.



MAP 1
Sheep Flocks in the County of Northamptonshire, 1547

updating this survey in 1595 was the extensive enclosure in the meantime. Many of those recorded in these surveys are known from other sources to have grazed sheep on enclosed land. We can take it that the instructions to compile a list of the 'names of such pastures and persons as be contributory to the king's most honourable house-

hold' and the enumeration of persons and flocks do indeed refer to flocks on enclosed land.

In total some 112 flocks of sheep were recorded for Northamptonshire in 1547, of which 66 were in the Western Division and 46 in the Eastern Division. Altogether, 66,700 sheep were recorded: 46,200 in the

TABLE 1
1547 Sheep Survey: Numbers of Flocks and Sheep in Northamptonshire Hundreds,
by Size Group

<i>Western Division</i>	1000+	<i>No of flocks in size group</i>			<i>Total no of flocks</i>	<i>Total no of sheep</i>	<i>Average flock size</i>	<i>% of parishes with flocks</i>
		500- 1000	300- 500	50- 300				
King's Sutton	4	6	4	1	15	8,700	580	60.9
Chipping Warden	1	3	1	0	5	3,000	600	45.5
Green's Norton	3	1	5	0	9	7,300	811	66.7
Fawsley	5	4	1	2	12	10,800	900	47.6
Towcester	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	0.0
Cleyley	1	0	0	0	2	1,400	700	13.3
Nobottle Grove	1	2	0	2	5	2,700	540	25.0
Guilsborough	5	1	3	3	12	8,600	717	36.8
Wymersley	1	1	2	1	5	3,400	680	23.8
Spelhoe	0	0	1	0	1	300	(300)	11.1
Total - West Div (157 parishes)	21	18	17	10	66	46,200	700	36.3
<i>Eastern Division</i>								
Rothwell	3	6	4	3	16	10,100	631	50.0
Orlingbury	0	0	1	4	5	1,000	200	29.4
Corby	2	1	0	3	6	4,000	667	19.4
Hamfordshoe	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	0.0
Higham Ferrers	0	0	1	1	2	400	200	14.3
Huxloe	0	1	1	4	6	1,500	250	28.6
Navisford	0	0	0	3	3	400	133	37.5
Polebrook	0	1	0	0	1	500	(500)	11.1
Willybrook	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	0.0
Nassaburgh	0	3	2	2	7	2,600	371	31.0
Total - East Div (173 parishes)	5	12	9	20	46	20,500	446	25.4
Total - Northants	26	30	26	30	112	66,700	596	30.6

Western and 20,500 in the Eastern Division. Table 1 presents the information analysed by Hundred and flock size.

Table 1 suggests considerable concentrations of large flocks in King's Sutton, Green's Norton, Fawsley and Guilsborough Hundreds in the West, and Rothwell in the Eastern Division. This is indicated in Map 1 which shows the distribution of flocks in the County. These large flocks

were particularly evident in the classic areas of deserted villages such as the Wolds (the south-western tip of the County, largely conterminous with King's Sutton Hundred) and Northamptonshire Heights (including Chipping Warden, Green's Norton, Fawsley, Guilsborough and Rothwell Hundreds). The Northamptonshire Heights were grazier territory par excellence and had 'depopulated sites as

close-packed as anywhere in England'.¹⁹ The close association of large flocks and deserted village sites is clearly shown on Map 1 (which also displays the location of the sixty village sites which were probably deserted prior to the mid-sixteenth century). Only four sites in Northamptonshire Heights, Whittlewood-Salcey and the Wolds did not have any flocks on them. In the Western Division there were concentrations of deserted village sites used for grazing in the area of Green's Norton (with seven sites), Catesby (five sites) and Newbottle (four sites), and in the East, Rushton (four sites). Some thirty-four sites in thirty-one parishes were recorded as grazing sheep in this survey and were definitely deserted by the mid-sixteenth century, and we could add another eleven sites probably deserted by this time. By 1564, another nine deserted village sites had flocks on them, all but one in the Eastern Division. The vast majority of these villages had been deserted during the previous century when wool-growing was expanding rapidly, rather than earlier. Upon the forty-five sites recorded for 1547, some 40,200 sheep grazed; an average of 855 sheep per flock, much larger than the average for Northamptonshire (596 – see Table 1).

19 Steane, *op cit*, pp 27, 161. For Map 1 we include the thirty-four deserted village sites where sheep flocks were found in 1547, cited in Allison *et al*, *op cit*. To these have been added another twenty-six sites which were deserted prior to 1700 and for which there is good evidence in Allison *et al* that this occurred prior to 1518 (p14). These sixty sites represented 73.2 per cent of the total for the County (eighty-two) recorded in Allison *et al*, and 76.9 per cent of the total (seventy-eight) recorded up to 1700, including those of uncertain but probable dates. By 1564, nine previously ungrazed sites now had flocks on them – in the East, eight sites with eleven flocks, total 2400 sheep; in the West, one site with one flock of 400 sheep. These additional sites occupied by 1564 are not depicted on Map 1.

According to Allison *et al* (*op cit*, pp 20–1), there were three areas of low density of deserted medieval villages: 1, the northeast tip of the County which was fenland thinly scattered with large villages not threatened by enclosure for pasture; 2, Rockingham Forest (only Kirby and Cotes were deserted between Wothorpe and Boughton) and Whittlewood Forest in the southwest. Both were lightly settled, and lacked the nucleated villages and extensive open fields which were tempting to graziers; 3, the Nene Valley – Allison *et al* consider that this area's immunity is difficult to explain, but speculate that the proximity of Northampton town favoured cattle for the leather industry rather than sheep.

Sheep farmers who could acquire such large tracts of pasture were at a distinct advantage.

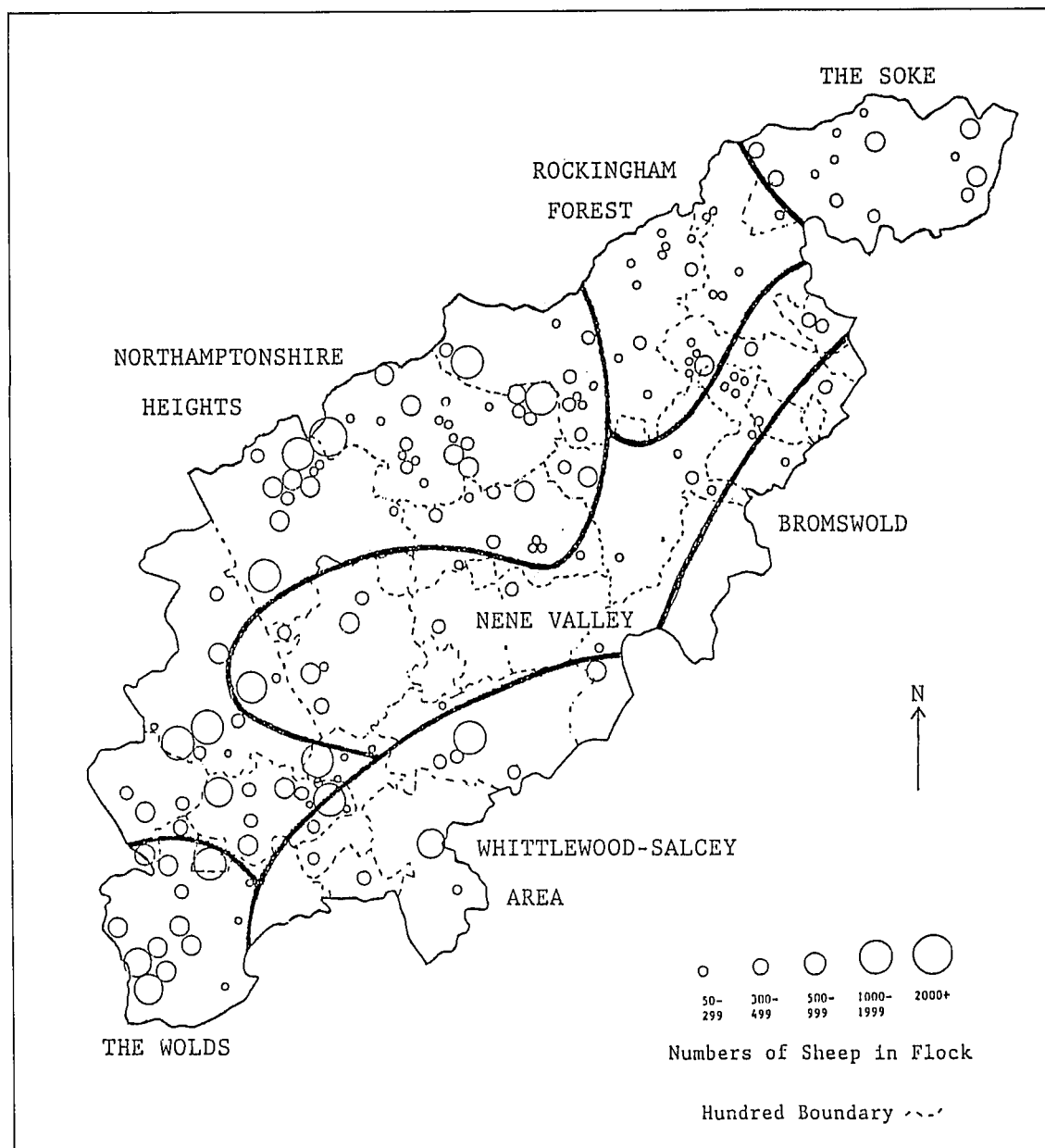
The percentage of parishes with recorded flocks in a Hundred may be taken as a measure of the impact of sheep in an area. In three Hundreds – King's Sutton (60.9 per cent); Green's Norton (66.7 per cent); and Rothwell (50.0 per cent) – half or more of their parishes contained flocks. In another two – Chipping Warden and Fawsley – between 40 and 50 per cent of parishes had flocks. Throughout the County 30.6 per cent of parishes had flocks – 36.3 per cent in the West and 25.4 per cent in the East. In other words capitalist sheep-farming was present in close to a third of all parishes in 1547. Some thirty-one places in twenty-eight parishes were both recorded in the Royal Commissions of 1517–18, as having suffered enclosure and depopulation in the period 1484–1517, and appeared in the sheep surveys of 1547 and 1564. Of these places, prosecutions for the offences were recorded for fourteen places in the Court of Exchequer prior to the 1547 survey, and another three prior to 1564.²⁰ The links between sheep-farming in the County in the sixteenth century, and previous enclosure, depopulation and desertion of villages are clearly apparent.

The 1564 sheep survey

This survey is contained within a Book of Fines and Estreats belonging to Sir Edward Montagu when he was Sheriff of the County at the end of the sixteenth century.²¹ This record contains a schedule and

20 I S Leadam (ed), *The Domesday of Inclosures, 1517–1518*, 1897, Vol 1, Northamptonshire, pp 261–318. Unfortunately we do not have access to similar information about specific parishes from the 1607 Commissions. Gay, 'The Midland Revolt', *op cit* only provides aggregate data for the county, and it seems that the documents have deteriorated since he used them so as to be virtually unreadable in parts. The documents are in the Public Record Office, Chancery C/205/5/5. Beresford, *Lost Villages*, *op cit*, Table 15a, p 402.

21 Northamptonshire County Records Office, Montagu Papers, second series 'A Book of Fines and Estreats, Eliz. I and Jac. I', ff 69–91, 112–18.



MAP 2
Sheep Flocks in the County of Northamptonshire, 1564

notes on purveyance relating to the year 1564, with additional enclosures noted since that time up to 1595. As in 1547, each parish with flocks of sheep was noted so that a systematic comparison can be made. By 1564 the number of flocks re-

corded had risen substantially to 173 (an increase of 54.5 per cent), and the number of sheep had also increased to 69,980 (an increase of 4.9 per cent). While there was a reduction in sheep numbers in the Western Division to 39,900, the number in the

TABLE 2
1564 Sheep Survey: Number of Flocks and Sheep in Northamptonshire Hundreds, by Size Group

<i>Western Division</i>	1000+	<i>No of flocks in size group</i>			<i>Total no of flocks</i>	<i>Total no of sheep</i>	<i>Average flock size</i>	<i>% of parishes with flocks</i>
		<i>500- 1000</i>	<i>300- 500</i>	<i>50- 300</i>				
King's Sutton	2	6	3	4	15	8,500	567	60.9
Chipping Warden	1	2	2	0	5	3,100	620	45.5
Green's Norton	2	2	5	4	13	6,300	485	75.0
Fawsley	3	2	2	3	10	6,500	650	42.7
Towcester	1	0	0	2	3	1,200	400	50.0
Cleyley	1	0	0	1	2	1,400	700	13.3
Nobottle Grove	0	2	3	1	6	2,600	433	35.0
Guilsborough	2	4	2	4	12	7,600	633	42.1
Wymersley	1	0	3	1	5	2,300	460	23.8
Spelhoe	0	0	1	1	2	400	200	22.2
Total - West Div	13	18	21	21	73	39,900	547	40.8
<i>Eastern Division</i>								
Rothwell	2	5	5	10	22	9,350	425	54.2
Orlingbury	0	1	3	6	10	2,700	270	58.8
Corby	1	1	7	16	25	6,630	265	64.5
Hamfordshoe	0	0	2	1	3	650	217	42.9
Higham Ferrers	0	1	0	1	2	700	350	14.3
Huxlow	0	1	2	4	7	2,000	286	33.3
Navisford	0	0	0	6	6	1,000	167	75.0
Polebrook	0	0	4	0	4	1,400	350	44.4
Willybrook	0	0	0	5	5	550	110	23.1
Nassaburgh	0	4	5	7	16	5,100	319	58.6
Total - East Div	3	13	28	56	100	30,080	301	49.1
Total - Northants	16	31	49	77	173	69,980	405	45.2

Eastern Division had increased considerably to 30,080. This information is presented in Table 2 and Map 2.²²

The general geographical pattern evident for larger flocks in 1547 persisted in 1564 with concentrations in King's Sutton, Green's Norton, Fawsley and Guilsborough in the Western Division, and Rothwell in the East. But by 1564 Nobottle Grove in the West and virtually

all Hundreds in the East apart from Higham Ferrers and Hamfordshoe experienced considerable increases in flock numbers. There was marked expansion in Corby and Polebrook, previously virtually without sheep, and a proliferation of small flocks in Rothwell, Orlingbury, Willybrook and Navisford Hundreds. In terms of regions, wool-growing had now expanded from the higher country down into the length of the Nene Valley and Rockingham Forest, where few flocks had been previously recorded. Flocks were now particularly evident in Rockingham Forest, a wooded-pastoral area.

²² I have been unable to trace and map the exact parish location for four small flocks in 1564 - one in Spelhoe; one in Hamfordshoe; and two in the Nassaburgh Hundred. Only 650 sheep in total are involved.

III

The changes evident in the period 1547-64 were the result largely of a proliferation of smaller flocks which spread throughout much of Northamptonshire, especially in the Eastern Division. The average flock size fell from 596 to 405, but at the same time the percentage of parishes with flocks grew substantially. By 1564 nearly half (45.2 per cent) of Northamptonshire parishes contained one or more flocks and thereby felt the impact of sheep grazing on enclosed pasture. In three Hundreds of the Western Division, half or more of the parishes were affected (King's Sutton, Towcester and Green's Norton). In the last-named a full three-quarters of its twelve parishes contained flocks, comprising a total of 6300 sheep. In another three Hundreds in the West, between 40 and 50 per cent of parishes contained flocks. Now more than half of parishes in the Eastern Division Hundreds of Rothwell, Orlingbury, Corby, Navisford and Nassaburgh had flocks.

In the intervening seventeen years, five Eastern Hundreds had increased flock numbers by five or more, and another three by three or four flocks, while only two Western Hundreds had increased by three or four flocks and none by a greater amount than this. Two countervailing trends were at work. Large flocks reduced

in number, while at the same time there were many more smaller flocks. Geographically, these trends are manifest in a reduction in sheep numbers in the West and a significant increase in the East which more than counterbalanced the trend in the West.

The 1564 survey was used by Sir Edward Montagu, Deputy Lieutenant, as a basis for revised purveyance schedules in the 1590s. The original levy was 11s 6d per hundred sheep. This was raised to 18s per hundred at that time. Montagu evidently felt that the survey of 1564 gave an adequate minimum baseline for the new levy, for he relied upon it heavily. This suggests that there was no significant reduction in numbers of sheep, flocks or owners that might require a new survey. Indeed, the changes noted in the document comprised two new lists of 'dyvers other grounds by decaying of tillage improved' and 'grounds inclosed since her Majesties reign'. This suggests that sheep-grazing had expanded further. The first contains thirty-three places in the Western Division, and the second a further thirty in the East, on which flocks of sheep undoubtedly grazed.²³ Excluding those parishes already recorded as grazing sheep (thirteen in the Western Division and twelve in the East) the number of parishes with sheep on enclosed pasture in Northamptonshire rose

TABLE 3
Extent of Surveyed Flocks of Sheep in Northamptonshire, 1547-95

	1547		1564		1595	
	No of parishes with flocks	% of total parishes	No of parishes with flocks	% of total parishes	No of parishes with flocks	% of total parishes
Western Division	57	36.3	64	40.8	73	46.5
Eastern Division	44	25.4	85	49.1	93	53.8
Northamptonshire	101	30.6	149	45.2	166	50.3

²³ A further twenty-one places recorded enclosure in the period 1564-95 for which either the names were indecipherable or the places could not be traced (probably eleven in the Western Division and another ten in the East, judging by location of

these places in the lists). These twenty-one places are not included in Table 3, but if included the impact of enclosure would be further increased.

from 101 (or 30.6 per cent of the total) in 1547, to 149 (or 45.2 per cent) in 1564, and to at least 166 (50.3 per cent) by the 1590s, as indicated in Table 3. In other words the spread of sheep farming in the half century since 1547, from a position of affecting 30.6 per cent of parishes in the County, now affected half of the parishes, with a fairly even balance between the Eastern and Western Divisions. The number of parishes with sheep flocks increased by at least two-thirds during this period.

IV

In mid-century, there were considerable numbers of farmers with large flocks, especially in the Western Division and in Rothwell Hundred in the East. Some of the more important names might be mentioned. The largest flock of 2500 sheep was run by Sir Valentine Knightley in Fawsley, a deserted village site. Knightley, together with Sir Thomas Newnham, also had a flock of 500 sheep in Everdon. This was followed by a number of flocks of 2000, run by Mr Oneley in Catesby; Lady Lane in Sulby; Mr John Gyfford in Watford; Mr Hickling and Mr Goodwyn in Green's Norton; and John Coope in Canon's Ashby. The last three flocks were pastured on deserted village sites. Coope also ran 600 sheep in the parish of Eydon, adjacent to Canon's Ashby.

These and other large sheep flocks were clustered in a number of adjacent parishes. Between Catesby and Green's Norton there was a great corridor of sheep pasture, where more than 15,000 sheep were recorded.²⁴ There the largest flock in the

County grazed at Fawsley. The parish of Newbottle, a deserted village site in the southwestern corner of the county, was also an important centre of pastures with 6300 sheep in its vicinity. In Guilsborough Hundred, Elkington (a deserted village site) was the centre for more than 10,500 sheep.

Taken together, these concentrations of flocks in the Western Division accounted for almost half of the total surveyed sheep in the county in 1547. The details concerning larger flocks and the changes experienced by 1564 are given in Table 4.

For these flocks there was an overall reduction in sheep numbers of 22.2 per cent. Averaged over all twenty-seven flocks in 1547 this meant a loss of 433 sheep on an average flock size of 1385. But against this new flocks appeared and this mitigated the decline in size. This is indicated in Table 5.

This trend in larger flocks was more than counterbalanced by an increase of 11,580 sheep in flocks of less than 1000 in number, from 1547 to 1564. This was a result of the massive expansion of smaller flocks in the Eastern Division, in particular into Corby and Nassaburgh Hundreds as

in Fawsley, there was the Oneley flock of 2000 accompanied by another of 1500 owned by the Bailey of Stowe, in Catesby. Mr and Mrs Andrews pastured 1200 sheep in Charwelton, a deserted village site, where there was also a flock of 300 belonging to Thomas Knight and one of 500 of Sir Valentine and Lady Knightley. Mr Richard Andrews ran 1000 sheep at Daventry and Thrupp in Norton. In Everdon there was a flock of 500 sheep jointly owned by Knightley and Sir Thomas Newnham. The latter also pastured a flock of 1200 in Newnham itself in 1564.

In the area of Newbottle, Peter Dormer owned a flock of 1000 sheep in Newbottle itself; in adjacent King's Sutton there was another flock of the same size. Fulco Barker ran a flock of 1000 in Steane, a deserted site on the other side of Newbottle, and two flocks of 1000 and 600 grazed on a deserted site on the boundary of Newbottle and King's Sutton. There was also a flock of 600 sheep in adjacent Farthinghoe, two of 500 in Warkworth and Croughton and another of 100 in Evenley.

In Elkington Mr John and Mr William Lane, Mr Cave and Mr Dorrell ran flocks of 1000 sheep apiece, and there were also three smaller flocks there adding up to another 1000, making some 4000 in all. In adjacent Welford, Mr Dorrell owned 1500 sheep and there was another flock of some 200 sheep. The two large flocks of 2000 belonging to Lady Lane and Mr John Gyfford grazed in nearby Sulby and Watford. Smaller flocks of several hundred sheep existed in Sibbertoft, Stanford and Winwick also.

²⁴ In the area of Green's Norton there were the large flocks already mentioned in Canon's Ashby and Green's Norton, as well as a flock of 1000 sheep owned by Lawrence Washington in Sulgrave (a deserted village site). This flock had grown to 1500 in 1564. There were also Mr Watt's flock of 1000 sheep in Blakesley, and Mr Foxley's of 400 in adjacent Woodend, both on deserted village sites; a flock of 300 in Muscott, a deserted village site in the parish of Green's Norton; a flock of 700 in Weedon Lois; 300 sheep in Plumpton; and 400 in Adstone.

In the area of Catesby, as well as Knightley's flock of 2500

TABLE 4
Change in Size of Flocks of 1000 or more in Northamptonshire Hundreds, 1547-64

Hundreds	Owners	Number of Sheep		
		1547	1564	Change
Western Division				
King's Sutton				
King's Sutton (and Walton)		1,000	1,400	+400
Newbottle	Peter Dormer, 1547	1,000	600	-400
Steane	Fulco Barker	1,000	500	-500
Purston [?]	Halles Pargetor [?]	1,000	1,500	+500
Chipping Warden				
Sulgrave	Stuchbury, Lawrence Washington	1,000	1,500	+500
Green's Norton				
Canon's Ashby	John Coope, 1547	2,000	1,600	-400
Blakesley and Woodend	Mr Watts	1,000	800	-200
Green's Norton	Mr Hickling and Mr Goodwyn, 1565	2,000	1,000	-1,000
Fawsley				
Fawsley	Sir Valentine Knightley	2,500	1,500	-1,000
Daventry and Thrupp	Mr Richard Andrews	1,000	800	-200
Catesby	Mr Oneley	2,000	—	-2,000
	The Bailey of Stowe	1,500	—	-1,500
Charwelton	Mr and Mrs Andrews	1,200	1,400	+200
Newnham	Sir Thomas Newnham and Mr Harrison	—	1,200	+1,200
Towcester				
Potcote	John Hickling	—	1,000	+1,000
Cleyley				
Grafton Regis	Sir John Williams	—	1,200	+1,200
Easton Neston	Sir John Williams and Mr Goodwyn [same flock?]	1,200	—	-1,200
Nobottle Grove				
Althorp	Mr John Spencer, 1547	1,200	800	-400
Guilsborough				
Watford and Silsworth	Mr John Gyfford, 1547	2,000	1,500	-500
Welford	Mr Dorrell, and Mr Saunders, 1564	1,500	1,400	-100
Elkington	Mr John and Mr William Lane	1,000	800	-200
	Mr Cave	1,000	800	-200
	Mr Dorrell	1,000	800	-200
Wymersley				
Preston Deanery		2,000	1,000	-1,000
Total - West Division		29,100	23,100	-6,000
Eastern Division				
Rothwell				
Sulby	Lady Lane, 1547	2,000	2,000	0
Little Oxenden, in Great Oxenden		1,000	600	-400
Pipewell, in Rushton		800	1,000	+200
Glendon, in Rushton		1,500	600	-900
Corby				
Brampton Ash		2,000	1,000	-1,000
Lyveden		1,000	800	-200
Total - East Division		8,300	6,000	-2,300
Total - Northamptonshire		37,400	29,100	-8,300

TABLE 5
Summary of Changes in Large Flocks of 1000
or more in Northamptonshire, 1547-64

	Stable	Gains	Losses	Total flocks
West Division	0	7	17	24
East Division	1	1	4	6
Northamptonshire	1	8	21	30

evident in Table 6, and Map 2 above. At the same time average flock size decreased (from 345 to 280). Unfortunately, flock-owners' names were only rarely included for the Eastern Division of the County so we cannot tell whether there was a corresponding proliferation of small graziers, or whether fewer individuals ran a substantial number of smaller, scattered flocks as did Thomas Tresham for example (see below).²⁵ Graziers may well have had to run smaller flocks in more dispersed enclosures as large consolidated tracts of pasture on deserted village sites in one or more adjacent parishes were increasingly hard to come by. The marked expansion of sheep-grazing into the wooded-pasture area of Rockingham Forest would have been in smaller closes typical of this kind of area.

There is other evidence supporting the general extent of sheep-farming evident in the two surveys of 1547 and 1564.²⁶ Two examples involving key Northamptonshire

graziers are presented here. The most renowned sheep-master of all, Sir John Spencer, is noted in the surveys by name only for Althorp, his home manor. He was recorded as keeping 1200 sheep in 1547 and 800 in 1564. By the early seventeenth century the Althorp flocks ranged between 1104 and 1451 sheep. In 1547 a number of gentlemen had substantial flocks in Elkington – a total of 4000 sheep. By the end of the century Spencer was involved in pasturing more than a thousand sheep there. In 1575 Spencer bought from William Gent the manor and farm of Muscott (comprising four closes of pasture) in Green's Norton. Mr Gent had run a flock of 300 sheep in these closes in 1547 and 1564. Spencer's flock at Muscott was noted as consisting of 284 sheep in 1633.

We now turn to the activities of Thomas Tresham of Rushton, another well-known grazier of the time. In 1547, Rushton (including Pipewell in Rushton) and nearby Lyveden were shown as having 2800 and 1000 sheep respectively. In 1564 the figures were 1900 and 1400. In 1540 Tresham emparked 420 acres in Lyveden, sufficient for about 800 sheep. By 1544 he had bought further pastures in the same

²⁵ We are unable to determine the social status of flockowners, whether aristocrat, gentry or peasant – sometimes individuals were given the honorific 'Sir' or 'Mr' but this was not common. However, because the minimum flock-size recorded was fifty this tends to exclude peasant flocks. Only six flocks of less than 100 sheep were recorded in 1564. Parker suggests that there was considerable peasant involvement in enclosure in Leicestershire in the latter half of the sixteenth century, suggesting that peasants enclosed 19 per cent of the total area. L A Parker, 'Enclosure in Leicestershire, 1485-1607', University of London, PhD thesis, 1948. However, only a very small proportion of this area was enclosed by freeholders and yeomen specifically (299 acres out of 1826 acres, or 16.4 per cent). The remainder was enclosed by tenants of unknown status. In other words, it is unclear whether these people were true peasants or larger grazier leaseholders.

²⁶ For this section, see Finch, *op cit*, generally and especially pp 8, 311, 40-3, 48, 69, 74, 17111. Further examples of corroboration of the survey figures could be given. Watford recorded 2000 sheep in 1547, and 1500 sheep in 1564. This matches well the numbers grazed there some fifty years later. In 1606,

William Watkin of Watford was charged in the Court of Exchequer for holding more than 2000 sheep. In 1564, there were 300 sheep at Lampport; in the period 1571-96 John Isham of that parish held between 731 and 1572 sheep there. In 1547, 500 sheep were recorded in Kelmarsh, and in 1564 there were 1050 of which 800 were owned by Mr Osborne. Some 400 of these sheep were in Osborne's New Close. In 1598, Robert Osborne was accused in the Court of Star Chamber of having 1400 sheep at Kelmarsh. Public Record Office, Star Chamber Proceedings, Sta. Cha. 5/A13/36. Others from Northamptonshire who were at the same time accused of depopulation and conversion of arable into pasture were Thomas Isham of Lampport (see above) and Richard Humphrey of Barton Seagrave. In 1547, Barton Seagrave contained 200 sheep and in 1564, 800 sheep. Beresford, *Lost Villages*, pp 193-4, cites a document circa 1530-40, in which the largest wool growers in various counties are listed. In Northamptonshire Lord Vaux, Sir Richard Knightley, Sir Robert Lee, Sir Robert Dormer and Mr Anthony Cave were named. The Knightleys, Dormer and Cave were specifically cited in the surveys of 1547 and 1564. The Knightleys pastured a total of 3,500 sheep in Fawsley, Charwelton and Snorscombe in 1547. This correlates reasonably well with the 30 sacks of wool (or approximately 3600-5400 sheep) Beresford suggests the Knightleys produced just before that date.

TABLE 6
Changes in Smaller Flocks and Numbers of Sheep in Northamptonshire
Hundreds, 1547-64

<i>Western Division</i>	<i>1547</i>		<i>1564</i>		<i>Change</i>	
	<i>Flocks</i>	<i>Sheep</i>	<i>Flocks</i>	<i>Sheep</i>	<i>Flocks</i>	<i>Sheep</i>
King's Sutton	11	4,700	11	4,500	0	-200
Chipping Warden	4	2,000	4	1,600	0	-400
Green's Norton	6	2,300	10	2,900	+4	+600
Fawsley	7	2,600	6	1,600	-1	-1,000
Towcester	0	0	2	200	+2	+200
Cleyley	1	200	1	200	0	0
Nobottle Grove	4	1,500	5	1,800	+1	+300
Guilsborough	7	2,100	7	2,300	0	+200
Wymersley	4	1,400	4	1,300	0	-100
Spelhoe	1	300	2	400	+1	+100
Total - West Div.	45	17,100	52	16,800	+7	-300
Mean size of flock		380		323		
<i>Eastern Division</i>						
Rothwell	12	4,800	18	5,150	+6	+350
Orlingbury	5	1,000	10	2,700	+5	+1,700
Corby	4	1,000	23	4,830	+19	+3,830
Hamfordshoe	0	0	3	650	+3	+650
Higham Ferrers	2	400	2	700	0	+300
Huxloe	6	1,500	7	2,000	+1	+500
Navisford	3	400	6	1,000	+3	+600
Polebrook	1	500	4	1,400	+3	+900
Willybrook	0	0	5	550	+5	+550
Nassaburgh	7	2,600	16	5,100	+9	+2,500
Total - East Div.	40	12,200	94	24,080	+54	+11,880
Mean size of flock		305		256		
Total - Northants	85	29,300	146	40,880	+61	+11,580
Mean size of flock		345		280		

area for another 300 sheep. Tresham also bought Luscottes assart lands in Brigstock in 1538, comprising eight closes of 170 acres. In 1564 some 200 sheep were recorded for these closes. In 1597, Tresham held a total of 3440 sheep in Rushton and Pipewell, and a further 2860 in Lyveden. These figures on numbers of sheep which are drawn from other sources strengthen confidence in the figures compiled from the two surveys, and illustrate the extensive enclosure in the second half of the sixteenth century.

VI

The information provided by these two surveys gives us a detailed understanding of the pattern and changes in sheep-grazing in Northamptonshire in the second half of the sixteenth century. The surveys show us that large-scale grazing was prevalent in the County and that many flocks were on deserted village sites. Sheep-grazing spread throughout Northamptonshire in the latter half of the sixteenth century, particularly into Eastern Hundreds, and there was a considerable increase in the

number of flocks of less than a thousand sheep. By the end of the century, half of the County's parishes contained flocks on enclosed pasture. In other words, capitalistic sheep-farming had become a feature of the County. Northamptonshire did not experience the contraction in sheep num-

bers which might have been expected if the changing price relativity between wool and grain was indeed so crucial in causing the reconversion of pasture to arable. Instead, graziers increased in number and importance and the County remained in the forefront of the enclosure movement.

Notes and Comments

WINTER CONFERENCE, 1987

The 1987 Winter Conference was held jointly with the Historical Geography Research Group of the Institute of British Geographers. Four papers were given on the theme of 'Food production, land use and diet during war'. P Dewey considered 'Production problems in British farming, 1914-18'; J Chapman discussed 'The effects of the First World War on trends in land-use change'; J Martin presented a paper on 'The British food production campaign of the Second World War: a reassessment'; and the conference concluded with D Oddy on 'Diet and food supply in the two world wars'. The Society is grateful to Dr Turner for organizing yet another successful conference. The Society's winter conference will be breaking from custom in 1988 in that it will not be held jointly with the Historical Geography Research Group. In the future it is hoped that the winter conference may be held in conjunction with other bodies with an interest in agrarian history.

SPRING CONFERENCE, 1988

Full details and a booking form for the 1988 Spring Conference, which is to be held at Plaxtole House, King's Lynn, should have been received by members or included with this copy of the *Review*.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1988

The 36th Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at 9 am on Thursday 7 April 1988 at Plaxtole House, King's Lynn. Nomination forms for officers and members of the Executive Committee should be inserted in this issue of the *Review*. Nominations should reach the Secretary no later than Thursday 31 March 1988. Members are reminded that it was agreed at the 1986 AGM that those nominating candidates for the Executive Committee should supply a twenty-word statement about each candidate to be circulated at the AGM of the Society.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

It is quite remarkable that the Society's membership subscription has remained at £5 since 1 February 1977. The costs of printing the *Review* now far exceed the income from subscriptions, and so a proposal will be put to the AGM in April that the Society's annual subscription be raised to £9 with effect from 1 February 1989. If the meeting agrees to this increase it is hoped that it will be maintained at this level for at least four years.

COMPUTER-BASED INDEX TO THE IRISH ORDNANCE SURVEY MEMOIRS

Members of the Society may be interested in a project, based at the Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast, which aims to transcribe and index an important collection of manuscripts belonging to the Royal Irish Academy, the Ordnance Survey Memoirs, and make them more accessible to scholars and the interested public. These uniquely detailed parish accounts record Irish landscape, economy and society in the 1830s and were written as part of the first Ordnance Survey of Ireland. They describe 19 counties of Ireland but most attention was paid to the northern half, particularly counties Antrim and Londonderry. Very few Ordnance Survey Memoirs have been edited and published. By transcribing edited texts of the parish Memoirs, putting them on computer, and then indexing every text individually, a database has been established. An information retrieval programme developed at Queen's University of Belfast has been run on the texts. This indexes every significant word in the texts which are specially structured with fields or headings and text. The Memoirs are particularly diverse in subject matter describing buildings and antiquities, trades and occupations, land use, farming practice and produce, markets and manufactures, giving school and dispensary statistics and other

(continued on page 75)