

Trouble with farms at the Census Office: an evaluation of farm statistics from the censuses of 1851–1881 in England and Wales*

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Abstract

From two viewpoints this article evaluates the tables in the 1851–81 Census Reports based on farmers' responses regarding farm size and employment. It is intended both as a guide to the tables, and to the strengths and limitations of the data contained in them. It also discusses the apparent strategies of the Census Office in relation to the wider concerns of census-taking and the collection of agricultural statistics. The information discussed is the most comprehensive of its kind for the period, but needs to be treated with considerable caution. Much of the difficulty lies in the intention of the Census Office to arrive empirically at a definition of 'farmer' by collecting data, rather than by taking an arbitrary definition and applying it to the census process.

The institution of the regular peace-time collection of agricultural statistics was debated for a period of 35 years, starting about 1830 and culminating with the establishment of the current system in 1866. The debate centred on crop returns, especially wheat, in the context of rising imports of this cereal necessitated by population increase. Meanwhile the general census authorities in 1801 had begun to collect information on all occupations, including farmers, and various types of farm employees. While the debate about crop returns was in full sway, the 1851 census began the collection of data on farm sizes and supplemented the occupational question directed at all individuals by asking employers, including farmers, to state the numbers of persons in their employment. A full set of tables based on these data appeared in the 1851 census report. This activity continued in the censuses of 1861, 1871 and 1881, but the reports of 1861 and 1871 made only partial use of the material collected, and none of it was used in 1881. This strange behaviour by the Census Office suggests that they were not fully confident of the results they obtained, and is one of the reasons for attempting an evaluation of the data from the standpoint

* My wife, Mrs Joan Mills, began the excavation of data from the census reports. Dr E. Higgs and Prof. M. E. Turner made helpful remarks on the first draft of the 1851 sections of the paper, and Profs E. J. T. Collins and G. E. Mingay were also very encouraging at this stage. Mrs A. S. Brook made valuable comments on the first full draft and suggested further reading. Prof. M. Drake, among other forms of assistance, checked the tortuous references to Parliamentary Papers and provided some extra material. Profs W. A. Armstrong and M. Overton responded to enquiries about their own work. I have depended considerably upon the resources of the libraries of The Open University, Nottingham University, Bishop Grosseteste College, the Museum of Lincolnshire Life, Lincolnshire Archives, and the Lincolnshire Libraries Service. My thanks go to all these helpers, but any shortcomings are, of course, my own responsibility.

of present-day agricultural historians. Although increases in farm size have been one of the major features of agricultural change, relatively little attention has been paid to it by historians in recent decades. Changes in the amounts of labour employed on farms have possibly aroused no greater interest, despite labour being one of the farmer's chief inputs.¹ To what extent can any progress be made towards understanding these questions by using the data collected by the Census Office?

At the four censuses of 1851–1881 householders who were occupiers of (agricultural) land, not all of whom described themselves as farmers, were requested to record on their schedules the number of acres of land they occupied (with common grazing rights stated separately). They were also asked to record the number of *labourers* they were employing, regardless of whether or not they lived in the farmhouse. Boys and women were to be recorded separately, but the request for the numbers of women employed was not repeated in the same way at the 1861–81 censuses and this aspect of the subject is therefore omitted from the present discussion. Enumerators transferred the information from household schedules to the census enumerators' books (CEBs) for onward transmission to the General Register Office, which set up a temporary Census Office for the purpose. The latter then built up a series of tables at national, divisional and county level which were published in the printed census volumes. Since 1952, when the 1851 CEBs were opened for public use, it has also been possible to use the raw figures recorded by farmers.

In addition to the farmers' responses concerning their farms as units, there were of course responses relating to the occupations of *individuals* in the workforce, farmers, agricultural labourers, farm servants, farmers' sons, shepherds and so on.² These responses are less central

¹ For a general history of agricultural statistics see Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), *A Century of Agricultural Statistics, Great Britain, 1866–1966* (1968); the introduction, written by A. H. J. Baines, describes the build-up towards the introduction of the compulsory and comprehensive collection of data starting in 1866. Relevant literature on farm size mostly in the period up to 1850 includes W. A. Armstrong, 'Labour I: rural population growth, systems of employment, and incomes', in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales VI: 1750–1850* (1989), p. 670; J. V. Beckett, 'The debate over farm sizes in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England', *Agricultural History*, 68 (1983), pp. 308–25; D. B. Grigg, 'Small and large farms in England and Wales; their size and distribution', *Geography*, 48 (1963), pp. 268–79; *id.*, *The Agricultural Revolution in South Lincolnshire* (1966), pp. 169–70, *id.*, 'Farm size in England and Wales, from early Victorian times to the present', *AgHR* 35 (1987), pp. 179–89; and M. Overton, *Agricultural revolution in England: the transformation of the agrarian economy, 1500–1850* (1996), pp. 171–78.

² See E. Higgs, *A clearer sense of the census: the*

Victorian censuses and historical research (1996) for a description of the enumeration process, the preparation of census reports, the relevant archival arrangements, and especially on the agricultural workforce (pp. 105–7). D. Mills and K. Schürer (eds), *Local communities in the Victorian census enumerators' books* (1996) discuss the enumeration process in Chapters 1 and 2; there are illustrations of the Census Office in this book (front cover and p. 20). For an article reviewing the methodology of using the manuscript returns at the local level see D. and J. Mills, 'Farms, farmers, and farm workers in the nineteenth-century census enumerators' books: a Lincolnshire case study', *Local Historian* 27 (1997), pp. 130–43. An older, but still important reference is P. M. Tillott, 'Sources of inaccuracy in the 1851 and 1861 censuses', in E. A. Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth-century society. Essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data* (1972), especially pp. 118–21. Another still useful older general introduction to the censuses is R. Lawton (ed.), *The Census and social structure. An interpretative guide to nineteenth century Censuses for England and Wales* (1978).

TABLE 1. Labour supply on three farms at Thornborough, near Buckingham, 1851

<i>Farmer and farm address</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Labourers employed</i>	<i>No. and ages of co-resident sons and daughters employed</i>	<i>Man equivalents</i>
Arlant Allcock, High Street	196	3 men and 2 boys	2 sons, 25, 15 One dau, 19	Seven
John Mold, Shellspit Farm	160	7 men and 4 boys	One son, 24	Eleven
Samuel Frost, Manor House	170	3 men and 2 boys	3 sons, 23, 20, 16	Eight

Note: Man equivalents calculated by including the farmer as one man, and boys and girls under twenty as half a man.

Source: Census Enumerator's Book for Thornborough, 1851, PRO, HO107/15.

to the present article, but critical analysis of the occupation tables produced from them shows that their use also needs to be considerably qualified.³

Sections one and two of this paper look at farm employment, firstly as it was recorded in the CEBs, then as it has been studied on this basis by modern historians. Sections three and four repeat this process in relation to farm acreages. Thus informed at the local and manuscript level, the reader is taken on in section five to a consideration of the relevant tables in the Census Reports of 1851, 1861 and 1871. Section six puts the farm size data alongside those collected by other means, whilst the last section sets the discussion in the wider contexts of census-taking and agricultural statistics more generally. Finally, there is an appendix offering a more detailed guide to farm statistics in the census reports.

I

Table 1 demonstrates the wide variations in labour supply per unit area frequently encountered at the local level in the CEBs by comparing three farms at Thornborough (Bucks.) in 1851. 'Man equivalents' have been calculated by adding the farmers themselves, their sons and one daughter to the number of labourers recorded, taking boys and girls under 20 as half a man. This procedure is based on the observation that farmers seldom described their co-resident sons and daughters as 'labourers', nor probably thought of them as such, partly as a matter of status, partly because they would not have been in receipt of conventional labourers' wages. How married farmers' sons living in their own households described themselves is a matter of conjecture, since the census was not constructed in a way that relates households to each other. At Thornborough we find that John Mold of Shellspit Farm was apparently employing eleven man-equivalents on a 160 acre farm almost in sight of Arlant Allcock's 196 acre farm where he managed with only

³ For the first part of the century see E. A. Wrigley, 'Men on the land and men in the countryside: employment in agriculture in early nineteenth-century England', in L. Bonfield, R. M. Smith and K. Wrightson (eds), *The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structure* (1986), pp. 295-336. For the later period see E. Higgs, 'Occupational censuses and the agricultural workforce in Victorian England and Wales', *Economic History Review* 48 (1995), pp. 700-16. His study is part of a wider interest in the use of occupations in the censuses; see also E. Higgs, 'The tabulation of occupations in the nineteenth-century census, with special reference to domestic servants', *Local Population Studies* (hereafter *LPS*) 28 (1982), pp. 58-66, reprinted in Mills and Schürer (eds), *Local communities*, pp. 27-35.

seven, whilst Samuel Frost of the Manor House employed eight. Presented as acres per man-equivalent, Allcock had one man per 28 acres, Mold one man per 14.5 acres and Frost one man per 22.5 acres.

Table 2 illustrates the layout of the CEBs and transfers the focus to an area – North Cumberland – in which farm service was still in widespread use. ‘Indoor farm servants’ were paid differently from the non-resident labourers, through a lump cash payment at the end of a year’s service, plus full board during that time. They were described as ‘servants’ in the CEB column for *relationship to head of household*, which was distinct from the *occupation* column. In the latter they were described variously as ‘(indoor) farm servant’, ‘carter’, ‘waggoner’, ‘shepherd’, ‘garthman’, and so on. Although the terms ‘farm or agricultural labourer’ should not have been used of farm servants in the occupation column, this was sometimes the case. Thus in Table 2 one such in the Todd household is described in the occupation column as ‘farm labourer’ and another in the Richardson household as ‘ag[ricultural] lab[ourer]’.⁴ Robert Todd is also an example of a farmer who returned no employees on his own line in his schedule, despite having a co-resident worker in his household. Perhaps Todd thought of John Byers as a *servant*, as distinct from a *labourer*, but then we have to ask why Byers was described in the occupation column as a ‘farm labourer’? Thus, as is shown below, there was confusion as to whether ‘labourers’ was an all-inclusive term, despite the Census Office’s instructions to use it that way.

To continue the analysis from the point of view of the ratio between labour and land, Joseph Thirlwall appears to have had less labour than one might expect. If he and the farm servants are added to the two labourers declared on the top line, the total of five men and one woman yields a ratio of 47 acres per man-equivalent, compared with 26 acres on Todd’s farm and only 18 acres on the Routledge farm. Only very occasionally are the historian’s doubts put to rest as to how living-in farm servants had been counted in the farm total: Bingham H. Thomlinson at Little Coates near Grimsby in 1851 declared that he employed six indoor and 13 outdoor labourers, the six indoor labourers actually appearing on lower lines in his entry. It is generally accepted that casual workers were excluded, since the Census Office’s instructions to farmers was to state the number of labourers employed at the date of the census – during the last few days of March or the first few of April – a season when casual work would be minimal on most farms.

There is also what can be termed the ‘bailiff problem’. Where a bailiff, or sometimes a foreman, took farm servants into his household, he usually mistakenly described them as if they were his own servants, rather than those of his master, who may or may not have been resident on the farm. Thus at Grasby Bottoms Farm, near Brigg, Lincolnshire, in 1861 William Dann described himself as a farming bailiff, with three ‘servants’ whom he listed as ‘carters’ in the occupation column. In census terms he should have used the word ‘lodger’ or ‘boarder’ in the relationship column, but this did not represent the real situation as a bailiff saw it, since the three servants would not have been paying him for board and lodgings. Instead, he was presumably paid by his employer for this extra service.

⁴ Joseph Thirlwall and James Routledge exemplify the employment of female farm servants, a relatively rare practice outside northern England. For recent statements on farm service see Overton, *Agricultural Revolution*, pp. 179–82; Armstrong, ‘Labour I’, pp. 672–77; Alan [sic] Armstrong, *Farmworkers: a Social and Economic History, 1770–1980* (1988), pp. 94–96; and S. Caunce, ‘Farm servants and the development of capitalism in English agriculture’, *AgHR*, 45 (1997), pp. 49–60.

TABLE 2. Four farm households in the Wetheral registration sub-district, Cumberland, 1851

Sch. No.	Address information	I	U	Name and surname	Relation to head of family	Cond'n	Age M F	Rank, profession or occupation	Where born
(Coathill ED)									
11	(not given)	1		Robert Todd	Head	Wid	77	Farmer of 90 acres	Cumberland, Stanwix
				George do.	Son	Wid	32	Farmer's son	do., Seberham (sic)
				Rebecca do.	Daughter	Un	30	Farmer's daughter	do., do
				Ann do.	Granddaughter		10	Scholar	do., St Marys
				John do.	Grandson		2		do., Croglin
				John Byers	Servant		19	Farm labourer	do., Stapleton
(Wetheral ED 7-11a)									
1	Coathouse	1		Joseph Thirlwall	Head	Mar	56	Farmer of 260 acres employ- ing 2 labs	Cumberland, Walton
				Ann do.	Wife	Mar	52		do., Brampton
				Mary Edmundson	Wife's sister	Un	62	Annuitant	do., do.
				Elizabeth Gilchrist	Servant	Un	24	Ag Servant	Scotland
				William Johnston	Servant	Un	54	do.	do.
				John Dickson	Servant	Un	20	do.	Cumberland, Kirkington (sic)
(Wetheral ED 7-11b)									
76	Low Wood	1		James Routledge	(Joint) Head	Un	55	{ Joint farmers of 220 acres employing 8 labs	Cumberland, Hayton
				George do.	(Joint) Head	Un	40		do., do
				Mary do.	Sister	Un	45	Housekeeper	do., do.
				Mary Wannop	Neice	Un	18	Farm servant	do., Cumwhitton
				Joseph Charlton	(no entry)	Mar	40	Farm servant	do., Walton
				John Brow	(no entry)	Un	27	Farm servant	Scotland, Gretna
(Wetheral ED 7-11d)									
57	(not given)	1		John Richardson	Head	Mar	40	Farmer	Cumberland, Whitehaven
				Jane do.	Wife	Mar	42		do., Wetheral

Sch. No.	Address information			Name and surname	Relation to head of family	Cond'n	Age		Rank, profession or occupation	Where born
		I	U				M	F		
				John Phillips	Servant	Un	26		Ag Lab	do., Rockcliffe
				Wm Rutherford	Servant	Un	30		Winter Shepherd	Scotland
				Ann Hewitson	Servant	Un		26		Cumberland, Cumwhitton
				Margret Henderson	Servant	Un		36		Scotland

Note: The full label of column 1 is 'No. of Schedule'; column 2 = Road, Street, &c., and No. or Name of House; columns 3 and 4 = Houses inhabited or uninhabited/building. Cond'n = marital condition. Age M and Age F = ages of males and females. ED = Enumeration District.

Source: *Transcript and Index for the 1851 Census for Wetheral, etc.*, Cumbria Family History Society, 1989, based on PRO, HO/2429.

II

Passing on to some of the studies of farm employment based on the CEBs, Sheppard compared the numbers of men 'employed' (as stated by the farmers) with the numbers of agricultural labourers recorded in the East Riding (in census entries relating to individuals) and found close agreement between the two figures: approximately 10,200 for the first category and 10,900 for the second. She therefore concluded that farmers, with reasonable consistency, *excluded* their indoor farm servants from the employee totals, regarding this question as a reference to outdoor labourers only. In his study of South Carmarthenshire, S. Thomas did not report having tested this conclusion, because the 'Returns state quite specifically "farmer of x acres employing n labourers."' It seems that he relied on the farmers being all of the same mind that 'labourer' meant 'outdoor labourer'.

The Sheppard approach was, however, challenged in another Welsh context by C. Thomas in a study of nine enumeration districts (EDs) in south Cardiganshire. Here he found that of 185 'farmsteads' listed in the 1851 CEBs, only 45 provided details of the labour force. He argued that the remaining 140 farms could not all be assumed to have employed no labourers, but detected confusion as to the use of terms and a lack of compliance with the census questions. Tillott and Stevenson, studying an area of 12 parishes around Scunthorpe, discovered that the farmers reported a total of 810 employees and had 312 farm servants in their households. Even if it is safe to add these two figures together, the total is only 1122 persons, compared with 1365 agricultural workers recorded as individuals. The authors felt that the discrepancy was too large to be explained by farm labourers working outside the boundaries of the survey area, and suggested that another partial explanation lay in casual work and chronic under-employment.⁵

⁵ J. A. Sheppard, 'East Yorkshire's agricultural labour force in the mid-nineteenth century', *AgHR* 9 (1961), pp. 45-6; S. Thomas, 'The agricultural labour force in some south-west Carmarthenshire parishes in the mid-nineteenth century', *Welsh History Rev.* 3 (1966), p. 67; C. Thomas, 'Rural society in nineteenth century Wales: south Cardiganshire in 1851', *Ceredigion*, 6 (1971), pp. 397-8; P. M. Tillott and G. S. Stevenson, *North-west Lindsey in 1851* (University of Sheffield, Department of Extra-Mural Studies, 1970), pp. 2, 6-9. W. T. R. Pryce, 'Manuscript census records for Denbighshire in the nineteenth century', *Trans. Denbighshire Hist Soc.*, 22

Taking acreages at face value for the time being, it is possible to report on a number of studies of the relationship between area and labour. In very crude terms, these point to farmers in arable areas employing men at the rate of about 25 acres per man on farms of under 100 acres and 35 or more above that size, with fewer men in pastoral areas. In 1871 the Census Office estimated 35 acres per worker across the country, but, despite including farmers in their calculations, they omitted farmers' relatives working on farms. Tillott and Stevenson calculated a figure of about 24 acres per worker on the basis of adding all 312 farm servants to the 810 labourers declared by farmers, plus one-and-a-half men per farm to allow for family labour. In the East Riding, Sheppard reported averages varying from 13 acres to 34 acres per worker depending on soil fertility (high fertility = high labour demand) and farm size (large farms were more efficient). S. Thomas found in south-west Carmarthenshire that the area per worker was about 33 acres on farms of 50–100 acres, about 40 acres on farms of 100–200 acres, and about 45 acres on farms of 200–300 acres, with a figure of about 60 acres on farms of 500 acres or more. For a pastoral parish in Devon, Haydon calculated averages of 21 and 28 acres per worker in 1841 and 1851 respectively, but figures for single parishes in particular can only be regarded as approximations, even when based on individual, rather than farm entries in the CEBs, since indications as to place-of-work were given only for workers living in farmhouses. Other farm workers may have worked outside their parishes of residence, and many did so in those areas where closed villages were commonplace as in eastern and southern England, but the transfer of labour between parishes is even reported from Carmarthenshire.⁶

III

Moving on to the reliability of the acreages recorded, whilst problems are not as complex, they remain serious, since on top of having to assume that farmers had accurate figures and were willing to divulge them truthfully, there is also the much more important problem that some farmers recorded no acreage figure. What proportion of the whole these farmers represent is a matter for discussion.

From the way in which the information appears in the CEBs, there would appear to be two different situations in which a farmer failed to report an acreage. The first arose when the farmer actually occupied land in his own right as an owner or tenant, but simply failed to report the acreage. This can be inferred where the farmer is head of a household at a farm address and/or where his household included farmers' sons or co-residing farm servants. See for an example, John Richardson in table 2.

(1973), p. 189, also reports confusion about the reporting of employees. In some other studies census data on employment and acreages has been accepted almost at face value, for example, A. Chinnery, 'Rutland farms in 1871', *Rutland Record*, 2 (1981), pp. 78–81.

⁶ BPP, 1873, LXXI, Part II, *Census of England and Wales 1871*, Vol. IV, *General Report*, p. xlviii; Tillott and Stevenson, *North-west Lindsey*, p. 7; Sheppard, 'East Yorkshire', pp. 46–7 and 52–4; S. Thomas,

'SW Carmarthenshire', pp. 67–9; E. Haydon, *Secular and Divine. A History of Widworthy Parish in East Devon* (Marwood Publications, Ford Farm, Wilmington, 1997), p. 75; D. R. Mills, *Lord and Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (1980), pp. 118–120; and B. A. Holderness, "Open" and "close" parishes in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries', *AgHR*, 20 (1972), pp. 126–39.

Although the Census Office's instructions were that 'the term farmer was to be applied only to the occupier of land', problems also arise where this instruction appears to have been ignored. A farmer may have been out of work or retired, for example, Watson Harmston, living at 4, Edwin Street, Nottingham in 1881, who described himself as 'farmer out of place'.⁷ Some farmers may have been reluctant to describe themselves as 'out of place' and although the Census Office used the term 'retired', the concept of 'retirement' may have been imperfectly understood. Alternatively a farmer may have described himself so because he was a partner in a farm reported by another person, perhaps his widowed mother, a brother, or his father. From what is seen in the CEBs it is often difficult to disentangle one situation from another, although there are sometimes hints, such as the great age of a farmer, or his appearance as a single man in the household of his farmer brother, or even (but very rarely) an explicit admission that two brothers were 'joint farmers', as in the Routledge household included in table 2.

There is also the 'bailiff problem' again. A bailiff should not have reported the acreage of the farm of which he had charge since he was not the 'occupier'. However, this sometimes happened, as at Manor Farm, Canwick, Lincolnshire in 1871, when bailiff George Sleight reported 165 acres. Whether the true occupier desisted or did likewise will usually remain unknown, through lack of a means to identify him. Poor coordination between farmer and bailiff could lead to a farm acreage being reported twice over, or not at all. Where a farmer occupied two or more 'farms' (in the sense of distinct physical units) he would presumably have added their acreages together and reported them as one 'holding'. This should have been the correct procedure from the present standpoint, helping to keep the numbers of *farmers* and the numbers of *farms* in step with each other.

IV

Published studies sometimes raise the problem of defining the use of the term 'farmer', especially at the lower acreage levels. Sheppard drew a line under occupiers of five acres (with the exception of 'gardeners' and 'market gardeners') and considered any 'farmer' reporting a smaller acreage as in reality an agricultural labourer. S. Thomas, partly on the basis of comparison with a tithe apportionment, challenged this view and drew the line at 10 acres.⁸ In some areas the term 'cottager' was used of minor occupiers of land, whilst the better known terms of 'smallholder', 'gardener' and 'market gardener,' all have to be considered, since they were all 'occupiers of land'. In addition, there were many dual occupationists who combined farming with any one of a very large range of additional occupations, sometimes more important than their farming, sometimes less so, but usually in an ambiguous relationship so far as census evidence is concerned.

There is a considerable variation in the proportion of farmers found not to have recorded their acreages. For example, the biggest survey available is Sheppard's, which shows that about 10 per cent of farmers in the East Riding did not give their acreages in 1851, although locally it could be a much higher proportion. Tillott and Stevenson's study area near Scunthorpe had 250 farms for which acreage figures were given in the 1851 census, yet this accounted for only

⁷ Higgs, *A Clearer Sense*, p. 104. I owe the information on Harmston to the kindness of Mrs Jean Towers. He was recorded in the 1861 and 1871 cen-

suses as a farmer at Canwick, Lincs., 40 miles away.
⁸ Sheppard, 'East Yorkshire', p. 44 and S. Thomas, 'SW Carmarthenshire', pp. 63-4.

about 70 per cent of the area surveyed. Eleven other full-time farmers failed to give their acreages. In addition they excluded a large number of dual occupationists from the total of full-time farmers, including all men who gave 'farmer' as all or part of their occupational description. In all 375 men were excluded, of whom 281 were heads of households. At Tickhill in south Yorkshire in 1851, 17 of the 60 farmers did not record their acreages. C. Thomas' Cardiganshire area of nine EDs contained 185 men and women describing themselves as farmers in 1851, but only 171 gave their acreages. The latter figure is to be compared with no less than 357 agricultural *holdings* recorded in the near-contemporary tithe apportionments, many of which were obviously not occupied by full-time farmers. Pryce reported that acreage information is sometimes missing from the 1851 CEBs for Denbighshire, especially in EDs located on the coalfield or near towns, where 11–26 per cent of farmers (household heads) failed to state the size of holding.⁹

V

After each census the Census Office published a number of volumes, usually loosely referred to as 'Census Reports'. In practice there were several kinds of texts, including (general) reports proper, population tables, summary tables and abstracts (see appendix). As Higgs has demonstrated, the clerical process of tabulating the raw data was fraught with practical difficulties of a kind readily appreciated by any modern scholar experienced in the use of questionnaires. Noting that the Census Office clerks were only temporary and poorly trained, he followed up their work with reference to domestic servants in Rochdale, Blackburn and Oldham. Higgs discovered not only discrepancies between the printed tables and the CEBs from which they were derived, but also inconsistencies in practice between clerks processing the returns for different towns. Apparently clerks attempted to rectify mis-specifications, perhaps referring back in some instances to the household schedules, but they left little behind to show how this was done. In the 'servant' context, one possibility was by cross-reference to entries in the 'relationship to head of household' column.¹⁰ Much the same kind of criticisms are probably true in relation to the processing of farm data.

Failure to create a working definition of farmer is at the root of many of the difficulties, especially in regard to farm acreages, for if there was no definition of 'farmer', it followed that there could be no definition of 'farm'. In the 1851 report the Census Office claimed that the acreage and employment figures they collected would give a 'definite idea of the term "farmer"' and lay 'the foundation of a further inquiry'. They referred to lists of farmers resident in each parish drawn up with the intention of carrying out a revision, which they thought could only

⁹ Sheppard, 'East Yorkshire', p. 45; Tillott and Stevenson, *NW Lindsey*, pp. 2, 4, 7 and 8; P. M. Tillott, 'The Censuses of Tickhill in 1851 and 1861', part 1 (Tickhill Census Project, unpublished ts, c. 1970), p. 13; C. Thomas, 'S Cardiganshire', Tables 5 and 7; Pryce, 'Denbighshire', p. 189. Other examples are given in Mills, 'Farms, farmers, etc', Table 3.

¹⁰ Higgs, 'The agricultural workforce', pp. 703, 713; and 'The tabulation of occupations'. Dr Higgs also

informs me that no occupational coding dictionary for census clerks in 1851 has survived, and that, although such existed for later censuses too, they are unlikely to have been much help in situations described in this article. See also Tillott, 'Sources of inaccuracy', pp. 86–90, and, for an extension of Higgs' observations, see M. Anderson, 'Mis-specification of servant occupations in the 1851 Census: a problem revisited', *LPS* 60 (1998), pp. 58–64.

be done on the spot. In the absence of this revision, apologies were made for publishing the figures of acreages and employees as they stood. The Census Office also accepted the uncertainty as to whether indoor farm servants had been included in the totals of labourers and noted that farmers themselves and their sons at home should be added to reflect the full size of the workforce. Superannuated farmers and those who had given up their farms were said to have been included with working farmers, as with other occupations, but they neglected to say exactly how they identified these men, or how many there were.¹¹

Perhaps the most important shortcoming of the reports is that there is no way of establishing with certainty the total number of farmers actually occupying land and not reporting their acreages in 1851. Was it 2047 (0.9 per cent) as stated at the foot of Table 35, which seems implausible, or the gap of 24,113 (9.7 per cent) between Tables 32 and XXV? In addition, there are the 22,982 'lost' dual occupationists of Table XXXVII to bear in mind (see appendix and table 3). If the real number of non-reporters was distributed evenly between the size groups, the tables will not have suffered significantly, but there is no means of verifying this. On the contrary, suspicions are easily aroused that errors occurred principally at either ends of the scale. Smaller farmers included many who were also engaged in other activities that might have led them to neglect the recording of acreages and employees. At the other end of the scale, confusion may easily have occurred in the cases where farmers resided at one farmstead (or none), but occupied two (possibly more) farms, one or more in the charge of bailiffs.

TABLE 3. Occupiers of land engaged in other pursuits beside farming, England and Wales, 1851: the 18 most common pursuits

<i>Pursuit</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Pursuit</i>	<i>Number</i>
Victualler and/or beerhouse	1898	Blacksmith	645
Miller	1885	Woollen-cloth manufacturer	631
Innkeeper	1536	Shoemaker	546
Gardener, nurseryman	1463	Carman, carrier	543
Butcher	1352	Maltster	537
Land proprietor	1230	Mason, pavior	445
Farm bailiff	895	Coal miner	315
Carpenter, joiner	759	Cotton manufacturer	315
Grocer	690	House proprietor	313

Source: BPP, 1852-3, LXXXVIII, part 1, p. cclxxxv. Abstracted from Table XXXVII, which excludes many dual occupationists (but an unknown number) who were transferred as farmers to the Occupation Tables because they reported the size of their holdings and the number of labourers employed. See appendix for further detail.

Despite all the difficulties that farm statistics obviously presented to the Census Office, similar basic questions continued to be asked at the next three censuses. However, in 1861 there was a sharp reduction in the number of tables prepared from the CEBs, the Census Office making use of representative counties instead of printing tables for the whole of England and Wales

¹¹ BPP, 1852-53, LXXXVIII, part I, *Census of Great Britain 1851, Population Tables II, vol. I*, p. lxxviii.

(see appendix). The report for 1871 repeated a pattern similar to that of 1861, but in 1881 nothing whatever appears to have been done to make use of farm data.

In the 1861 report the Census Office repeated the disclaimer that their collection of farm acreages and numbers of labourers had been defective, but would lay the foundation of a further inquiry. Again they pointed out the need at least to add farmers and farmers' sons to the numbers of employees in order to arrive at more reliable employment data for farms. They offered a partial explanation of the gap between the aggregate numbers of farm employees reported by farmers and the figures appearing in the Occupation Tables as due to many agricultural labourers being out of work; problems over the number of farms were due to many farmers being superannuated or having given up their farms.¹²

The table footnotes and text of the 1871 report are instructive. In particular the Census Office drew attention to the maverick influence of the term 'labourer' used without specification of the branches of the economy to which they belonged. Their numbers had shot up from 325,000 in 1851 and 307,000 in 1861 to 509,000 in 1871. The Census Office complained that 'notwithstanding the explicit instructions on the subject to the householders and enumerators, it is not improbable that many agricultural labourers returned themselves simply as labourers'. The writer's experience of the CEBs points to the enumerators as the more guilty parties, since whole enumeration districts in rural areas can be found without a single 'ag lab' – instead the enumerator has used the abbreviation 'lab'. The rise in the number of labourers between 1861 and 1871 is, however, another matter.¹³

Farmers in the representative counties who reported no labourers totalled 23,540 in 1851 and 25,618 in 1871, or 33.9 and 42.2 per cent respectively: at least these figures are broadly consistent with the national proportion of 40.7 per cent in 1851 (see appendix). The Census Office remarked that there were 714 farms in the representative counties in 1851 and 892 in 1871 for which no acreage had been returned. These figures are equivalent to only 1.0 and 1.5 per cent respectively and although they are similar to the percentage of 0.9 reported in 1851 for the whole country, they appear to be far too low an estimate.¹⁴ There is, of course, no way of ascertaining how many farmers were genuine non-employers, but my impression from the CEBs is that a considerable proportion of farmers who recorded an acreage also recorded the number of labourers they employed. Thus the gap between the 1.0 to 1.5 per cent not returning acreages and the 40 per cent not returning labourers is so large as to suggest that the clerks went astray somewhere in their interpretation of the data and its tabulation.

Indeed, a footnote appended to Table 109 of the 1871 report draws attention to the fact that in addition to the 60,762 farmers reporting acreages in the representative counties, there were a further '10,521 farmers who made no returns respecting either the acreage of their farms or the numbers of the men employed'. This 10,521 is no less than 14.8 per cent of the total of 71,283 farmers reported in the table, but is unreliable because there is no means of disaggregating the two kinds of non-reporting (acreages and employees). According to earlier reasoning the total of 10,521 must have included some retired farmers and farmer-partners, but even allowing for

¹² BPP, 1863, LIII, part I, *Census of England and Wales 1861*, III, *General Report with Appendix of Tables*, p. 29.

¹³ BPP, 1873, LXXI, part II, pp. xlv–xlv; Higgs, in 'Tabulation of occupations', has attempted to iron

out this kind of problem.

¹⁴ BPP, 1873, LXXI, part II, pp. xlv–vi.

¹⁵ BPP, 1873, LXXI, part II, p. xlv, appendix A, p. 123 for Table 109.

this factor, the percentage is much bigger than the larger of the two figures extracted from the 1851 report: the official figure of 0.9 per cent and the inferred figure of 9.7 per cent.¹⁵ The historian is, therefore, still in a quandary as to the under-reporting of acreages, but there is a possibility that Sheppard's figure of about 10 per cent for the East Riding is representative of the whole country (see above, p. 65).

VI

The reader may be forgiven for thinking that the farm data in the census reports are quite without value. It is true that only a handful of historians have made significant use of them. Probably less confidence can be placed on the figures of farm employment than on acreages, especially where there were marked seasonal fluctuations that could not be reflected in the census, or in areas of widespread hiring of farm servants, who may have been treated in different ways by different farmers in reporting the number of their employees. In the absence of any consensus about how to allow for variations in reporting, it is very important for local historians to use both the farm employment data and the record of individuals' occupations. Since there was often movement of labour between EDs, the figures for individual EDs should be regarded with particular suspicion, and an attempt be made to increase the geographical scope of the research in order to widen and strengthen the statistical base. At the national level it is essential to have recourse to the work of Higgs and Wrigley.¹⁶

The evaluation of the acreage figures given in the censuses must take into account the fact that they are the most comprehensive for the period. They are also less biased than figures in estate records, which tend to exaggerate the numbers of large farms. Where they exist, the tithe apportionments are much to be preferred, although they are very time-consuming if figures for more than single parishes are sought. Overton has recently dismissed the acreages given in the censuses, stating that 'the data are unreliable because the question was a voluntary one and many small farmers did not bother to give an answer'.¹⁷ Such a remark, it will now be seen, oversimplifies the actual situation, although one might not quarrel with the conclusion.

Table 4 represents an attempt to circumvent some of the problems by taking the Census Office's farm acreage figures for 1851 and comparing them with 1871, as it is fairly safe to assume similar defects in the reporting system at both dates. The data for the whole of England and Wales in 1851 show that the 17 English counties act as a reasonably representative selection for that date: in only one size group (5-20 acres) are the figures more than two percentage points apart. The number of farms reported in these counties went down by 12.8 per cent between 1851 and 1871. The two largest size groups (300 acres plus) gained over the others, in absolute as well as percentage terms. The next lowest group (200-300 acres) and the two smallest groups (below 20 acres) lost in absolute terms, but gained percentage-wise. The three middle groups (20-200 acres) lost in both both absolute and percentage terms.

The extreme right-hand column of table 4 acts as a reminder that, although there was still a very large number of small farms in England in 1871, they did not account for a large proportion of agricultural production: their importance was more in social than in economic terms. For

¹⁶ Higgs, 'Agricultural workforce' and Wrigley, 'Men on the land'.

¹⁷ Overton, *Agricultural Revolution*, p. 174.

TABLE 4. Farm sizes in England and Wales (1851) and 17 'representative' English counties (1851 and 1871)

Size (acs)	Eng & Wales 1851		17 Eng Counties 1851		17 Eng Counties 1871		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	% of area
Under 5	7,656	3.4	2,047	3.0	1,984	3.3	0.1
5-20	42,829	19.2	10,894	15.9	10,091	16.9	1.3
20-50	47,315	21.2	12,747	18.6	10,604	17.7	4.0
50-100	44,558	20.0	13,451	19.6	10,483	17.5	8.3
100-200	45,752	20.5	14,795	21.6	12,047	20.1	19.2
200-300	18,401	8.2	6,930	10.1	6,251	10.4	16.8
300-500	11,646	5.2	5,012	7.3	5,216	8.7	21.8
500 & over	5,114	2.3	2,755	4.0	3,194	5.3	28.6
Totals	223,271	100.0	68,635	100.1	59,870	99.9	100.1

Source: BPP, 1852-3, LXXXVIII, part I, Appendix II, Table XXXIV (for 1851) and BPP, 1873, LXXI, part II, pp. xlv-xlv (for the 17 counties). See appendix for further detail.

example, 20.2 per cent of farms in the under 20 acre groups contained only 1.4 per cent of the land, whilst the largest size group (500 acres and over) comprised only 5.3 per cent of the number of farms, but contained 28.6 per cent of the total acreage represented in the table. So, if the under 20 acre holdings are regarded as not being true farms (but, say, mainly the holdings of labourers, cottagers, smallholders, dual occupationists, semi-retired farmers and market gardeners), then it is clear that the smaller *true* farms of 20-200 acres were being absorbed into larger holdings as economies of scale took effect during the period of High Farming. By comparison, Grigg showed that there was a decline of the larger farm (over 300 acres) during the period c. 1875-1930, followed by a revival which was slow enough to prevent the area occupied by larger holdings from reaching the 1851 level again before the 1960s.¹⁸

The Census Office's figures for 1871 can also be compared with those derived from the *Agricultural Returns*. The first way of doing this is to start with the 1871 Report's figure of 249,907 farmers and graziers, or occupiers of land not returned under any other profession. The Census Office compared this with the 309,708 *holdings* of five acres and upwards recorded in 1872 through the *Agricultural Returns*, 'two or more of which were sometimes held by one person, and some were held by persons who were certainly not farmers'. They then pointed out a further 171,714 holdings of less than five acres, but concluded that 'the farmers, in the proper sense of the word, probably do not exceed 250,000', thus coming back to their own initial figure!¹⁹

The second way of making a comparison is through the breakdown of farm sizes in the *Agricultural Returns* of 1870 and the census tables of 1871. The unadjusted data appear in the top part of table 5 and show an enormous discrepancy in percentage terms in the two smallest size

¹⁸ Beckett, 'Debate', pp. 310 and 325, has some similar comparisons between proportions of numbers and of areas for 1851; Grigg, 'Farm size in England and Wales', p. 186. Overton, *Agricultural Revolution*, p. 173, points out that, in general, landlords would

be interested in engrossing farms because higher acreages meant proportionately higher profits, thus potentially higher rents per unit area.

¹⁹ BPP, 1873, LXXI, part II, p. xlv.

table 5. Distribution of farm sizes (percentages) in England (1870) and in 17 'representative' counties (1871)

Size (acres)	Under 5	5-20	20-50	50-100	100 & over	N
Year	Unadjusted					
1870	26.0	28.0	16.0	12.0	18.0	393,569
1871	3.3	16.9	17.7	17.5	44.5	59,870
Year	Adjusted					
1870			34.8	26.1	39.1	181,042
1871			22.2	21.9	55.9	47,795

Note: The adjusted figures have been produced by eliminating all farms of under 20 acres from the percentage calculations (see text for further discussion).

Sources: 1870, BPP, 1870, LXVIII, pp 363 ff, *Agricultural Returns of Great Britain 1870*, Appendix to Report, p. 20; 1871, BPP, 1873, LXXI, part II, pp. xlv-xlv. See appendix for further detail.

groups (below 20 acres), thus mirroring the data discussed in the previous paragraph and supporting Overton's contention that the largest failure of occupiers of land to report their acreages on their census schedules occurred in these groups. This comparison also points up the difference between the recording of *farms* in the main body of the census tables on the one hand, and *agricultural holdings* in the *Returns* on the other. By discarding the figures for the two smallest groups, it is possible to adjust the percentage figures for the three groups above 20 acres. The discrepancies between the two sets of data are redistributed, rather than reduced, making it clear that the two methods of reporting were considerably at odds, quite apart from the very wide discrepancies between the two in the lowest sizes.

VII

In evaluating the data discussed in this article, the agricultural historian needs to take into account the overall aims of the Census Office, insofar as it is possible to establish them. When it planned the first censuses to make use of household schedules (from 1841 onwards), in asking the question on 'rank, profession, and occupation', it was not primarily concerned with social status or stratification. Instead it was much more concerned to establish to what extent occupational conditions could be used to explain mortality levels in different sections of the population. Nevertheless, in the 1851-81 censuses all employers were questioned as to the number of persons in their employment. In their 1851 and 1861 reports, the Census Office referred to this matter as though they were chafing at the restrictions of the Census Act, which did not permit them to ask all the questions that would have made possible the 'enumeration of visible property and annual produce' embraced by the Census in some other countries. This helps to explain why the 1851 report said that 'The return of the workpeople by masters and farmers ... is purely tentative, a mere auxiliary to our inquiry'. Despite this caveat, the failure of employers to respond appropriately was a disappointment to the Census Office.²⁰

²⁰ Higgs, *A Clearer Sense*, pp. 18, 109; Higgs, 'Agricultural workforce', p. 702; BPP, 1852-53, LXXXVIII, part I, pp. lxxvii and lxxix; BPP, 1863, LIII, part I, p. 29; and M. Drake, 'The census, 1801-1901', in Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth-century society*, p. 45.

The scale of farm enterprises could also be gauged by asking for acreages, and in respect of both the acreage statistics and those of farm employment, the Census Office are likely to have been influenced by the regularity with which Select Committees and Royal Commissions enquired into the state of agriculture, the problem of the rural poor, and the availability of smallholdings for those who wished to get their foot on the bottom rung of the 'farming ladder'. The 1871 Census Report specifically makes the point that there was a plentiful supply of rented holdings of all sizes in England and Wales, and refers to a recent paper in the *Journal of the Statistical Society* which discussed the relatively small numbers of owner-occupier farmers here, as compared with France.²¹

In addition, the debate about crop and stock returns being conducted contemporaneously must have had some influence on the thinking of the Registrar-General's Office. Thus, for example, arguments in favour of collecting agricultural statistics were set out by Caird in 1852 and at great length by Wren Hoskyns in 1855. In the following year the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England* began to publish annual digests of statistics useful to farmers, and from 1870 this digest incorporated brief summaries of the crop returns, starting with those for 1867. In 1860 for a second time, the Statistical Society proposed an agricultural census. More specifically, the debaters considered a number of different practical means by which statistics could be collected. Was it to be by the Poor Law Guardians and their officers, by churchwardens or incumbents, by farmers' clubs, or by the Quarter Sessions and the constabulary? In 1847 Milner Gibson, Vice-President of the Board of Trade, tried to persuade parliament to legislate for a scheme depending on superintendent registrars (i.e., the census administrators), who were to employ 'agricultural enumerators'. The 1861 report referred to the probability that England, as well as Ireland, would 'enjoy the advantages of a system of Agricultural Statistics', and this was quoted as the reason for not processing all the information in their own returns.²²

When the collection of agricultural statistics started in 1866, the Census Office was discarded as a possible vehicle. Instead, excise officers working from parish rate books identified all those who should be supplied with returns. Even so, or perhaps because of the involvement of the Inland Revenue, a satisfactory response rate was not achieved for about ten years.²³ Perhaps the Census Office were right not to wind down their scheme too precipitously, since they might after all have been called upon to administer the collection of agricultural statistics.

The behaviour of the Census Office remains, however, enigmatic, despite the significant number of pointers towards an explanation, since the questions on acreage and employment in all four of the censuses of 1851-1881 were plainly not being answered in a reliable way. Moreover, the amount of tabulation dropped off markedly after 1851, and in 1881, although the questions carried on as before, absolutely no use was made of the data collected. The agricultural

²¹ BPP, 1873, LXXI, part II, p. xlviii.

²² J. Caird, *English Agriculture in 1850-51* (1852; repr. 1968), pp. 520-24; C. Wren Hoskyns, 'On agricultural statistics', *J. Royal Agricultural Society of England* 16 (1855), pp. 554-606 (agricultural enumerators discussed on p. 558); Lawton, *Census and social structure*, p. 18; MAFF, *Century of Agricultural Statistics*, pp. 2-7; BPP, 1863, LIII,

part I, p. 29.

²³ The collection of farm size data was much improved from 1885 onwards, at irregular intervals; Grigg, 'Farm size in England and Wales', p. 181. The number of holdings of five acres or more in England and Wales was given as 338,715 in 1885; BPP, 1886, LXX, p. 1 - ; *Agricultural Returns of Great Britain, 1886* (for 1885), p. 98.

historian is left with a tantalising prospect of 'what might have been' if the matter had been pursued more energetically. However, it is also quite possible that had the matter been thoroughly reviewed after the 1851 census, then the farm employment and acreage questions might have been eliminated from all future censuses. Finally, one of the most interesting sets of farm data found in the Census Reports – the data on dual occupations, illustrated in table 3 – was collected almost fortuitously.

Appendix. A guide to farm statistics in the census reports, 1851-71

Of the three reports, that issued following the 1851 census contains much more information than the two later reports. Not only are the tables more detailed, but there is also a complete set for all the English counties. Details of the tables containing 1851 data at the national and divisional levels are given together in table A of this appendix, making it possible to confine the text to particular points of interest.¹ In the main report, table 32 shows the numbers of *labourers* (my emphasis, a term excluding women and children) employed by farmers in England and Wales. The total number of farmers included is 225,318, of whom 91,698 (or 40.7 per cent) made no return as to the number of labourers employed. It is impossible to find out how many of these did not employ anyone at all or did not employ outdoor labourers, and how many simply failed to answer the question. The total number of labourers included in the table is 665,651, and it is tempting, but unfortunately not very fruitful, to compare this with the figure of 1,625,600 for the total agricultural workforce in 1851 according to Charles Booth's reworking of the Census Office's tables, and 2,151,800 according to Higgs' reworking.² However, the wide gap between these figures supports Sheppard's view that most farmers declared only outdoor labourers.

Tables 33-35 are concerned with *farms*, principally with farm sizes and the proportion of the country occupied by cultivated farmland. A footnote to tables 33 and 35 states that acreages for 223,271 farms in England and Wales were returned, whilst 2047 farmers, who were presumably thought to be occupiers, failed to report their acreages. These figures sum to 225,318, the total also included in table 32. Table 35 displays the acreage data against employment data, but the criticisms levelled against both sets of data suggest that these are compounded when related to each other.

Turning to the first appendix, tables 19-22 contain data on the numbers and proportions of

¹ The relevant sections of the 1851 Census Report can be found in BPP, 1852-53, LXXXVIII, part I, *Census of Great Britain 1851, Population Tables II*, vol. I, pp. lxxviii-lxxxi, xci, clxxiv-clxxv, ccxxiii, ccxxvi and cclxxxiii-cclxxxv. The relevant tables are Tables 32-35 in the report section (pp. lxxviii-lxxxi), Tables 19-21 in its first appendix (pp. clxxiv-clxxv) and Summary Tables XXV, XXXIII-XXXVII in the second appendix (pp. cclxxxiii-cclxxxv) all relating to the national level. Further on in the same volume and in volume II there are follow-up tables giving similar data for each division of the country and each

geographical county. There are almost indispensable lists of printed census reports in M. Drake, 'The census, 1801-1901', in Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth-century society*, pp. 31-46; and in Lawton (ed.), *The Census and social structure* (1978), pp. 296-301. Mills and Schürer (eds), *Local communities*, pp. 80-5 have also followed this practice.

² Higgs, 'Agricultural workforce', p. 709. Table 1 of Higgs' paper contains both Charles Booth's 'orthodox' figures for the numbers of people engaged in agriculture in 1851, 1861 and 1871, and Higgs' secondary reworking of them.

APPENDIX, TABLE A. Summary of relevant tables in BPP, 1852-53, LXXXVIII, part 1

Table	Title	Description of contents
Report:		
Table 32, p. lxxix	Farmers employing in- and out-door labourers in England and Wales	The data are set out on a scale graduated in steps of single labourers from nil to 10 labourers, steps of five labourers from 10 to 60 labourers, then one group for 60 labourers and above (21 categories).
Table 33, p. lxxx	Number and proportion of farm holdings of different sizes in Gt Britain (England and Wales shown separately)	Eight size categories: under 100 acres, 100-600 acs in 100ac steps, 600-999, 1,000acs and above.
Table 34, p. lxxx	Acres of land returned as occupied in GB (England and Wales shown separately)	Total number of farms, total acreage of farmland, total acreage of uncultivated land, total acreage of territory.
Table 35, p. lxxx	Number of acres returned by farmers in England and Wales, and the number of farms of various sizes	Twenty-four size categories, plus a category where the farmer had not stated an acreage.
Appendix I:		
Table 19, p. clxxiv	Number and size of farm holdings in GB (England and Wales shown separately)	Eight size categories, as in Table 33.
Table 20, p. clxxiv	Number and size of farm holdings, 11 divisions of England and Wales	Fourteen size categories, under 100, steps of 100 to 1000, then 1,000-1,199, 1,200-1,499, 1,500-1,999, and 2,000 acres and over.
Table 21, p. clxxv	Proportional number of farm holdings of various sizes in GB (Eng. and Wales shown separately) 11 divisions of England and Wales	This table turns the raw data of Table 19 into proportions expressed as xxx per 1000.
Table 22, p. clxxv	Proportional number of farm holdings of various sizes, 11 divisions of England & Wales	This table turns the raw data of Table 20 into proportions expressed as xxx per 1000.
Appendix II; Summary Tables:		
Table XXV, pp. ccxxii to xxvi	Occupations in England and Wales, by sex and age	Class IX, the agricultural class can be found among all the other occupational classes, viz., farmers, graziers, relatives of both, bailiffs, ag labs (outdoor), shepherds, farm servants (indoor), others connected with agriculture.
Table XXXIII, p. cclxxxiii	Farmers with nos. of labourers employed and acres occupied in GB	Fourteen size categories (plus no acreage category) shown against 16 employment categories.
Table XXXIV, p. cclxxxiii	As for Table XXXIII, but England and Wales only	Twenty-four size categories, plus a category where the farmer had not stated an acreage, shown against nos. of labourers employed in 20 categories (nos. of labourers as for Table 32, less the farmers who gave no return of labourers employed).
Table XXXVII, p. cclxxxv	Occupiers of land engaged in other pursuits beside farming	A table of dual occupationists, one occupation being farming. Table excludes all those who stated acreages and nos of labourers, as they appear in tables above.

farms within various acreage categories. Thus, for instance, out of every 1000 holdings in England and Wales 637.60 holdings on average were under 100 acres in size and 3.45 holdings were 1000 acres and above (table 21).

As to *farmers*, the most detailed national tables are the summary tables in the second appendix, beginning for the present purpose with table XXV, which gives all occupations in England and Wales by age groups and gender. From these it can be seen that 249,431 persons, male and female, were recorded as farmers or graziers, a figure some 24,113 greater than the total of table 32 of the main report. Presumably because they were retired or out of place, these 24,113 farmers did not report acreages and are in addition to the 2047 stated in table 35 not to have done so. There is, thus, a major discrepancy between table XXV and the earlier tables in this regard. There may be a further discrepancy in that not one female grazier is reported in table XXV. Was this category included in the 22,916 female farmers or did it get 'lost'?

Tables XXXIII-IV are similar to tables 32-33, but, despite giving more detail, are no more enlightening on the question of farmers not reporting acreages. However, a note to Table XXXIII shows that the Census Office realised it was impossible to get the same total of labourers from using its farm employment figures (table 32) as from counting individual entries (in the Occupation Table - table XXV). The discrepancy was put down to three factors (a) an unspecified number of farmers not returning the numbers of labourers they employed; (b) the inclusion of retired farmers in table XXV; and (c) different ways of dealing with dual occupationists as between table XXV and table XXXIII.

Into this febrile situation table XXXVII throws up a further 22,982 occupiers of land, who, as well as farming, were engaged in other pursuits. However, it does not include all dual occupationists combining farming with another occupation. Thus the rubric states that men recording themselves in the format 'miller and farmer' (or 'farmer and miller') 'employing x labourers and occupying y acres' had been transferred to tables XXXIII-IV. This transfer *excluded* all those failing to report both employees and acreages. Moreover, these latter dual occupationists were not transferred to the farming section of table XXV, being included instead in sections relating to their 'other' occupations. Thus, there is some blurring at the edges of the Census Office's implicit definition of a farm, because the clerks had to exercise some judgement on which dual occupationists were to be classified as farmers. As the householders had been requested to put the more important occupation first, this was generally taken in for use in the classification,³ but an 'occupation' of high social standing like landed proprietor would tend to be regarded as more important, regardless of position. The rubric also acknowledges that some inflation in the numbers of farm employees occurred where it was impossible to separate farm employees from employees in the second occupation.

The divisional and county tables for 1851 offer no help in answering the questions raised in this article. Moreover, although the numbers of farmers not reporting labourers is identified - for instance, 5095 out of the 11,017 farmers in the Lincolnshire table, - those not reporting their acreages are forgotten, making it impossible to analyse this problem at the divisional or county level. In addition, these tables also demonstrate the ambiguities surrounding employees. It might be expected that such figures would relate to acreages, especially in a county with few extreme

³ BPP, 1852-53, LXXXVIII, part II, vol. I, p. lxxxii.

APPENDIX, TABLE B. Summary of relevant tables in BPP, 1863, LIII, Part I

Table	Title	Description of Contents
Report:		
Table VII, p. 35	Number of persons engaged in agriculture in England and Wales, enumerated at each of the censuses 1851 and 1861	Gives numbers for each of 25 agricultural occupations, including land proprietors, by gender.
Table VIII, p. 35	Number of farmers and graziers, farm bailiffs, farm servants (in-door), agricultural labourers, and shepherds (out-door) enumerated at the censuses of 1851 and 1861 in England and Wales	Gives totals only (nb, Tables VII and VIII are extracts from an Occupation Table similar to Table XXV of the 1851 Report (see Table A above).
Appendix to report:		
Table 87, p. 139	Farmers with the number of labourers, and of acres occupied in the following registration counties: Bucks, Cambs, Ches, Cumb, Lincs, Norfolk, Shrops, Sussex, Wilts, Yorks NR	Twenty-four sizes of farm from under five acres to over 2,000, plus category 'acreage not stated'; 20 categories of farmers by number of labourers, from one man to 60 and over, plus category 'no men employed or number not stated'.
Table 88, p. 139	As 87, but for 1851	As 87.
Tables 89-98, pp. 140-43	As 87, but for the 10 counties separately	As 87.
Table 99, p. 143	Occupiers of land engaged in other pursuits besides farming	For the same counties as in Table 87.
Table 100, p. 144	Number of farm holdings by size, 1851 and 1861, for same counties.	In eight sizes from under 100 acs to 1,000 acs and over, raw data and proportions expressed as xxx per 1,000.
Table 101, p. 144	Number of farm holdings 1851 and 1861, under 100 acres, same counties.	Six sizes: under 10, 10-20, 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, total under 50, 50-100 and total under 100 acres.

variations in farming practice such as Lincolnshire. Nevertheless, for example, of the 654 farmers in the Lincolnshire table reporting acreages of 75-99 acres, 157 had no employees or did not state their number, 211 reported one man, 178 reported two, 78 reported three, 22 reported four, and the remaining eight reported between five and 10 employees. Similarly, the 293 farmers occupying 400-499 acres are spread out across the table in the 14 columns representing the employment of one man up to more than 30 men, with a further three farmers reporting no employees. Finally, as before, this table is confined to men, the women, boys and girls having been discarded by the Census Office.⁴

The tables published after the 1861 and 1871 censuses are described in tables B and C of this appendix, which show a striking fall-off compared with 1851. In particular, the divisional tables disappeared entirely, whilst the number of county tables was reduced in 1861 to only ten, rising again to seventeen 'representative counties' in 1871 (all English). Only Cumberland, Lincolnshire and Sussex appear in both lists and no argument was put forward for the selections made. A table showing dual occupationists in the ten selected counties appears in the 1861 report, but

⁴ BPP, 1852-53, LXXXVIII, part II, vol. II, p. 597.

APPENDIX, TABLE C. Summary of relevant tables in BPP, 1873, LXXI, Part II

Table	Title	Description of Contents
Report: Unnumbered table, pp. xlv-xlv	Farmers and their holdings in 17 representative counties of England (counties as for Table 109, below)	The table is in two sections, one with 24 sizes of farm (as Table 109), the other with 14 sizes from under 100 to 2,000 acres and over. Numbers of each size and the total acreage in farms of each size are given for both 1871 and 1851.
Unnumbered table, p. xlv	Number of men returned as agricultural labourers, labourers (unspecified), shepherd (outdoor) and farm-servant (indoor)	Figures given for 1851, 1861, 1871, the two labourer categories sub-totalled, and the shepherds and farm-servants sub-totalled.
Unnumbered table, pp. xlv-vii	Farmers employing In and Out door Labourers in 17 representative counties of England (counties as for Table 109, below)	The table is in two sections, one with 20 categories of farmers by number of labourers, from one man to 60 and over, plus category 'no return', the other with 13 categories, from under 5 to 60 and over. Numbers of farmers in each category and the total number of labourers employed by each category are given for both 1871 and 1851.
Appendix A to report: Table 109, p. 123	Farmers with the number of labourers, and of acres occupied in the following registration counties: Surrey and Kent (ex-Metropolitan), Sussex, Hants, Berks, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Leics, Rutland, Lincs, Notts, Derbys, Durham, Northld, Cumbld, and Westld	Twenty-four sizes of farm from under five acres to 2,000 and over, plus category 'acreage not stated'; 20 categories of farmers by number of labourers, from one man to 60 and over, plus category 'no men employed or number not stated', for 1871.
Table 110, p. 123	As 109, but for 1851	As 109, but for 1851.
Tables 111-127, pp. 124-29	As 109, but for the 17 counties separately for 1871	As 109, for 1871.

not that for 1871. Perhaps the most unfortunate change is that farm acreages and employment figures appear, not for England and Wales as a whole, but in totals only for the ten and seventeen representative counties in 1861 and 1871 respectively. To compensate for this saving of labour, the Census Office gave comparisons for the representative counties between 1851 and 1861 and between 1851 and 1871, which are of some value to historians wishing to establish trends across the period of High Farming.⁵

⁵ For 1861 the relevant report is BPP, 1863, LIII, Part I, *Census of England and Wales 1861, Vol. III, General Report with Appendix of Tables*, pp. 29, 35-6 and appendix, pp. 139-144. For 1871 the relevant report is BPP, 1873, LXXI, Part II, *Census of England and Wales 1871, Vol. IV, General Report*, pp. xlv-xlviii and appendix A, pp. 123-29.