

Jethro Tull I, II, and III

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Abstract

Although Jethro Tull has been recognized as an important innovatory figure in agricultural methods in the eighteenth century, little has been written concerning his origins and social background; and much of that is either vague or inexact. From genealogical and other research, new information is provided concerning the family background of Jethro Tull. In particular the three Jethro Tulls who overlapped in time and place (especially with regard to Prosperous Farm) are distinguished. Some revision is suggested in the date of Tull's commencement at Prosperous Farm and of his journey to the continental vineyards. This and other additional background information throws light both on Tull's personality and behaviour and on his need to innovate in order to convert Prosperous from sheepdown to arable.

ALTHOUGH Jethro Tull the agriculturist was one of the great innovatory figures of the early eighteenth century, his origins, social background, and many other aspects of his life have remained obscure. Works concerning Tull have, quite naturally, concerned themselves primarily with his theories and practice; his ancestral and social origins have been concealed from his biographers, and several events in his life which clearly have a bearing on the development of his practice and theories or on their relationship to each other have been ascribed to speculative rather than exact or proven dates. The fact is that the sources of information concerning Tull's life are skimpy, and later accounts tend to follow earlier ones blindly and without necessary verification.

The earliest information we have is to be found in scattered remarks made by Tull himself in the various editions of his *Horse-Hoeing Husbandry*. The object of many of his autobiographical remarks was almost wholly defensive, to rebut what he considered unfair attacks upon his farming practice. Used in this controversial context his autobiographical remarks are inevitably limited, revealing only that which he wished to reveal to the outside world and then simply to refute a specific inaccuracy by one or other of his opponents. Nevertheless these occasional sentences in the text or in the footnotes of his work are the major primary material which provides

us with some details of his personal life and background, scanty though they are. These scattered notes and addenda were collated in William Cobbett's edition of 1829, making it the most convenient edition to use overall.¹

The next source of information is to be found in an article written by one D Y of Hungerford and published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1764. The identity of D Y is not known, but he claims to have been 'personally acquainted' with Tull and, if the ascription 'of Hungerford' is true, he lived in the same parish and was therefore in a good position to know something of a personal kind concerning the subject of his article. Nevertheless, there are many details which he takes on trust from the scattered autobiographical details given by Tull himself.²

The third source of material for Tull's life is Earl Cathcart's article in the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*, 1891. This article bases itself on the diary of Cathcart's ancestor, an earlier Earl Cathcart who befriended and encouraged Tull during his lifetime.³

On these three sources – Tull himself, D Y of Hungerford, and Earl Cathcart – all subsequent biographies have based themselves, adding thereto little of consequence. The *Dictionary of National Biogra-*

¹ Jethro Tull, *The Horse-Hoeing Husbandry*, ed. Cobbett 1829.

² D Y, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1764, pp 522–526.

³ Earl Cathcart, 'Jethro Tull', *JRAS*, 3rd series, II, 1891.

phy contains an article which summarizes the information up to the date of its publication. In 1973, Dr G E Fussell wrote a volume *Jethro Tull: his influence on mechanised Agriculture*, in which he devoted a chapter to Tull's biography, and in it he reveals some of the many uncertainties and confusions which have existed and which he himself is unable to explain away.⁴

Some of the main confusions and uncertainties concern Tull's parentage, his father's place of origin, his social and financial standing; the date and place at which Tull himself commenced farming; the date at which he removed from Howberry to Prosperous Farm in Shalbourne; the true date of his extensive tour abroad to Montpellier and the French vineyards; and even the exact date and place of his death.

I

The *Dictionary of National Biography* states that Jethro Tull was born at Basildon in Berkshire in the year 1674, the son of Jethro and Dorothy Tull. And indeed there is an entry in the Basildon parish register recording a baptism on 30 March 1674 which confirms this. After this date, however, there are no further entries in the Basildon register which might indicate that the family were settled in the parish and thus the probability that young Jethro spent his boyhood there.

G E Fussell in his life of Jethro Tull is aware of this difficulty. 'How the family became connected with Basildon was not known in 1889' (presumably the date of publication of the *DNB* article), he writes.⁵ In fact, however, the connection with Basildon is explicable, and in what is the most likely way. It was in Basildon in June 1672 that Jethro Tull married Dorothy Buckeridge. The Buckeridges were a Basil-

don family and Basildon was the bride's parish.⁶ A search of neighbouring parish registers reveals that Jethro and Dorothy had a daughter, named Dorothy, baptized in the parish of Bradfield on 5 February 1676. Bradfield is the parish immediately south of Basildon; and this rather than Basildon, was the home of the Tulls.⁷ The next baptism we have for a child of Jethro and Dorothy Tull, however, is in a parish as far removed in Berkshire as it was possible to be. This was the baptism of Elizabeth, daughter of Jethro and Dorothy Tull, at Shalbourne 14 April 1679.⁸

Shalbourne was the site of Prosperous Farm; it lies at the extreme southwest of the parish of Hungerford and is partly in Wiltshire and partly in Berkshire. The question arises as to what was Tull senior's connection with Shalbourne at this date, and whether he was farming Prosperous Farm there. Indeed Fussell asks whether the connection may not have been even earlier, pointing out that the 1664-6 (*sic*) *Visitation of Berkshire* mentions a Jethro Tull of Shalbourne 'who married Mary, daughter of one Farmer of Cholsey, whose Christian name is not stated'.⁹ But it is stated, revealing that Fussell had not consulted his primary sources. The *Visitation* shows that Jethro Tull of Shalbourne was the son of Giles Tull of Midgham, Berks; that he had an elder brother James of Bradfield, Berks, and a younger brother Giles; and that he married Mary daughter of Jeffery Farmer of Cholsey, Berks. That these facts are correct is certified by Jethro Tull himself.¹⁰

The *Victoria County History of Berkshire* confirms this marriage, indirectly, by its entry concerning the advowson of the church of Cholsey, possession of which was shared in 1682 by Mary, 'daughter of

⁴ G E Fussell, *Jethro Tull: his influence on mechanized Agriculture*, Reading, 1973.

⁵ Fussell, *op cit* p 6.

⁶ Berks RO, Basildon Parish Register 3 June 1672.

⁷ Berks RO, Bradfield Parish Register 18 Jan 1635, 1 Jan 1644 etc.

⁸ Wilts RO, 534/1 Shalbourne Parish Register 14 April 1679.

⁹ Fussell, *op cit* p 6.

¹⁰ *Visitation of Berkshire 1665/6*. Harleian Soc, LVI, p 297.

Geoffrey Farmer and wife of Jethro Tull'.¹¹

The possible awkwardness of a daughter born to Jethro and Dorothy Tull in 1679 and a Jethro Tull with a wife Mary in 1682 seems to have raised no queries from the biographers of the son of Jethro and Dorothy. One would expect them to have searched for a burial entry between those years which would confirm the death of Dorothy. In such searching they might have discovered, but obviously did not, that there exists a foot of fine in 1678, in which Jethro Tull and his wife Mary sold land in Hungerford, Inkpen and Shalbourne to Sir William Jones, Attorney General.¹² Only two conclusions seem to present themselves: either Jethro Tull was a bigamist or there were two Jethro Tulls, both associated with Shalbourne. Still further search uncovers a case in Chancery in 1678 in which Jethro Tull was a defendant in a suit brought by Frances Farmer widow of Jeffery Farmer, in which a copyhold in Cholsey was involved and concerning the administration of the estate of the late Jeffery Farmer.¹³

Depositions in yet another suit claim that in January 1674 an agreement or treaty was made between Griffith Jones of Radnorshire, Wales, and Jethro Tull of Cholsey, Berks, gent, for a marriage to be solemnized between Jones's son and Elizabeth Goddard, daughter and heir of Vincent Goddard, late of Howberry, Oxon. Esq. deceased, Jethro Tull having married Mary, Elizabeth's mother.¹⁴

Clearly, if there are two Jethro Tulls at this time, one married to Dorothy Buckeridge and one to Mary Farmer, both having associations with Howberry as well as with Shalbourne, it becomes difficult to be certain of the exact origins of Jethro Tull the agriculturist. And if the Jethro Tull of Cholsey married Mary Farmer how is it

he is now revealed as married to Mary Goddard? The answer to this is fortunately simple. Mary Farmer first married Vincent Goddard; and subsequently, following Vincent's death,¹⁵ she became the wife of Jethro Tull. For the purpose of this article it may now be convenient to label Jethro Tull who married Mary Goddard née Farmer as Jethro Tull I and Jethro Tull who married Dorothy Buckeridge Jethro Tull II. Jethro Tull the agriculturist will then be Jethro Tull III.

II

Which of the Jethros I and II was the Jethro Tull who was holding Prosperous Farm in the years prior to its occupation by the agriculturist Jethro Tull III? Deeds in the Wiltshire Record Office connect Jethro Tull II and his wife Dorothy with Prosperous Farm in 1686.¹⁶ Deeds formerly in the Berkshire Record Office but now in the Wiltshire Record Office relate to a Jethro Tull in the area in 1674 and earlier.¹⁷ The biographers of Jethro Tull the agriculturist (Jethro III) have simply merged the two men into one. They have not only missed details in local parish registers (more accessible nowadays than in theirs), but they seem to have been unaware of the rich source of material in the records of the court of Chancery which concern Jethro Tull I, II, and III.

Deposing in a Chancery suit which occurred in 1676, Jethro Tull I describes himself as of Cholsey, Berks, gent, aged 60 or thereabouts. He had been employed by Thomas Hussey senior in receiving and collecting the rents and profits of Hussey's estates in Hampshire, Berkshire and Wiltshire for nearly twenty years before the latter's death, (which occurred in 1657). He continued in this capacity during the lifetime of Hussey's son, Thomas Hussey

¹¹ *Victoria County History, Berks*, III, p. 302.

¹² Public Record Office: CP25/2/29-30 Charles II, Hilary term.

¹³ PRO, C22/249/5.

¹⁴ PRO, C5/169/38.

¹⁵ PRO, PCC Will, Vincent Goddard 1657.

¹⁶ Quoted by Fussell, *op cit*, p. 21.

¹⁷ Wilts RO, 1883/127.

junior (who died in 1661) and again for his heir William Hussey, who in 1668 relinquished the estate to a group of trustees headed by Sir Robert Mason. Tull was employed by them in a continuing capacity until about 1673.¹⁸

In the management of these estates Jethro Tull was the one continuing element, a trusted agent who served one master after another. His indispensability was recognized by substantial annuities bequeathed in the wills of both Thomas Hussey senior and Thomas Hussey junior. Business transactions, including the sale or lease of properties, were carried out by Tull on behalf of his employers. He was the centre of a whole web of estate affairs; the network was complex and intricate and its management full of difficulties.

The difficulties arose from the fact that the ancient family of Hussey lived above its income, as the suit *Elwes v. Wall* makes plain. According to Jethro, Thomas Hussey senior was indebted at the time of his death to several persons for considerable sums of money upon mortgage bonds and otherwise amounting to £23,000 and about £1000 in addition on his own account.¹⁹ Jethro's account is honest and lucid. The trustees 'could not raise money out of the estate to pay the testator's debts, annuities and legacies as fast as they were demanded or called for and to pay fines for renewing leases, but were forced from time to time to prevent suits or damage to the estate to take up several great sums of money upon their own bonds or security at interest for payment of the said debts, annuities or legacies'. It would seem that the affairs of the trustees and of Jethro himself, their friends and acquaintances all became involved in the affairs of the Hussey estate as lenders or borrowers or sureties. The juggler given the task of keeping all these

balls in the air was Jethro Tull. The principals who employed him quarrelled among themselves and were unwilling or unable to adjust themselves to the growing crisis.

The point was reached where the profits of the estate were not sufficient to pay the interest and brokerage of the debts and the inevitable crash came in or about 1673-4. Tull, whose hand was in everything, went down first. Sir Bulstrode Whitelocke, Cromwell's former ambassador to Sweden, who had been encouraged by Tull (as agent for Hussey's trustees) into the purchase of Chilton Park and the manor of Hidden a few years previously, notes in his diary on 1 May 1674: 'More [news] of Mr Tulle's being broke'. It caused trouble for Whitelocke for he, too, had been a surety in one of Tull's deals on behalf of the Hussey estate.²⁰

During the period of collapse Tull's own lands were being sold off in a desperate attempt to bring the financial crisis under control. In 1674 Tull signed a release of Anvilles Farm, and another of Helmes Farm to Sir William Jones.²¹ In 1677 he released his rights in Helmes Heath to Sir John Elwes, one of Hussey's trustees, and in 1677/8 he released to Sir William Jones all his estate in Old Anvilles. These properties were all in the immediate neighbourhood of Prosperous Farm, and it would seem that Jethro, by various purchases or gifts from the Husseys, had been building up a small but conglomerate estate of his own in an area to which he may have had a special attachment. Any such ambition was now dashed.

When news of his misfortune broke everyone turned on the hapless agent. He was involved either as a principal or as a deponent in a succession of law suits²² and for the remainder of his life Jethro Tull I had to dodge his creditors. One of them

¹⁸ PRO, C24/1012 pt 1.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ R Spalding ed, *Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke* [in preparation OUP].

²¹ Wilts RO, 1883/127.

²² PRO, C22/803/50; C22/101/16; C22/249/5; C24/1012; C5/169/38.

pursued him from Wales to Cholsey where he found only his wife Mary. Mrs Tull told the weary seeker that 'her husband had not been there once for a long time before, neither could she tell him where to send unto him'. Another deponent in the same suit asserted that 'it is commonly reported that Tull is far indebted and engaged deeply to many creditors that he hath by reason of his own debts and suretyships for others passed and conveyed all his estate to some trustees under colour of bargains or privately that thereby he might avoid the payment of his debts . . . it is also commonly reported that he doth abscond and hide himself in some privileged places (or places said to be privileged) from arrest lest he should be arrested'.²³

In 1688/9 Tull was in Midhurst, Sussex²⁴ and there he died, being buried on 23 September 1691. The burial record is taken from a typed transcript made by W H Challen and, typical of the confusion which surrounds and clings to the name Jethro Tull, it has been mistranscribed as Jethro Full!²⁵

II

His busy, active life may seem to have ended in failure. But he never gave up his ambition to establish a Tull estate in that hilly corner of Berkshire adjoining the lands of his former employers. Somehow he contrived to squeeze out of his losses a farm in the area which he boldly called (or which by amazing chance was called) Prosperous. He was able to do this by transferring the farm to Jethro Tull II before his creditors could get at it. A letter written by Jethro I to Jethro II and dated 25 May 1680 says 'I owe you for my own dyett [diet] and for my horse ever since you came to Prosperouse'.²⁶ The transaction

seems to substantiate the deposition which referred to his use of 'trustees' to save some at least of his estate from the Tull/Hussey creditors. The letter (particularly when linked with the baptism in Shalbourne in 1679 of Jethro Tull II's daughter Elizabeth) makes it clear that Jethro II had settled into the property; and the acknowledgement by Jethro I of his debt for board and lodging suggests that he had granted the estate to Jethro II more fully than if he had appointed him as a nominal trustee only.

The use of the name Prosperous at this early date, long before the agricultural innovations of Jethro III, shows that the farm's name did not derive (as some may think) from the youngest Tull's success but was already in existence. The earliest use of the name I have been able to find is in a document of 1677 when Jethro Tull I is described as of Prosper farm.²⁷ It is certain that the farm, as such, did not exist before the time of Jethro Tull I. He seems to have created it from bits and pieces of land lying in and between other farms in the area, such as Helmes, Anvilles, Old Anvilles, and Helmes Heath. The latter was an area which had been subject to constant enclosures and one must suspect that Prosperous may have in part owed its origin to one or other of these enclosures.²⁸ Jethro III says that the farm was 'cut out of the skirts of others and a great part of the land was formerly a sheep down'; and elsewhere in his book he says that Prosperous was first made into a farm 'about seventy years ago', a statement that takes it back to the time of Jethro I.²⁹

Since Jethro Tull I granted Prosperous Farm to Jethro Tull II, how close was their relationship? Although all previous writers have confused (or ignored) the relationship, usually considering Jethro I and Jethro II as one and the same man, the answer is quite simple. Jethro Tull I was

²³ PRO, C22/465/8.

²⁴ PRO, C24/1123.

²⁵ W H Challen, *Typescript*, vol XII, Guildhall Library, London.

²⁶ PRO, C22/920/24.

²⁷ Wilts RO, 1883/127.

²⁸ Berks RG, H/M5.

²⁹ Tull, *op cit*, pp 214, 386.

the brother of James Tull of Bradfield, and James was the father of Jethro Tull II.³⁰ The two Jethros, therefore, were uncle and nephew. As it was the uncle who had married Mary Goddard and the nephew who had married Dorothy Buckeridge it is clear that the father of Jethro Tull the agriculturist was Jethro II.

The family was evidently very close and in a deposition in 1698 young Jethro Tull III, then aged 24 and at Grays Inn, testifies on behalf of his father.³¹ Also deposing is another James Tull, brother of Jethro II, who states that his uncle [Jethro I] 'did possess and live in a farm called Prosperent (?) farm in or near Shalborne or Bagshot and worth about £100 p.a., part freehold and part leasehold, and another farm of about £30 p.a. in or near Bagshot or Shalborne, Berks for about seven or eight years of his said uncle's life', and he believed his brother [Jethro II] had received rent from it ever since Jethro I's death. The last time James Tull had seen his uncle was at the Rose and Crown in the precinct of Whitefriars in London not long before the latter's death when his uncle told him that he had made over certain farms and premises to his nephew [Jethro II] in trust for the payment of his debts and seemed to complain that Jethro II had paid little of them.

Jethro II continued to hold his estate at Howberry throughout these crises. In 1691, about four years after he had acquired Howberry from Edmund Gregory (an associate of Jethro I), he was involved in a law suit concerning the rent charges and taxes on the property.³² This is the first sign of his growing financial problems. It is also the year in which his uncle Jethro I died. Sheltered hitherto from legal and financial problems by his uncle's ingenuity and wide-ranging contacts, Jethro II now began to be plagued by

lawsuits which had reached a peak in 1695 and in which his family affairs were exposed in all their shakiness.³³ The financial problems which brought down Jethro I were now close to bringing down Jethro II too. This was during those years when his son Jethro III was leading, successively, the life of an undergraduate at Oxford, a student of Grays Inn, and a young man about town in London. The fall of his great uncle Jethro I would have been ancient history but the effects of it were continuing and the financial predicament in which this involved his own family cannot have been but embarrassing, perhaps distressing, to a young man in a family so closely knit that the name Jethro (meaning in Hebrew, ironically, 'abundance') was passed down for three successive generations. The sudden reversal of the Tull family fortunes and its continuing reverberations may be the circumstances to which Jethro III referred when he wrote that 'accident, not choice, made me a farmer, or rather many unforeseen accidents'.³⁴

In 1697 Jethro Tull II explains that he, his father James Tull, and his uncle Jethro I had had 'many dealings together and [had] been bound for one another in several bonds'.³⁵ When James died, he appointed both Jethro I and Jethro II as his executors. But it was Jethro I who undertook the administration, Jethro II then 'being a young man and but little acquainted with business'. Jethro II states that his uncle had satisfied all the debts owed by James and discharged all his bonds. He claims that the suits brought against him now were merely vexatious and that his time and money were being exhausted by his 'being forced to defend himself against a multiplicity of suits and be put to the charges of bringing his evidences often times to

³⁰ PRO, C22/920/24.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² PRO, C22/296/3.

³³ PRO, C22/920/23.

³⁴ Tull, *op cit*, p. xi.

³⁵ PRO, C10/353/52.

the same matter at law'. A year later there were no less than four suits pending which involved Jethro II.³⁶

Among the allegations made in the case in 1697 was one that Jethro II had undertaken to 'pay all his uncle's [outstanding] debts and on that condition got all the estate from his said uncle in his lifetime'.

III

Biographers of Jethro Tull III seem to have been unable to discover the date of his father's death. The actual date is of some moment in establishing when Jethro III may have inherited his father's estate in Howberry (and also the freehold portion of the estate in Shalbourne). It is possible that the estate, or a portion of it, was made over to him and his wife upon his marriage in 1699. The leasehold portion of the Shalbourne estate had been made over to him in 1704.³⁷ This transfer (a lease having been previously held by his father dated 1686) has led some biographers to assume that it was in this year 1704 that the father died. This was not so: Jethro Tull II died in 1713.³⁸

Does the lease of 1704 mean that young Jethro began to farm Prosperous at that date while his father continued at Howberry until his death in 1713? The *Dictionary of National Biography* commences him at Prosperous in 1709, though for no given reason. No further reference has yet been found of Jethro II at Prosperous later than the 1686 lease; but there are various references to him in Howberry from 1688 onwards, corresponding with the suggested date of his acquisition of the farm at Howberry.³⁹ The new property there would certainly have taken up his time and energies. It was quite natural, therefore, that from Michaelmas 1686 to September

1691 Prosperous Farm should have been leased to a local tenant farmer named Smith, a lease which was then extended for at least another two years.⁴⁰

It seems unlikely that the occupation of Prosperous Farm by Jethro Tull III would have been later than the 1704 lease, and his management of the farm might have been even earlier. If it is true that Jethro began his agricultural experiments at Howberry it seems that they must have been carried out between 1699, the date of his marriage, and 1704 when he and his wife acquired the new lease at Shalbourne. If the experiments did indeed cause hostility in his father's main estate at Howberry, this could well have been a cause for the father to feel the need to remove the son to another area where he could begin afresh. On the other hand there is a local tradition that Tull's seed drill was first used at Prosperous Farm. The claim was made by a later owner of the farm, Lt.-Col Wills, who showed the broadcaster-journalist Ralph Wightman the very pit or well into which, he claimed, the villagers had pushed the hated drill, having first smashed and broken it.⁴¹

There has been much speculation concerning the date of Jethro Tull III's journey to the Continent. Fussell gives April 1711 as his date of departure, basing it on Tull's own statement, 'and he is most likely to be correct, although memory is apt to play a man false'.⁴² The *Dictionary of National Biography* dates his departure similarly and gives his return as in 1714.⁴³ If either of these statements were correct, one would wonder at the baptism on 13 October 1713 at Shalbourne of Tull's daughter Sarah.⁴⁴

However, a different set of dates which makes much more sense is thrown up by the information given in yet another Chancery case in which Jethro III's bro-

³⁶ PRO, C22/920/34.

³⁷ Quoted by Fussell, *op cit*, pp 21-22.

³⁸ PRO, C11/975/2.

³⁹ PRO, C22/296/3; C22/920/24; C10/353/52.

⁴⁰ PRO, C10/353/52.

⁴¹ Ralph Wightman, *Rural Rides*, 1957, p16.

⁴² Fussell, *op cit*, p 20.

⁴³ *Dictionary of National Biography*, article on Jethro Tull.

⁴⁴ Wilts RC, 534/1, Shalbourne Parish Register.

ther-in-law states that Jethro, being seized of the Howberry estate in 1713 'and being in a very ill state of health was advised for recovery thereof to travel to Montpellier beyond the sea, which he accordingly did, but before he proceeded in his travel he made a letter of attorney empowering his wife Susannah to deal with his estates'.⁴⁵ Both parties in the case agree that Jethro set out for abroad at the beginning of the year 1713 [i.e. probably in April] and it is clear that he was out of the country before 6 July when his wife made some sort of agreement about the letting of his Oxfordshire estates. Both parties agree that Jethro returned in 1715.

While he was abroad two events occurred which he may or may not have expected when he set off and, if his health was bad, may not have been informed about. One was the birth of his daughter Sarah. If Tull left the country in April 1713 it is possible that he would not have known of his wife's pregnancy, which at the beginning of that month could have been of only a two-month period. The second event was the death of his father Jethro II. This was either in September 1713 or in March 1714: two different dates were provided by his in-law relatives in contention concerning his estate.⁴⁶ The Crowmarsh Gifford parish register, damaged by fire and incomplete, gives no record. Whatever the circumstances, a considerable burden must have fallen on Jethro III's wife Susannah.

Susannah had married Jethro on 26 October 1699, according to Earl Cathcart.⁴⁷ The place of marriage is not given by Cathcart, but Fussell states that 'it may be assumed that it took place in London'. The assumption is made, presumably, to suit Fussell's account of the life of a young bachelor of means and status living there. It is a mistaken assumption:

search of the parish registers of Burton Dassett in Warwickshire, where Susannah's family resided, reveals that the marriage took place in that parish.⁴⁸ The Smiths were a substantial yeoman family and it may be that young Tull, rather than leading a life of leisure and fashion in London, was sufficiently affected by his family's financial misfortunes to seek out a suitable provincial bride.

According to Tull's will he was survived by a son John and four daughters.⁴⁹ The date of John's birth is not known, but it must have been before 10 April 1704 since Jethro's son John is one of three lives on which the 1704 leasehold of a portion of Prosperous Farm is based. Shalbourne parish register records the baptism of Mary daughter of Jethro and Joanah Tull 2 March 1711 and Sarah daughter of Jethro and Joanah on 13 October 1713. Since all other records refer to Susannah, is this yet another example of the confusion into which the personal details of the Tulls' lives have been allowed to remain?

IV

The discovery of so many records containing miscellaneous information previously unknown concerning the Tulls I, II, and III has resulted also in unearthing a few items which, by alluding to farming practices by the two earlier Tulls, may throw a little light on the sort of family agricultural background from which the younger Tull developed.

When Jethro I was negotiating a marriage settlement in 1674 between Griffith Jones and his step-daughter Elizabeth Goddard, one of the items he insisted on having inserted into the treaty was that Griffith Jones senior should make a watercourse in his lands in Radnorshire which were to be settled on Griffith junior.⁵⁰ What the exact

⁴⁵ PRO, C11/1242/16.

⁴⁶ PRO, C11/975/2.

⁴⁷ Cathcart, *op cit*.

⁴⁸ Warwickshire RO, DR/292/1.

⁴⁹ PRO, PCC Will, Jethro Tull 1741.

⁵⁰ PRO, C5/169/38.

function of the watercourse was is not stated, but clearly it was designed for the improvement of the estate; and Griffith Jones complained bitterly that it had cost him some £400 to make.

Of greater interest are the details of Jethro II's conditions in leasing Prosperous Farm to John Smith in 1686 and his complaints concerning the tenant farmer's failure to comply with them. The bill and answer to this suit (dated April 1697) are contained within the documents which relate to another suit of that year.⁵¹ As the lease and its continuation expired in September 1693 it is difficult to know why Tull waited another four years before bringing his suit. It may be that he was desperate for the money owed to him by Smith. It would be interesting to know also what happened to the farm after Smith quit the tenancy in 1693.

The lease was drawn up in writing on 1 July 1686 and was to commence at Michaelmas next and to last for five years. Subsequently this term was extended on an amended rental for another two years. It was a condition that, on expiry of the five-year lease, the tenant should leave the ground well planted with clover grass 'as he had found the same' and to leave all the straw and chaff from the last year's crop. When Smith entered upon the tenancy there were eighty acres or more planted with clover, but when he left there were only a few acres so planted, 'neither did he leave any straw and chaff or firewood'. Moreover, Smith was over £300 in arrears of rent.

Smith of course denied most of this. He stated that there was very little meadow ground in the farm, so little that Tull allowed him a £5 deduction from his annual rent to buy hay 'and to preserve the timber on the estate did allow the defendant 40 shillings p.a. in lieu of plowbote and cartbote'. The area of the farm

had been estimated at 300 acres and Tull had agreed to allow seven shillings per acre for any acreage below 300. Smith claimed that it was twelve acres less. He reckoned that he lost about £100 as a result of his five-year rental and he agreed to a further two years rental at a reduced rent. An additional complaint by Tull was that the hedges around the copses had been broken down, thus letting in the cattle which cropped the undergrowth, 'all the young shoots and germins of wood'. Smith admits this but says that the damage had been done by others.

When Tull agreed to abate Smith's rent after the fifth year he seems to have taken into account Smith's continual complaints 'of the hardness of his bargain, the badness of times, and the cheapness of corn'. In addition Smith had found taxation heavy and had had soldiers quartered upon him.

Whatever happened to the farm between the time when Smith finally quit in 1693 and Jethro Tull III was assigned a lease in 1704 we do not know. Nevertheless the case just related gives us some idea of the circumstances of the farm which he inherited and a foretaste of some of the problems he would be likely to encounter in times that were bad for farmers and on land which was far from ideal.

In addition to a picture of the farming practice which Jethro III inherited, the Tull v. Smith case illustrates Jethro's statement about Prosperous Farm that 'every farmer on the old system that has rented it since it was first made into a farm . . . has either [gone] broke or quitted it before the end of his term'.⁵²

Interesting as the Tull v. Smith case may be in showing the farming practice of Jethro II, there is another case which illustrates the practice of Jethro III in the very year of his momentous departure abroad, that is, before he comes back with his observations of the French and Italian vine-

⁵¹ PRO, C10/353/52.

⁵² Tull, *op cit*, p 386.

yard tillage which led to his most important conclusions. In 1713 an agreement was made by Jethro's wife Susannah on his behalf, leasing an estate in Oxfordshire to a tenant farmer.⁵³ This agreement contained a clause whereby the existing tenant in his last year 'was not to feed the field after he had cut his grass and he was to spend all his straw now in the barns, in the backsides and yards, and the straw thus growing or to grow, and the dung thereof made, and also the dung now laying in the backside [of the premises] and there leave the same' for the use of the incoming tenant. And the incoming tenant 'likewise, in his last year was to spend all the straw on the premises and the dung thereof made, to lay on the same, except for the last year's dung, which he is to leave for the use of Jethro Tull'.

After four years, and following Tull's return from abroad, the new tenant wished to exercise his option to quit and planted 'grass seed called clover or St Foyn on twenty acres with his last crop of corn'. It seems clear that, whatever Tull's views on the use of dung may have been following

his return from the Continental vineyards, he considered its use necessary at least up until the visit abroad he made in 1713-14.

V

The object of this article has been to provide a much firmer basis than previously existed for the family descent of Jethro Tull the agriculturist and to resolve some of the chronological problems in his biography. What strikes an outside observer is the degree to which Tull's invention was mothered by necessity. His pioneer work seems to have developed pragmatically in response to a series of financial setbacks which had begun by undermining the basis of the social standing for which he had been educated. A victim of the economic forces of his day, the pressure of those forces gave a naturally ingenious mind the driving urge to experiment and to innovate. This response enabled him to maintain a precarious link with genteel society, whose intelligentsia (eg, Cathcart) accepted him, despite his impoverishment, as a practical and beneficial innovator.

⁵³ PRO, C10/1242/16.