

The 'survival' of service in the English agricultural labour force: lessons from Lancashire, c. 1650–1851*

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Abstract

The high level of farm service in the north of England in the mid-nineteenth century has previously been seen as a 'survival' of an early modern rural social structure. In contrast, the prevailing interpretation of the decline of service in the south-east between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries suggests that this was a product of the spread of agrarian capitalism and improving agricultural regimes. This article explores the changing composition of the agricultural labour force in Lancashire between the mid-seventeenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries. It is argued that farm servants only became a significant part of Lancashire's agricultural labour force in the last third of the eighteenth century in response to the increased labour demands of an improving farming system stimulated by the growth of towns and industry. Farm servants were thus intrinsic to agricultural development, not evidence of an ossified social structure.

The orthodoxy established by Ann Kussmaul's conclusions about the changing composition of the agricultural workforce is increasingly being challenged. This orthodoxy, established in her *Servants in Husbandry*, is simple. From the late eighteenth century in the south of England, rapid population growth, the rise in poor relief expenditure, falling real wages for agricultural labourers and a rise in the cost of living caused capitalist farmers, particularly those with social aspirations, to reject farm service as a means of procuring labour. Farm servants were the victims of the agricultural revolution of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, abandoned by their capitalist masters in favour of a more casual, proletarian labour force. In the North of England, farm service remained a significant feature of the rural social structure until well into the nineteenth century, which, Howkins has suggested, reflects the employment patterns of a backward, perhaps inefficient, agrarian regime where innovation and agrarian capitalism were alien. If it is accepted that farm servants were survivors of a pre-capitalist, primitive rural social structure, then it does not require a substantial leap to see that farm servants do not fit comfortably with the tripartition of a capitalist agrarian social structure.¹

* I am grateful to Dr S. A. Caunce, Dr H. R. French, Prof. R. W. Hoyle and two anonymous referees for their comments on earlier drafts.

¹ A. Kussmaul, *Servants in husbandry in early modern England* (1981); M. J. Daunton, *Progress and poverty. An economic and social history of Britain, 1700–1850* (1995); M. Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England. The transformation of the agrarian economy, 1500–1850* (1996); K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor. Social change and agrarian England, 1660–1900* (1985); A. Howkins, 'Peasants, servants and labourers: the marginal workforce in British agriculture, c. 1870 – 1914', *AgHR* 42 (1994), pp. 49–62; id., 'The English farm labourer in the nineteenth century: farm, family and community' in B. Short (ed.), *The English rural community: image and analysis* (1992), pp. 85–104.

This conceptual framework has recently come under critical review. In a previous article, it was demonstrated that the flaws in the 1831 census data, and the inadequacies of Kussmaul's methodology, grossly exaggerate the divide between a high service North and a low service south in 1831. Woodward has demonstrated how Kussmaul's analysis of marriage seasonality is subject to serious methodological errors and that her interpretation of fluctuations in the numbers of farm servants in the early modern period is also questionable.² Interpretations of the role of the small farmer in agricultural production have also developed in recent years and the significance of family farms and farm servants to agricultural production in the nineteenth century is now increasingly recognized. There is a growing realisation that small farmers geared output to the demands of capitalist markets, and that they were adaptive, efficient commodity producers. They may not have been capitalists in a Marxist sense, and may not fit the tripartite division of society that is characteristic of agrarian capitalism, yet they were innovators who had commercial advantages over larger farmers. It is certainly inappropriate to view them as mere 'survivors' from a more primitive developmental stage, existing on the periphery of the capitalist economy. Small family farms were the most successful class of farmer in late nineteenth-century England, surviving agricultural depression which saw many larger farmers face bankruptcy. Whilst holdings of less than 20 acres and more than 300 acres declined, farms of 20 to 300 acres increased in number between the 1870s and the 1930s, with the increase being most marked for holdings of 20 to 100 acres.³

Despite Woodward's criticisms of some of Kussmaul's analysis of early modern data, his agenda for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is somewhat wide of the mark. Indeed, he fails to go beyond the inherited wisdom that the divergence in the rural social structure between the north and south of England simply reflected the fact that they had 'disappeared' from most southern and eastern counties while service 'remained remarkably resilient throughout much of the North'. Woodward concludes with a call for research to explain the precise reasons for the 'survival' of farm service in the north of England. This call is inappropriate. Survival suggests two main elements. First, that servants existed in large numbers in a previous epoch. Second, that economic changes in the late eighteenth century had made service a redundant, anachronistic form of contract between capitalists and their workforce. However, it has been

² A. J. Gritt, 'The census and the servant: a reassessment of the decline and distribution of farm service in early nineteenth-century England', *EcHR* 53 (2000), table 8, p. 103; D. Woodward, 'Early modern servants in husbandry revisited', *AgHR* 48 (2000), pp. 141–50.

³ M. Reed, 'Nineteenth-century rural England: a case for "Peasant Studies"?', *J. Peasant Studies* 14 (1986–7), pp. 78–99; M. Reed, 'The peasantry of nineteenth-century England: a neglected class?', *History Workshop J.*, 17 (1984), pp. 53–76; A. P. Donajrodzki, 'Twentieth-century rural England: a case for "Peasant Studies"?', *J. Peasant Studies* 16 (1989), pp. 425–42; M. Winstanley, 'Agricultural and industrial revolutions: reassessing the role of the small farm', in C. Bjorn (ed.), *The agricultural revolution reconsidered* (Landbohistorisk Selskab, 1998),

pp. 89–110; M. Winstanley, 'Industrialization and the small farm: family and household economy in nineteenth-century Lancashire', *Past and Present* 152 (1996), pp. 157–95; C. E. Searle, 'Customary tenants and the enclosure of the Cumbrian commons', *Northern Hist.* 29 (1993), pp. 126–53; C. E. Searle, '"The odd corner of England": an analysis of a rural social formation in transition, Cumbria, c. 1700–1914' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Essex, 1983); T. W. Fletcher, 'Lancashire livestock farming during the Great Agricultural Depression', *AgHR* 9 (1961), pp. 17–42; id., 'The Great Depression in English agriculture, 1873–96', *EcHR* 13 (1960–1), pp. 417–32; D. Grigg, 'Farm size in England and Wales, from early Victorian times to the present', *AgHR* 35 (1987), p. 184.

demonstrated that farm service was not incompatible with agrarian capitalism. Indeed, several studies have shown the positive role fulfilled by farm servants in improving agricultural regimes, where capitalist, market-oriented farmers relied upon servants for their labour requirements. Caunce's work on the East Riding of Yorkshire has shown clearly how farm servants were fundamental to the development of a highly successful capitalist farming regime in the second half of the nineteenth century, and that they actually increased in number during this period. Far from being a 'survival', farm service provided an efficient, motivated labour force on East Riding farms that was essential to the agrarian regime. For Caunce, farm servants do 'not destroy the old tripartite model, only its simplicity'. Moreover, Moses argues that in the East Riding it was 'progressive capital intensive farming that proved to be most deeply attached to the seemingly archaic and backward institution of farm service'. In Lancashire, Mutch has demonstrated that farm service increased in significance in the second half of the nineteenth century in the north of the county as arable cultivation gave way to stock rearing and greater integration into national markets. Similar claims have been made for areas outside the North. Short suggests that farm service in parts of Sussex was a fundamental part of capitalist agriculture. Anthony's work on farm service in lowland Scotland similarly demonstrates that farm servants were the rural proletariat of agrarian capitalism. Moreover, Scottish agricultural development in the lowlands was predicated upon the *creation* of a landless servant and labouring class in the late eighteenth century.⁴

Our knowledge of the changing structure of the agricultural labour force at a regional level is clearly inadequate to conceptualize national changes. There is a demonstrable need for long-term regional studies of the dynamics of rural social structure. Regional patterns are clearly diverse, but the reasonably reliable figures derived from the 1851 census provide the earliest comprehensive national survey of the structure of the farm workforce, despite the undoubted difficulties of using this material. By 1851, farm servants had all but disappeared from many south-eastern counties, but formed more than one-fifth of the agricultural workforce of all the English counties north of the Wash, reaching as high as two-fifths of the agricultural workforce in Cumberland and Westmorland.⁵ However, preoccupations with developments in southern English arable counties have provided a model of early modern farm labour dominated by service. The assumption that the high levels of service in the North in the mid-nineteenth century reflected the survival of a fossilized agrarian regime has not been

⁴ Woodward, 'Early modern servants', p. 150; S. Caunce, 'Farm servants and the development of capitalism in English agriculture', *AgHR* 45 (1997), pp. 49–60; G. Moses, '"Rustic and rude": hiring fairs and their critics in East Yorkshire c. 1850–75', *Rural Hist.* 7 (1996), p. 155; A. Mutch, 'The "farming ladder" in north Lancashire, 1840–1914: myth or reality?', *Northern Hist.* 27 (1991), p. 162–83; B. Short, 'The decline of living in servants and the transition to capitalist farming', *Sussex Arch. Collections* 122 (1984); R. Anthony, 'Farm servant vs. agricultural labourer, 1870–1914: a commentary on Howkins', *AgHR* 43 (1995), pp. 61–4; R. Anthony, *Herds and hinds. Farm labour in lowland Scotland, 1900–1939*

(1997); T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation, 1700–2000* (1999), pp. 135–40.

⁵ E. Higgs, 'Occupational censuses and the agricultural workforce in Victorian England and Wales', *EcHR* 48 (1995), pp. 700–16; D. R. Mills, 'Trouble with farms at the Census Office: an evaluation of farm statistics from the censuses of 1851–1881 in England and Wales', *AgHR* 47 (1999), pp. 58–77; 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.

tested. This article offers a case study of Lancashire from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century and offers a critique of the theory that the social structure in 1851 reflected 'survival'.

Section one summarizes the size, composition and distribution of the agricultural workforce in Lancashire in 1851. It is found that day labourers dominated the hired workforce, albeit with low levels of employment per farm, and large numbers of family labourers. Section two reviews the evidence for change from the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-eighteenth. It is suggested that hired labour was relatively unknown on most Lancashire farms at this time. Section three reviews changes in the century after 1750. It is argued that during the last third of the eighteenth century, levels of hired labour increased in response to agricultural change and a heightened demand for labour. The final section discusses the issue of labour motivation, the relationship between farmers and their servants, and the reasons for the expansion of farm service in the late eighteenth century. It is argued that farm servants were inept, and unmotivated, often requiring close supervision. However, farmers experienced difficulties in procuring labour and the service contract provided them with a more secure labour supply. Labourers were in a strong bargaining position due to the competition Lancashire farmers faced from industry, which offered economic opportunity, independence and inflated wages. In order to satisfy their increased demands for labour, farmers looked to the service contract to supply a guaranteed workforce all year round. Consequently, farm servants increased in number. Farm servants were thus intrinsic to agricultural change in Lancashire, and not 'survivals' from an earlier primitive stage in development.

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In the mid-nineteenth century, the day labourer overwhelmingly dominated the male farm workforce of Lancashire, although, with an average of fewer than two such workers per farmer, this does not suggest a high degree of proletarianization (Table 1). However, day labourers formed three-fifths of the male agricultural workforce, one-fifth were servants and a further fifth were family members. Women formed a negligible proportion of day labourers (although as Higgs suggests, female farm employment is substantially underrecorded). However, they did form 18 per cent of Lancashire's farm servants. Nevertheless, farmers' relatives undoubtedly dominated the female farm workforce of Lancashire. The employment of family labour is impossible to prove in individual cases, unless the census specifically describes relatives as farm workers, but in the absence of an alternative occupational description it is reasonable to suggest that women described as 'farmer's wife' or 'farmer's daughter' were involved in farm work, if only on a part-time basis. Pamela Sharpe and Joyce Burnette have both recently suggested that women's opportunities for agricultural employment fell during the period of the Industrial Revolution. However, there are clearly significant regional differences and in Northumberland, Gloucestershire and Somerset, for instance, women remained an essential part of the agricultural workforce in the nineteenth century. In Lancashire, the 16,000 female relatives of farmers aged over 10 and without an alternative occupational description in the census cannot be comfortably ignored and were likely to form a substantial and essential part of the farm labour force. Nevertheless, taking the farm workforce as a whole, day labourers still dominated with 43 per

TABLE 1. Composition of the agricultural workforce, Lancashire, 1851

	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>		<i>All</i>	
	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>
Agricultural labourer	27,254	60.1	761	3.9	27,995	43.3
Farm servant	8720	19.2	1968	10.2	10,688	16.5
Family labour	9339	20.6	16,641	85.9	25,980	40.2
Farmers	[15,998]		[1803]		[17,801]	
Total	45,293	100.0	19,370	100.0	64,663	100.0

Source: 1851 Census population tables II, vols I and II, ages, civil conditions, occupations and birthplaces (PP 1854, lxxxviii (1691)).

Note: Family labour is defined as all farmers' relatives over 10 not returned as being engaged in alternative employment.

cent, with family labour providing 40 per cent and servants 17 per cent. If we include farmers as part of the workforce, they, along with their family members, provided 53 per cent of the farm workforce, with day labourers at 34 per cent and servants at 13 per cent.⁶

It is perhaps not appropriate to include *all* farmers as part of the workforce, yet this approach is still instructive. In 1870, more than 80 per cent of holdings in Lancashire were under 50 acres and occupiers of land on this scale are unlikely to have been mere managers. Outwardly, this agrarian regime has many of the hallmarks of an anachronistic peasantry, with approximately two-thirds of the labour being provided by farmers, their family, or farm servants. On the other hand, the casualization of the workforce was probably more marked than these data suggest. The biggest single group were male day labourers, and they formed almost three-quarters of the hired workforce. The farm workforce was also swelled by large numbers of industrial workers who supplemented their income by labouring at times of peak demand, as well as the annual influx of Irish labourers that was commented on by contemporaries. The census fails to record either group, but nevertheless, the casualization of agricultural labour in mid-nineteenth century Lancashire appears to have been reasonably advanced, despite the emphasis on family labour and farm service in the literature.⁷

The composition of the workforce, however, was not uniform across the county. Table 2 shows the composition of the adult male agricultural workforce in Lancashire's 26 registration districts in 1851 divided between 'agricultural' districts (part a), districts with a mixed economy (part b)

⁶ Higgs, 'Occupational censuses'; Pamela Sharpe, 'The female labour market in English agriculture during the Industrial Revolution: expansion or contraction?', *AgHR* 47 (1999), pp. 161–81; Joyce Burnette, 'Labourers at the Oakes. Changes in the demand for female day-laborers at a farm near Sheffield during the Agricultural Revolution', *JECH* 39 (1999), pp. 41–67; N. Verdon, 'The employment of women and children in agriculture: a reassessment of agricultural gangs in nineteenth-century

Norfolk', *AgHR* 49 (2001), p. 41. And see also S. Coombes and D. Radburn, 'Children and young people on the land', in M. Winstanley (ed.), *Working children in nineteenth-century Lancashire* (1995), pp. 72–92; Winstanley, 'Industrialization and the small farm'.

⁷ Winstanley, 'Industrialization and the small farm', p. 168; W. Rothwell, *Report of the agriculture of the county of Lancaster* (1850), app. p. 51. See also A. Mutch, *Rural life in S. W. Lancashire, 1840–1914* (1988), pp. 39–42.

TABLE 2. Composition of the male agricultural workforce aged 20 and over, by registration district, Lancashire, 1851.

(a) Registration districts where more than 25 per cent of the male adult population were engaged in agriculture

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>Occupations</i>	<i>Agriculture (total)</i>	<i>Percentage working in agriculture</i>	<i>Labourers, family & servants</i>	<i>Family labour (%)</i>	<i>Day labour (%)</i>	<i>Servants (%)</i>	<i>Servants per farmer</i>	<i>Labourers per farmer</i>	<i>Total labour per farmer</i>
Garstang	2243	63.0	1574	21.5	56.7	21.8	0.5	1.4	2.5
Ormskirk	5097	52.5	3708	24.1	57.9	18.0	0.5	1.6	2.8
Fylde	2356	42.0	1683	19.8	63.2	17.1	0.5	1.8	2.9
Clitheroe	2261	37.3	1306	22.7	76.7	0.5	0.01	1.1	1.5
Ulverston	2973	35.4	1911	21.3	49.7	29.0	0.6	1.0	2.1
Lancaster	2974	32.3	1925	24.0	49.9	26.1	0.5	1.0	2.1
Chorley	2480	25.4	1478	20.1	77.5	2.4	0.04	1.2	1.6
Average	2912	41.1	1941	21.9	61.7	16.4	0.4	1.3	2.2

(b) Registration districts where more than 10 per cent and fewer than 25 per cent of the male adult population were engaged in agriculture

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Warrington	2075	21.8	1611	9.1	88.3	2.7	0.1	3.2	3.6
Barton-upon-Irwell	1572	19.7	1236	11.7	69.7	18.5	0.8	2.8	4.1
Prescot	2789	19.0	2176	11.5	72.9	15.6	0.6	2.9	3.9
Leigh	1441	16.9	1001	25.1	64.3	10.6	0.3	1.5	2.4
Preston	3280	13.4	2079	24.9	57.9	17.2	0.3	1.1	1.9
Wigan	2621	13.1	1859	17.7	68.6	13.7	0.4	1.8	2.6
Burnley	1827	11.1	950	16.7	77.5	5.8	0.1	0.9	1.2
Average	2229	16.4	1559	16.7	71.3	12.0	0.4	2.0	2.8

(c) Registration districts where fewer than 10 per cent of the male adult population were engaged in agriculture

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Bury	1908	8.3	1295	16.1	73.7	10.3	0.2	1.6	2.2
Bolton	2419	8.3	1611	17.9	70.9	11.2	0.2	1.5	2.1
Haslingden	1049	8.1	427	13.1	81.7	5.2	0.03	0.6	0.7
Blackburn	1678	7.4	824	32.8	52.4	14.8	0.2	0.5	1.0
Rochdale	1346	7.0	634	18.1	74.0	7.9	0.1	0.7	0.9
West Derby	2490	6.7	1908	10.4	75.00	14.6	0.7	3.4	4.5
Oldham	1125	5.0	684	15.2	75.7	9.1	0.1	1.2	1.6
Ashton-under-Lyne	1379	4.5	841	13.9	75.7	10.3	0.2	1.3	1.7

continued over

Occupations	Agriculture (total)	Percentage working in agriculture	Labourers, family labourers & servants	Family labour (%)	Day labour (%)	Servants (%)	Servants per farmer	Labourers per farmer	Total labour per farmer
Chorlton	956	3.0	689	7.0	73.3	19.7	0.8	2.9	4.0
Salford	485	2.2	382	1.8	86.1	12.0	1.0	7.3	8.5
Manchester	1060	1.7	758	9.8	76.1	14.1	0.5	2.5	3.3
Liverpool	846	1.2	608	3.1	96.7	0.2	0.01	3.7	3.8
Average	1395	5.3	888	13.3	75.9	10.8	0.3	2.3	2.9

Source: 1851 census population tables II, vols I and II, ages, civil conditions, occupations and birthplaces (PP 1854, lxxxviii (1691)). Unfortunately, the table from which the above data is derived does not include those aged under 20.

Notes: Column 1 shows the total number of adult males contained in Class 9, part 1, of the 1851 census. Column 2 shows the total number of adult males from column 1 expressed as a percentage of the total number of males in each registration district. Column 3 shows the total number of agricultural labourers, farm servants (indoor) and farmers' relatives for each registration district. Columns 4, 5 and 6 respectively show the total number of farmers' relatives, agricultural labourers and indoor farm servants expressed as a percentage of column 3. Columns 7 and 8 respectively show the numbers of indoor farm servants and labourers per farmer. Column 9 shows the total hired and family labour (including family labour, farm servants and day labour but excluding the farmers themselves) per farmer.

and 'industrial' districts (part c).⁸ Some significant trends are apparent. Family labourers were more common in the 'agricultural' registration districts contained in part 'a' of Table 2. Only three out of the nineteen non-agricultural districts recorded more than 20 per cent of their agricultural workforce as family labourers, while the lowest proportion in an 'agricultural' district was 19.8 per cent recorded for Fylde. They were least common in and around the major cities, where farming occupied only a negligible proportion of the workforce, with fewer than 10 per cent of the agricultural workforce being farmers' relatives in the registration districts of Chorlton, Salford, Manchester and Liverpool. Conversely, while only two of the seven 'agricultural' districts recorded more than 65 per cent of the agricultural workforce as day labourers, eleven of the twelve 'industrial' districts fell into this category. The distribution of farm servants is also distinct. Whilst five of the seven 'agricultural' districts recorded a proportion of servants in excess of 15 per cent, only four of the nineteen non-agricultural districts did so. Farm servants were to be found in greatest numbers in the registration districts of Ulverston and Lancaster, areas in the north of the county some distance away from the major centres of industry. Moreover, farm service increased in significance in north Lancashire in the later nineteenth century. In general, therefore, it is clear that where agriculture was more dominant, so too were family labourers and farm servants. Conversely, where industry was more dominant, so too were day labourers. There are some anomalies, however. For instance, the 'industrial' registration district of Blackburn returned exceptionally high numbers of family labourers, at the expense of day

⁸ The distinction between agricultural, mixed, and industrial districts is for illustrative purposes only. Industry was ubiquitous in nineteenth-century Lancashire, although it is clear that the 'agricultural' districts in Table 2 represents most of west and north Lancashire, the 'industrial' districts cover most of south and east Lancashire where textiles dominated the economy, and the 'mixed' districts are primarily located on the boundary between the 'agricultural' and 'industrial' districts.

labourers, probably reflecting the dominance of small dairy farms in this area. On the other hand, the 'agricultural' districts of Clitheroe and Chorley had a lower proportion of servants than any other registration district except for Liverpool.

Columns seven and eight of Table 2 respectively show the number of servants and labourers per farmer, whilst column nine shows the total labour per farmer. Here the patterns are less clear cut although 'agricultural' districts generally had fewer labourers per farm than non-agricultural districts. The intensively cultivated districts of Warrington, Barton-upon-Irwell, Prescott, West Derby, and the city-fringe districts of Chorlton, Salford, Manchester and Liverpool, representing a large swathe of south and south-west Lancashire where green crop production and market gardening were significant, recorded levels of hired labour per farmer far in excess of the remaining registration districts. However, some districts indicate very low levels of male servant labour. The 'agricultural' districts of Clitheroe and Chorley along with Burnley and Warrington, and the 'industrial' districts of Haslingden, Rochdale, Oldham and Liverpool each recorded fewer than one servant for every 10 farmers. Of these Burnley, Haslingden and Rochdale along with Blackburn also recorded fewer than one labourer per farmer.

It is significant that the districts recording the lowest levels of paid labour inputs were in the upland industrial areas of East Lancashire where pastoral farming and handloom weaving dominated the local economy. In selected communities in the Ribble Valley, east of Preston, the 237 farmers collectively employed only 160 farm servants with a further 299 female relatives and 163 male relatives aged between 10 and 70 either enumerated as farm workers or enumerated without an alternative occupational description. There were 107 day labourers enumerated. However, these communities were also home to 256 handloom weavers and a further 70 persons ambiguously described as 'cotton weavers'. Moreover, twenty-two farmers with an average farm size of just 16 acres collectively had 64 co-resident relatives working in the cotton industry, 94 per cent of whom were described as weavers or handloom weavers. These farmers employed no farm servants. Clearly, part-time industrial employment would significantly bolster the family economy of the small farmer, but labour could also be released from domestic industrial production in order to perform agricultural work when necessary.⁹

This association between industry and agriculture was not specific to the mid-nineteenth century, and was a major feature of the domestic economy in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Richard Latham's account book shows that the volume of textile and agricultural production, and therefore the family income, varied with the life-cycle of the family. Indeed, Latham substantially increased his textiles production on his south-west Lancashire smallholding in the 1740s when his children were in their teens. The processes of enclosure and engrossment did not eradicate these small farms, nor did industrial progress after the mid-eighteenth century and the later spread of factory production universally separate agriculture from domestic industry in Lancashire. In 1809, Dickson, the author of Lancashire's second *General View*, derided the 'great absurdity of small weaving farms', without any sensitivity to the positive relationships that existed between agriculture and domestic industry. Timmins cites evidence from the mid 1820s:

⁹ J. G. Timmins, *The last shift* (1993), ch. 5; Ribble valley census analysis of Aighton, Bailey and Chaigley, Chipping, Dutton, Leagram and Thornley with Wheatley, Lancashire RO (hereafter LRO) MF 25/154. N=3669.

TABLE 3. Composition of the agricultural labour force, Altcar, Formby, Ainsdale and Birkdale, 1851

	Males		Females		All	
	No.	%	No	%	No	%
Agricultural labourer	261	44	24	11	285	34
Farm servant	133	22	2	1	135	16
Family labour	205	34	203	88	409	49
Farmers	[165]	—	[30]	—	[195]	—
Total	599	100	229	100	829	99

Source: LRO, MF 25/49-50, Census enumerators' books, 1851.

Note: Family labour includes those who were aged 10 and over without an alternative occupational description.

It appears that persons of this description, for many years past, have been occupiers of small farms of a few acres, which they have held at high rents; and combining the business of Hand-loom weaver with that of working farmer, have assisted to raise the rent of their land from the profits of their loom.

In 1840, the assistant handloom weavers' commissioner wrote that '[handloom weavers] calculate upon field work in harvest-time; upon the produce of their potato settings; and in some districts upon fishing; and occasional employment in various capacities'. Clearly, even specialist handloom weavers who did not have access to land themselves could provide a significant proportion of the labour required by farmers at times of peak demand. Moreover, on farms where agriculture was combined with industry, daily routines such as milking were easily accommodated within the working day of a weaver.¹⁰

In arable south-west Lancashire, male day labourers were the largest single group of agricultural workers and dominated the hired farm workforce. North of Liverpool, in the communities of Altcar, Formby, Ainsdale and Birkdale, farm servants were to be found in 40 per cent of farmers' households, and yet they only formed 16 per cent of the agricultural workforce (Table 3). Female farm servants were virtually unknown. However, of the 81 farmers who provided an acreage, average farm size was 49 acres with only 10 farms over 100 acres. Consequently, farmers displayed a preference for family labour, supplementing this with day labourers where it was needed and only employing farm servants where there was no alternative. In addition whilst more than 90 per cent of family labourers and day labourers and almost 90 per cent of farmers were born within these communities, almost half of the farm servants had migrated (Table 4). Indeed, 14 per cent of servants had migrated more than 20 miles, most of whom had come from Ireland. Although most labourers and servants were local, 20 per cent

¹⁰ J. T. Swain, *Industry before the industrial revolution: north-east Lancashire, c. 1500-1640* (1986), pp. 118-22; A. P. Wadsworth and J. De Lacy Mann, *The cotton trade and industrial Lancashire, 1600-1780* (1931), pp. 322-3; L. Weatherill (ed.), *The account book of Richard Latham, 1724-1767* (British Academy Records of social and economic history, new ser. 15, 1990); A. J. Gritt, 'The farmer as individual: Richard Latham', conference paper given at the Rural History Centre, Reading, September 2001; LRO, DDSc/9/70, R. Dickson, Hendon, to Thomas Eccleston, Scarisbrick, 21 June 1809; Timmins, *The last shift*, p. 72. Timmins provides a useful discussion on the relationship between handloom weaving and agriculture in the first half of the nineteenth century, pp. 71-78.

TABLE 4. Place of origin of farmers and agricultural workers, Altcar, Formby, Ainsdale and Birkdale, 1851.

(a) Males.

	Native		<5 miles		5-10 miles		10-20 miles		>20 miles		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Agricultural labourer	235	90	14	5	7	3	2	1	3	1	261	100
Farm servants	74	56	24	18	12	9	5	4	18	14	133	101
Family labourer	187	91	1	1	15	7	0	0	2	1	205	100
Farmers	146	89	11	7	5	3	1	1	2	1	165	101
All	642	84	50	7	39	5	8	1	25	3	764	100

(b) Females.

	Native		<5 miles		5-10 miles		10-20 miles		>20 miles		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Agricultural labourer	23	96	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	100
Farm servants	1	50	1	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	100
Family labourer	182	90	12	6	4	2	2	1	3	1	203	100
Farmers	24	80	5	17	0	0	1	3	0	0	30	100
All	230	89	19	7	4	2	3	1	3	1	259	100

Source: As Table 3.

had been born more than 10 miles away, and there was clearly a dependency on both tied and casual Irish labour. Mutch records similarly high levels of geographic mobility of farm servants in north Lancashire.¹¹

II

The 1851 census is undoubtedly the earliest reliable source that allows us to study the size and composition of the agricultural workforce of Lancashire. Consequently, the analyses of pre-census data generate only tentative figures, but the lack of statistical rigidity does not invalidate the general trends. Early references to farm service and waged agricultural labour are not abundant and Wrightson's assertion that early seventeenth-century Lancashire was becoming increasingly proletarianized is not substantiated by the presence of a polarized agrarian social structure. Where we have apparently reliable sources, they uniformly indicate a landscape with few or no servants or labourers. The 1642 Oath of Protestation for the townships of Croston and Ulmes Walton recorded a total of 69 husbandmen and 15 yeomen. At the same time there were 27 'labourers' and 34 'servants', representing 0.73 hired workers per farmer. Moreover, not all of these servants and labourers were agricultural workers. Clearly, inputs of paid labour

¹¹ Mutch, 'Farming ladder', p. 170.

TABLE 5. Agricultural employment in Lancashire, 1678-9
(percentage of total recusants, male and female).

Status or occupation	Amounderness hundred	Blackburn hundred	Leyland hundred	Lonsdale hundred	Salford hundred	West Derby hundred
Yeomen	3.8	7.2	2.2	6.5	5.6	4.0
Husbandmen	26.8	31.7	30.9	43.6	25.5	39.5
Labourers and servants	16.7	3.1	4.7	0.5	2.8	4.0
N=	242	1121	622	385	216	1791

Source: B. G. Blackwood, 'Plebeian Catholics in later Stuart Lancashire', *Northern Hist.* 25 (1989), p. 163.

were not substantial in mid-seventeenth century Croston. The Oath of Protestation for the central Lancashire communities of Goosnargh and Whittingham reveal similarly low levels of proletarian labour. Indeed, there was a total of 38 yeomen, 114 husbandmen, 103 labourers and eight servants, or about 0.7 hired workers per farmer.¹²

Lancashire was home to the largest community of plebeian Catholics in England in the seventeenth century, and they were particularly concentrated in rural south-west Lancashire, which was also a stronghold of landowning Catholic families. There is no reason to suspect that Catholics were unrepresentative of the communities in which they lived, particularly those which they dominated. Blackwood's analysis of the Register of Recusants from 1678-79 is therefore particularly instructive (Table 5). Out of 1,791 individuals in the register for West Derby hundred, 780 (43.5 per cent) were listed as yeomen or husbandmen with only 71 (4 per cent) as 'labourers and servants'. The highest levels of hired labour were recorded for Amounderness hundred where there were 503 (30.6 per cent) yeomen or husbandmen and 276 (16.7 per cent) labourers or servants. Comparison with a 1682 list of Popish recusants indicates that about 7 per cent of Lancashire's Catholic population were labourers or servants in this period whilst about 38 per cent were yeomen or husbandmen. As Blackwood concludes, 'the fact is plain: labourers and servants formed tiny percentages of the Lancashire Catholic population' but this may equally be true of Lancashire as a whole.¹³

Evidence from the first half of the eighteenth century similarly points to low levels of hired labour. As a life-cycle occupation dominated by unmarried men and women under the age of 25, farm servants are not likely to be found in parish registers even where they were common, at least until their years of service had come to an end. On the other hand, day labourers ought to be readily detectable in marriage and baptism registers. The Blackburn baptism registers in the period 1698-1706 record 123 occupations. Fifty-six are non-agricultural, with 27 yeomen, 34 husbandmen, one gardener but only five labourers. Loschky and Krier, in their reconstitution

¹² K. Wrightson cited in J. K. Walton, *Lancashire: a social history, 1558-1939*, (1987), p. 28; LRO, MF 1/25, Protestation Returns, Croston and Ulnes Walton. I am grateful to my wife for this information. See S. Gritt, 'Family and kinship in Croston parish in the early seventeenth century', unpub. BA dissertation, University of

Central Lancashire (1999). I am grateful to Dr. Henry French, University of Exeter, for the Goosnargh and Whittingham data.

¹³ B. G. Blackwood, 'Plebeian Catholics in later Stuart Lancashire', *Northern Hist.*, 25 (1989), pp. 164-6.

of the north Lancashire parishes of Over Kellet, Gressingham and Claughton, record only 14 'labourers, serving men and dockers' to 123 'yeomen, husbandmen, and farmers' in the eighteenth century. The baptism register for the south-west Lancashire parish of Altcar in the period 1721 to 1734 records the occupation of 51 individuals. Thirty-nine were husbandmen and two were yeomen. Of the remaining 10, only one was described as a labourer. The baptism and burial registers of Walton-le-Dale in central Lancashire record only 10 labourers for the 36 yeomen and husbandmen in the period 1720–24. Walton-le-Dale was an industrial district, and weavers and bleachers significantly outnumbered farmers and labourers. Walton-le-Dale was not exceptional, and as Hey observes, 'even in non-industrial areas few parishes had many labourers during the years when baptism and burial registers recorded occupations'.¹⁴

Glennie has argued that militia ballot lists from the mid-eighteenth century onwards provide 'a comprehensive list of a major portion of the population – adult males. The chief advantage of ballot lists ... is as a source of occupational information with a combination of wide social coverage, substantial geographical coverage, and geographical specificity'. Notwithstanding the omission of women, minors and men over the age of 45 or 50, the presence of a rural proletariat ought to be detectable, if not measurable, through ballot lists. A militia list for Parr in south Lancashire from 1768–9 lists 36 husbandmen out of a total of 75 men aged 18 to 44. The list contains no labourers or servants. A quite different source, Arthur Young's *Six Month's Tour*, although contemporaneous, is contrary to the ballot list, and probably even less reliable. He visited 17 farms in Lancashire on his northern tour and recorded the composition of the workforce on each of them. He recorded a high level of hired labour on these farms: 21 servants, 23 maids, 20 boys and 15 labourers. However, as the average acreage of the farms he visited was over 113 acres, these data cannot be seen as representative of the county, and clearly represent an untypical employment pattern. Average farm size on the estate of the Earl of Sefton in south-west Lancashire, for example, was 30 acres in 1769, with fewer than five per cent of farms being over 100 acres. Richard Latham's account book reflects the labour structure of a more typical farmer. As a smallholder working a mixed farm, he relied on family labour for most of the time, hiring extra labour when members of his own family were incapacitated through illness or old age, or for specific tasks such as carting and ploughing. Latham, and many other farmers of south-west Lancashire could probably not have sustained a team of horses all year round and his demand for labour was as much a need for traction as it was for manual labour. This is supported by the fact that the Reverend Peter Walkden, who farmed a 40-acre holding near Chipping in central Lancashire in the 1730s, allowed neighbours to use his horses and farm 'lad' to cart goods, and supplemented his labour supply with more casual labour for ploughing and harvesting. Basil Thomas Eccleston of Eccleston near St. Helens was also in the practice of sending his plough teams to work for his tenants. Captain Dewhurst of Halliwell near Bolton allowed his farm servant to plough for his tenants for which he was

¹⁴ H. Brierley (trans.), 'The registers of the parish church of Blackburn in the County of Lancaster, I, 1600–1660', *Lancashire Parish Register Soc.*, 41 (1911); D. J. Loschky, and D. F. Krier, 'Income and family size in three eighteenth-century Lancashire parishes: a

reconstitution study', *JEcH* 29 (1969), p. 434. It is not clear what is meant by 'dockers'. LRO, PR 2465–7, Altcar parish registers, 1664–1809; D. Hey, 'Yorkshire and Lancashire' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, V, 1640–1750 (2 vols, 1984), I, p. 66 and n. 25.

TABLE 6. Composition of the agricultural workforce, Lancashire, 1767

	Yeoman		Farmer		Husbandman		Labourers		Relatives aged 10-70		Servants	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
South west	27	0	57	7	131	0	23	0	181	355	28	52
Central	28	0	82	3	79	0	27	0	111	247	28	41

Source: E. S. Worrall (ed.), 'Returns of papists, 1767', *Catholic Record Soc.*, occasional publications, 1, 2, 1989), I, *passim*. South-west sample based on the returns from the townships of Astley, Aughton, Bedford, Bickerstaffe, Burscough, Cuerdley, Ditton, Downholland, Farnworth, Garston, Great Sankey, Halsall, Huyton, Knowsley, Melling, Ormskirk, Parr, Penketh, Pennington, Rainford, Scarisbrick, Tarbock, West Derby, Whiston, Windle. Central sample based on the townships and parishes of Garstang, Goosnargh, Samlesbury and Woodplumpton.

'to be made drunk'.¹⁵ All suggest that Young's farmers with their high levels of labour are deeply untypical of the situation c. 1770.

The 1767 Returns of Papists are not the most reliable of sources upon which to base an analysis of occupational structure. Apart from the fact that they only cover a minority of the population and do not have the ability to enumerate households made up of different religions, there is a good deal of inconsistency from one parish to the next in terms of layout and detail, and the occupational descriptions themselves cannot be taken at face value. They are undoubtedly of most value in areas with high concentrations of Catholics. Table 6 shows the composition of the agricultural workforce in two sample districts where Roman Catholicism was particularly strong. Although farm servants formed almost 75 per cent of the hired labour force, the most striking feature is the very low level of hired labour. In south-west Lancashire, the 222 yeomen, farmers and husbandmen employed only 103 labourers and servants between them. In central Lancashire the 192 yeomen, farmers and husbandmen employed only 96 labourers and servants between them. Even if hired workers were only employed by yeomen and farmers, there would only be slightly more than one hired worker per farm based on these figures. What is perhaps significant is that almost two thirds of servants were female. Admittedly, some of these servants may have been domestic servants, but they were all employed by farmers and may have been involved in dairying. This dominance of women within the body of farm servants is contrary to the 1851 census evidence.¹⁶

¹⁵ P. Glennie, 'Distinguishing men's trades': *occupational sources and debates for pre-census England* (1990), p. 65; T. C. Barker, and J. R. Harris, *A Merseyside town in the industrial revolution. St. Helens, 1750-1900* (1959), p. 132; A. Young, *A six months tour through the north of England* (1771), pp. 155-6, 161-2, 166, 173-4, 184-5; LRO, DDM 14/12; A. J. Gritt, 'Aspects of agrarian change in south-west Lancashire, c. 1650-1850', (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Central Lancashire, 2000), p. 125; Weatherill (ed.), *Latham account book*; Chipping Local History Society, *The diary of the Reverend Peter Walkden for 1733-1734* (2000), 7 May, 11 Oct. 1733; LRO, DDSc 127/2-3,

estate memoranda books to be published in A. J. Gritt and J. M. Virgoe (eds), *The memoranda books of Basil Thomas Eccleston, 1757-89* (forthcoming) where see entries for 15 and 16 Oct. 1765 and 3-18 Mar. 1766. W. D. Billington (ed.), *Captain Dewhurst and his diary* (1989) 12 Aug. 1785.

¹⁶ E. S. Worrall (ed.), 'Returns of papists, 1767', *Catholic Record Ser.*, occasional pubs, 1-2, 1989), I, *passim*. See Gritt, 'Aspects of agrarian change', ch. 7 for a discussion of the methodological difficulties of using the returns of papists for the study of occupational structure.

By far the largest group of farm workers in 1767 was landholders' relatives. Juvenile children of landholders and adult relatives constituted 82 per cent of the available workforce. If husbandmen are included as part of the workforce, hired workers formed only 15 per cent of the available labour supply. This does not necessarily mean that relatives performed 82 per cent of the work, as a 10 year old is unlikely to do the same amount of work as an adult farm servant or hired labourer, but the numerical dominance of farmers' relatives is so great that family members must have performed a majority of the labour.¹⁷

III

There is evidence to suggest that between the mid-eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries, the composition of the agricultural workforce in Lancashire underwent a dramatic transformation, a transformation which undoubtedly originated within the ranks of larger, more progressive farmers. Agricultural change was rapid and the expectations of farmers and landowners changed. Increased demand for agricultural produce accompanied the rapid growth of towns and industry. Land values increased substantially and new transport links provided farmers with the means to sell their produce and procure copious quantities of organic by-products generated by towns and industries. Reclamation of waste land, enclosure and drainage were pursued by landlords with vigour, and, in south-west Lancashire, a reorganisation of the system of tenure wiped out three-life leases for more profitable rack rents for terms of years. Tenants consolidated landholding. In 1769, farms over 100 acres occupied 37 per cent of the land area of Altcar; by 1800, this had increased to 44 per cent.¹⁸

These changes caused an increase in the demand for hired labour, which coincided with an increased demand for labour from industry. In 1815, Dickson noted that the 'large farmers commonly keep as many servants in their houses as are sufficient to perform the necessary business of the farms'. However, inflated war-time prices were undoubtedly contributing to the fact that many farmers were complaining about the expense of this system and were beginning to favour day-labour. Although Dickson's observations do not facilitate an estimate of the composition of the workforce, it is clear that the number of farm servants had increased since 1767, particularly on large farms, which had also become more common.¹⁹

Basil Thomas Eccleston owned an estate of around 2500 acres in Eccleston, near St. Helens, of which he farmed about one quarter himself. His memoranda books, covering the period 1757-89 are particularly interesting on the subject of farm servants. He did not have a large body of estate staff and was only employing five male servants, three female servants and two boys in 1766. However, the memoranda books do not suggest an established hiring date in the mid-eighteenth century and between 1757 and 1770 servants were hired in January,

¹⁷ Wage rates suggest a differential in productivity between adult labourers and juveniles. In the Ormskirk district adult wages were said to be around £5-7 per annum whereas a boy of 10 or 12 was paid 30s. Young, *Six months tour*, p. 174.

¹⁸ Gritt, 'Aspects of agrarian change', chs. 4-6; T. W. Fletcher, 'The agrarian revolution in arable

Lancashire', *Trans. Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Soc.* 122 (1962), pp. 93-122; J. Holt, *General View of the agriculture of the county of Lancaster* (1795). R. W. Dickson, *General View of the agriculture of Lancashire* (1815); Rothwell, *Report*.

¹⁹ Dickson, *General View*, p. 598.

February, March, April, May, June, September, October, November, and December. Despite this pattern of hiring, there was a concentration in January, February and March. Between 1771 and 1782 Eccleston records the hiring date of 22 of his servants. Of these, three were hired in February, one in March, one in April, two in July, three in August, one in September and the remaining 11 were hired in January. Clearly, this was not an established, widespread system and there was no infrastructure in the form of a network of hiring fairs in south Lancashire to service the agricultural labour market. The situation seems akin to that recently described by Youngs in Cheshire in the early sixteenth century, where hiring was not assisted by hiring fairs and consequently servants' terms began and ended throughout the year. Surname evidence suggests that a number of servants who were employed by Eccleston in this period were probably related to each other and to some of his tenants. Nevertheless, Eccleston's hiring became more structured after 1770 as the institution of service became established. There was a clear preference to hire people in the first week of January, and those that were hired in February, March and April and July, August and September may have been on six-month hirings.²⁰

Competition for labour, whilst causing a necessity to contract for labour for a set length of time, might also have promoted a more regular pattern of hiring in Lancashire from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. The agricultural economy could only function if labour was guaranteed, and a widespread system of farm service would operate more efficiently if individuals began and ended their period of service on set days. Until the mid-1760s, Eccleston encountered problems keeping his servants for the full period of their service. Individuals were reported leaving service in the first six months of the year, sometimes only a few weeks or months after entering service. This was less of a problem from the 1770s. The Lancashire industrial economy was gaining momentum in the mid-eighteenth century, and in the absence of an abundant surplus labour force coupled with the opportunity for inflated industrial wages, the labour inputs required by an improving agricultural system were neither guaranteed nor cheap. Indeed, in 1766, he observed that 'The labourers begun about this time to raise their wages from 10*d.* and 12*d.* per day to 14*d.* per [day]'. Within a decade, Eccleston had increased his 'plowmans' wages by 37.5 per cent, his 'cowmans' wages by 33 per cent, and his gardeners' wages by 19 per cent. The wages paid to his chambermaid and dairymaid increased by 25 per cent.²¹

In response to fierce competition for labour, agricultural wages were considerably higher in Lancashire than in the south of England, despite marked variations within the county. According to Armstrong, agricultural wages in the North were showing signs of advancement by the 1770s and by 1795 were 19 per cent higher than southern wages. This was not just a Lancashire phenomenon. Labourer's wages in Leyburn, north Yorkshire, remained constant between 1750 and 1767, and then increased by 25 per cent between 1768 and 1771. Even in the difficult years at the end of the Napoleonic wars when rural distress was widespread, Lancashire labourers apparently fared better than labourers in other English and Welsh counties. By the

²⁰ LRO, DDSc 127/2-3, discussed in Gritt and Virgoe (eds.), *Eccleston memoranda books*; D. Youngs, 'Servants and labourers on a late medieval demesne: the case of

Newton, Cheshire, 1498-1520', *AgHR* 47 (1999), p. 149.

²¹ LRO, DDSc 127/2-3.

mid-nineteenth century, agricultural wages in the North were some 37 per cent higher than those found in the south of England.²²

By the beginning of the century, the proportion of farm servants in the agricultural workforce of Lancashire was undoubtedly rising sharply, contrary to the trends in southern England in the same period. The evidence for this is varied, and not always as direct as one would like. Population increase after 1801 was rapid, and in the first three decades of the nineteenth century some rural parishes grew more rapidly than some industrial towns. Moreover, this population growth was not universally accompanied by a significant increase in rural industry and was also maintained without an increase in the extent of pauperism.²³ In part, the expanded population came to occupy reclaimed land, but to a large extent, the increase in population was caused by the new agricultural labour force. Undoubtedly, more farmers' sons were staying in the parental home well into adulthood while others at least stayed in close proximity to the family farm. For example, after the population of Great Crosby increased 41 per cent in the decade after 1801, it was observed that 'The increase is chiefly to be attributed to the farmers and tradesmen bringing up their children to their own occupation & remaining in the village either as farmers, labourers, or tradesmen'.²⁴

However, the population increase was also the result of substantial gender- and age-specific migration that was necessary to meet the labour demands of agriculture. In 1801, there was no discernible pattern in the distribution of males and females in Lancashire. By 1831, substantial population movement had caused a distinct and significant distribution of men and women with high concentrations of men being found in the arable areas of west Lancashire and the fertile valleys of the Ribble and the Lune, and women being concentrated in the towns. Average household size was also very high in south-west Lancashire. In industrial south-west Lancashire, typical household size was between 4.5 and 5.5 in 1801, while a central core of the Molyneux estate to the north and east of Liverpool was more congested, with between 6 and 6.5 people per house. By 1831, congestion had increased across south-west Lancashire with many townships containing more than 6.5 people per house. Undoubtedly, the rural houses of south-west Lancashire accommodated more people than those in the large urban and industrial centres in the same period. The increased numbers of males were, therefore, not independent artisans or labourers, occupying their own households as heads of families. The inference is that they were farm servants or family labourers. On many estates there was a reluctance to invest in new buildings, despite the fact that housing quality was particularly poor, and the provision of labourers' cottages was inadequate. Increased demand for hired labour was not accompanied by an increase in fixed capital investment in buildings. Labourers' cottages were generally

²² J. D. Marshall, 'The Lancashire rural labourer in the early nineteenth century', *Trans. Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Soc.*, 71 (1961), pp. 101-2; A. Mutch, 'The mechanization of the harvest in south-west Lancashire, 1850-1914', *AgHR* 29 (1981), pp. 125-6; G. R. Boyer, *An economic history of the English Poor Law* (1990), p. 45; G. E. Mingay (intr.), *The agricultural state of the Kingdom, 1816* (1970), pp. 141-5; W. A. Armstrong, 'The influence of

demographic factors on the position of the agricultural labourer in England and Wales, c. 1750-1914', *AgHR* 29 (1981), pp. 76-7; W. A. Armstrong, 'Labour' in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, VI, 1750-1850 (1989), pp. 696-8.

²³ E. C. Midwinter, *Social administration in Lancashire, 1830-1860* (1969), p. 7.

²⁴ LRO, PR 2944/1/2.

unavailable, and living in was, in south-west Lancashire at least, a product of the heightened demand for labour and the deficiencies of the housing stock.²⁵

The employment of large numbers of resident day labourers would have required large-scale fixed capital investment in buildings which neither farmers nor landlords were prepared to make. It was not until the 1830s and 1840s, when farm service was undoubtedly in decline in south-west Lancashire, that the estates began a major building programme providing houses and cottages for farmers and labourers. Even after mid-century, however, the provision of cottages for labourers was inadequate in much of the county. As Mutch shows, farmers saw that it was the landlord's duty to provide cottages for labourers, and petitioned the estates about the inadequacies of labourers' accommodation. Before mid-century, the new labour inputs required by the progressive arable farmers could only be obtained by hiring live-in farm servants. By mid-century, the farmers of south-west Lancashire were abandoning farm service as a consequence of further agricultural change. For instance, by the 1840s, more than half the land in Altcar was used for meadow, producing hay as a commercial crop to satisfy the demand from Liverpool. The predominance of hay reduced the need for a permanent workforce and the intensive, but seasonal, labour inputs were satisfied increasingly by employing Irish migrant labour. Moreover, mechanisation after mid-century further reduced the demand for servants.²⁶

Increased numbers of farm servants in the early nineteenth century are also suggested by the 1823 militia muster roll, which survives for 59 townships in Amounderness hundred between the Rivers Ribble and Lune. The muster provides occupational details for 4150 men aged between 18 and 45. From these data, we can go some way towards analysing the composition of the agricultural workforce for the Fylde area.²⁷ Hiring fairs were held at Garstang, Lancaster and Ulverston, and, significantly, the muster shows that in the Fylde some 47 per cent of the male agricultural workforce aged 18 to 45 in 1823 were servants. This sample is not representative of the workforce, omitting women, children and those over 45, but nevertheless, the data are indicative of a high-service agrarian economy in the 1820s, which had declined by 1851.²⁸

A serious source of error in the muster, however, is the fact that family labourers are not directly recorded. Some may have been returned as husbandmen, others as labourers, although it is unlikely that they were recorded as servants. The township of Woodplumpton, for instance, recorded 83 husbandmen, eight labourers and no servants in the muster. Winstanley has demonstrated that family labourers were common in Woodplumpton in 1881, and the 1767 Return of Papists suggests a significant amount of family labour. Nevertheless, it is

²⁵ Gritt, 'Aspects of agrarian change', pp. 294-5, 247-8. On housing provision and housing quality in south-west Lancashire, see A. J. Gritt, '"For want of reparations": tenants and the built environment on the estates of south-west Lancashire, 1750-1850', *Trans. Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* (forthcoming). Mutch suggests that high levels of farm service was a product of deficiencies in the housing supply coupled with the close proximity of mining in north Lancashire in the later nineteenth century. 'Farming ladder', p. 164.

²⁶ Mutch, *Rural life*, pp. 34-5; Mutch, 'Mechanisation' pp. 125, 129-30; Gritt, 'Aspects of agrarian change',

p. 211; Rothwell, *Report*, app., p. 51; Armstrong, 'Labour', p. 682.

²⁷ LRO, LXA 6. This covers a much bigger area than the 1851 Fylde registration district. The militia returns covers parts of the 1851 registration districts of Fylde, Garstang, Lancaster and Preston.

²⁸ I am grateful to Dr. S. Caunce for information regarding Lancashire hiring fairs and for his constructive advice regarding their functionality and role in the labour market; A. J. Gritt, 'Occupational age specificity and the study of occupations', unpub. paper (1998); Gritt, 'Census and servant', p. 88.

undoubtedly the case that hired labour was much more significant in 1823 than it had been 50 years earlier.²⁹

Despite the flaws in the 1831 census data and the inability of conventional analysis to reveal the composition of the workforce, detailed analysis at the township level still yield some striking trends. Figure 1 shows the ratio of labourers and servants per occupier not employing labour in the townships of Lancashire in 1831. This measure has previously been used as a guide to the extent of proletarianization within English agriculture at the county level. It is certainly a useful indicator of differences in rural social structure. Conventional analysis of the 1831 data indicates that Lancashire, with two paid labourers to every 'peasant' farmer, had the lowest ratio of any English county of labourers and servants per occupier not employing labour. At the other extreme, in Essex there were 43 paid labourers to every 'peasant' farmer. At this broad county level, it is clear that Lancashire's rural social structure was not as polarized as that found elsewhere. However, this county average masks a great deal of significant sub-regional variation. Indeed, there was a significant polarisation within the county reflecting farming type and proximity to market. In general, the least proletarianized, or certainly the least polarized areas, were the industrial uplands in the east of the county, while the highest numbers of labourers and servants per farm were recorded in the immediate vicinity of Liverpool and Manchester. This pattern broadly fits the analysis of the 1851 data above (Table 2). The ratio of 'capitalist' farmers to 'peasant' farmers shows a similar distribution (Figure 2). With such wide variations in the social structure of agrarian Lancashire, it is misleading to consider the issue of agricultural labour at the county level. The fact that 47 per cent of the adult male agricultural workforce were returned as servants in the townships covered by the 1823 muster does not mean that 47 per cent of Lancashire's agricultural workforce were servants at that time. It is certain that the county figure was much less than this.³⁰

IV

Farm servants were not widespread in Lancashire before the late eighteenth century. Despite the hiring fairs in Garstang, Lancaster and Ulverston, the general absence of hiring fairs in most of Lancashire is a conspicuous piece of negative evidence about the structure of the farm workforce in the early modern period. Although the estates and the larger farmers had employed labourers and servants, most farms were under fifty acres, and even though they were not subsistence farmers, family labour was usually sufficient to maintain a mixed or dairy farm of this size. However, levels of paid labour inputs increased substantially in the late eighteenth century as agriculture underwent rapid improvement and became increasingly oriented towards urban capitalist markets. In arable south-west Lancashire the number of farm servants probably peaked between 1815 and 1830. On the pasture farms of northern Lancashire the number of farm servants continued to increase throughout the nineteenth century.

In order to achieve and sustain increased land productivity from the late eighteenth century, and to maximize the efficiency of a new farming regime that placed greater emphasis on intensive arable cultivation and market gardening, the progressive farmers of west Lancashire required

²⁹ Winstanley, 'Industrialization and the small farm', pp. 187-8.

³⁰ Overton, *Agricultural revolution*, p. 179; See also Gritt, 'Census and servant', p. 86

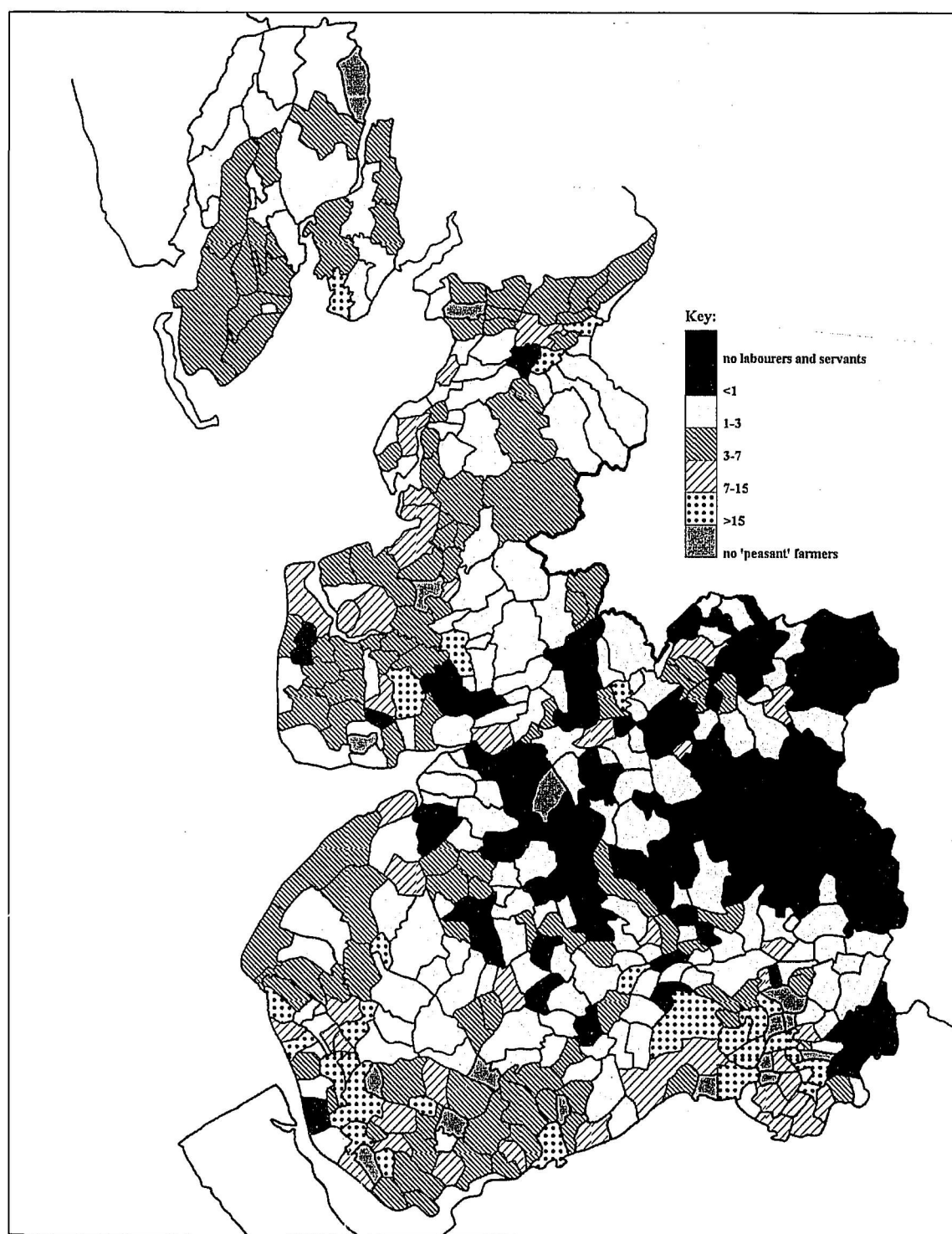


FIGURE 1. Number of labourers and servants per occupier not employing labour, Lancashire townships, 1831.

Source: 1831 census, *Abstract of answers and returns* (BPP 1833, xxxvi (149)).
Base map courtesy of Dr Alan Crosby and the Friends of Lancashire Archives.

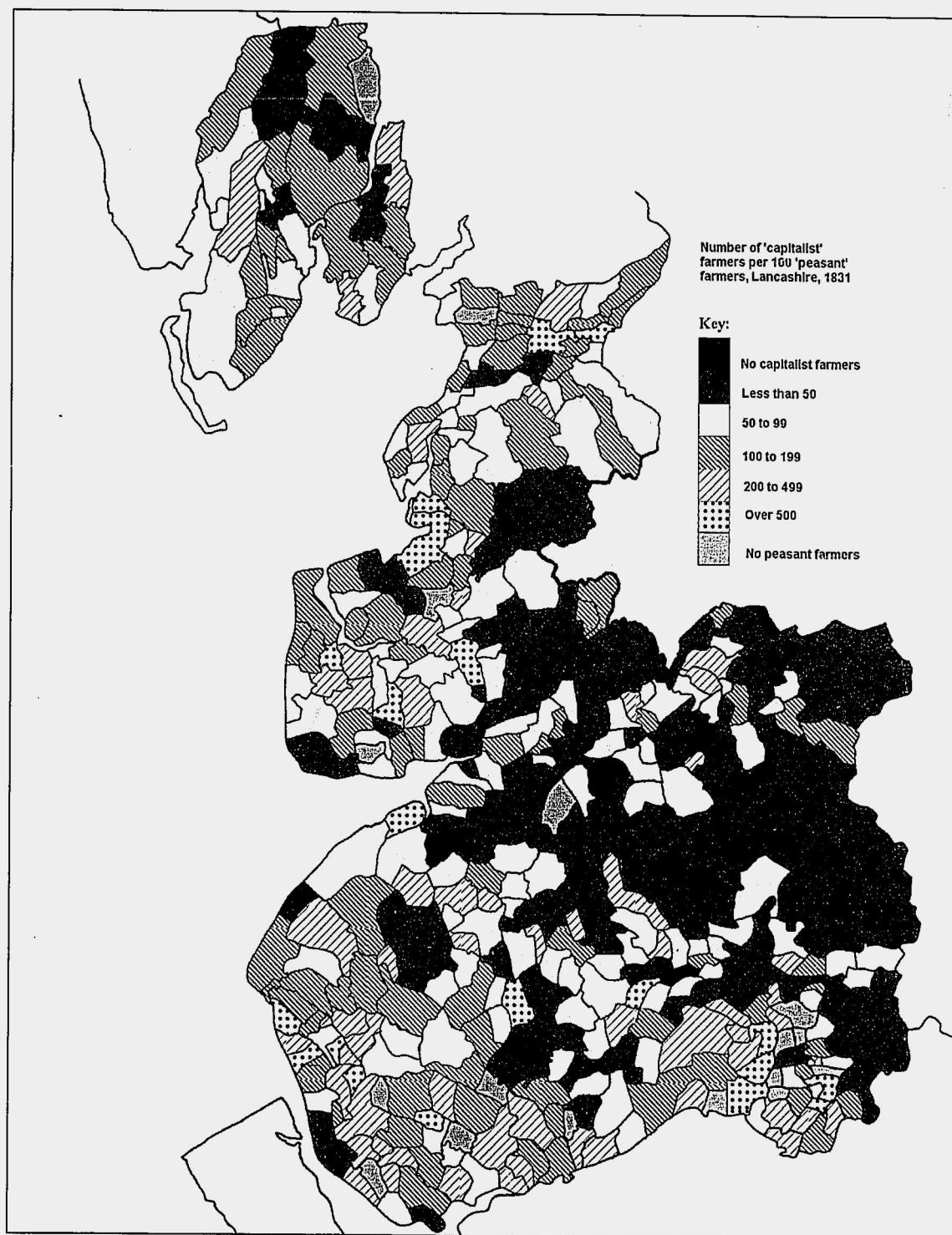


FIGURE 2. Ratio of 'capitalist' occupiers to 'peasant' occupiers, Lancashire, 1831.

Source: 1831 census, *Abstract of answers and returns* (BPP 1833, xxxvi (149)).

Base map courtesy of Dr Alan Crosby and the Friends of Lancashire Archives..

greater labour inputs. Thereafter, as arable cultivation gave way to commercial hay production and the cultivation of green crops in south-west Lancashire, servants declined and were replaced by a more casual farm workforce. In the upland east of the county and in central Lancashire, small dairy farms supplemented by handloom weaving dominated, providing the expanding urban centres with a supply of liquid milk. In certain of these districts, family labour dominated the farm workforce, but in east Lancashire generally, it was the day labourer that dominated by 1851. In northern Lancashire, in the agricultural districts furthest from the main centres of population and industry, where the pull of distant towns depleted the available workforce and local industry provided employment opportunities for the unskilled, farm service continued to grow in strength in the nineteenth century. They did so not as a 'survival', nor as part of a primitive, anachronistic farming regime, but as the only means by which commercial farmers could guarantee a labour supply. Hired farm labour was a development of the commercialisation of agriculture in Lancashire that followed demographic change, and urban and industrial expansion. The precise form of labour contract varied from one region to the next, but farm service as a means of procuring labour was a response to other economic factors. It is clear that between 1767 and 1851 a relatively small rural proletariat was created in Lancashire that had no early modern equivalent. Moreover, farm servants cannot be excluded from that proletariat.

Yet, we have not established why Lancashire farmers turned to service as the solution to their increased need for hired labour in the late eighteenth century. Could it be the case, as Counce has suggested, that service was agriculture's equivalent of proto-industry, an earlier stage of development that formed a bridge between subsistence and full-blown agrarian capitalism, providing farmers with a guaranteed level of *motivated* labour?³¹ Labour motivation is clearly difficult to prove without oral testimony, but the evidence presented by Woodward led him to conclude that

There is no reason to suppose that servants were intrinsically more reliable than day labourers; indeed, given the youth of the majority of servants, and the absence of the responsibility which marriage brought to day labourers, it is likely that servants were among the least reliable of employees and would have been even more unsteady without close supervision.³²

The evidence from Lancashire is not abundant, but largely agrees with Woodward's conclusions. The Reverend Peter Walkden employed a servant, Harry Wilkinson, on his forty-acre farm near Chipping in central Lancashire. Wilkinson was aged 16 in 1733 and Walkden's diary testifies to his general ineptitude as a farm labourer, and to the fact that he only worked under close supervision for much of the time. In April 1733, for instance, he was sent with a horse and cart to transport some straw, but 'he not being perfect in the road', Walkden found it necessary to send his wife with him. In May, Wilkinson returned home crying because he had been run over by a cartwheel. He had lost control of the horse in his charge and Walkden only became aware of the accident when the horse arrived home injured 'with the cart, but no wheels, and the cart broken in several places'. He ran away from his service in April when Walkden had found it necessary to 'hit him a blow or 2 on his ear', only to be brought back by his mother who was eager that 'he should stay his year out'. For his part, Walkden 'approved not of his running' and was 'pleased' to have him back, though he expected to 'have him in awe'.

³¹ Counce, 'Farm servants and capitalism', p. 52.

³² Woodward, 'Early modern servants', p. 143.

In a display of temperamental immaturity, he threatened to leave his service after he had been taunted by a female visitor to Walkden's household. Wilkinson 'Got up our [fire] tongs to strike at her, But mist her and hit daughter Ann of the forehead, and broke the skin and rais[ed] a boil, then took out of our fireiron end and threw at her, and missing her, he hit my Love on the Eye and wounded it'. Wilkinson 'fled' from the house, returned to collect his clothes saying he was going home. Then he returned 'calling Ellen bitch and whore, and said he would have killed her'. Wilkinson seems not to have been reprimanded for this behaviour, and Walkden was generally a lenient employer, allowing Wilkinson some leisure time, and actually giving him money to travel to fairs at Lancaster and Chipping. Nevertheless, Wilkinson could not have been a good advert for the advantages of employing a farm servant, and any degree of motivation is worthless without the ability to perform tasks dutifully, efficiently, independently and effectively.³³

Basil Thomas Eccleston employed a number of farm servants, and although he does not record their close supervision, he does record their incompetence and the way in which a servant contract did not always guarantee a labour supply for the year. Service did not necessarily provide access to an able, dependable workforce. He records the names of seven dairymaids that he employed between 1761 and 1783, four of whom proved to be unsatisfactory to Eccleston. Of these, two ran away from service, one after being 'much abused and crushed' by his 'cowman', who also left his service as a consequence. In 1775, Eccleston's cheese was said to be 'very ordinary' occasioned by the fact that 'the maid Helen Houghton' was guilty of 'not understanding the business so well as she ought to have done'. In 1783, he recorded that 'Elizabeth Unsworth my dairymaid through negligence spoiled me 40 cheeses'.³⁴

Captain Roger Dewhurst owned a small estate in Halliwell near Bolton, and his diary for the years 1784-6 shows that his farm servant, James Ramsbottom, was a particular problem. Ramsbottom preferred drinking to work. At five in the morning on 20 January 1785 he was sent with a message to a Mrs Gregge on the other side of Bolton, but at nine that night Dewhurst received a message to say that Ramsbottom had been taken ill. However, at half past eleven Ramsbottom was brought home drunk, with the cost of the journey being stopped from his wages. He was occasionally capable of carrying out his work with apparent diligence, such as in June 1785 when he was 'mowing from three in the morning till nine at night', but this was untypical. More typical of Dewhurst's relationship with his servant was when he recorded that 'James Ramsbottom was very lazy in mowing the great plot. He waited and rested no less than seven times in the morning'. The consequence was that the mowing, which Dewhurst expected to cost 1s., actually cost him 4s. Ramsbottom was not Dewhurst's only troublesome farm servant. In January 1785 he resolved that John Turner, a servant who was also prone to neglecting his duties, 'shall certainly remove next year'. In August 1785, when Dewhurst allowed Ramsbottom to do some mowing for one of his tenants, Dewhurst seemed glad to get rid of him for the day and he employed another labourer to finish his own mowing, which was done in three hours. Ramsbottom 'took this highly amiss' and he was persuaded by the farmer for whom he had laboured for the day to leave his service. Dewhurst was clearly not pleased about this, and noted that 'he is hired by the year, and I have kept him all winter'. Despite the poor relations between

³³ Chipping Local History Society, *Walkden Diary*, 30 Mar., 11, 14 Apr., 5 May, 16, 24 Aug., 25 Sept., 22 Nov. 1733.

³⁴ LRO, DDS 127/2-3, discussed in Gritt and Virgoe (eds), *Eccleston memoranda books*.

Dewhurst and Ramsbottom, Dewhurst was prepared to hire him again by October that year, but he recorded that 'He refuses to be hired again, says he will not be fast'. By early November, Dewhurst was looking for a replacement servant, and agreed to take one George Booth 'on trial for a fortnight'. The trial was seemingly unsuccessful, and by February 1786 Ramsbottom was again back at the Dewhurst household, although only temporarily as Dewhurst 'told him he should never come here again'.³⁵

In the light of this evidence, it would seem that Rothwell was romanticising the position of the farm servant within the rural social structure when, in 1850, he reflected on changes during the first half of the nineteenth century:

With respect to the moral principles of the *farm labourers*, in Lancashire, I am afraid they do not stand so high as they did forty years ago. And I am also of opinion that the farmers themselves, do not render that strict justice to their labourers as they did forty years ago; nor is there that fellowship and friendly feeling which there was then. That kindly feeling which ought to exist between them, is still on the decline; and the evils of which I speak, are, I am afraid, much on the increase, arising, in a great measure, from the fault of the masters and mistresses increasing the distance between themselves and their servants. The great body of farmers seem to care little about their servants, except to extract the greatest possible amount of labour from them; and yet, in my opinion, they take the worst means of ever obtaining this ... When I was a farmer, those servants who boarded in the house, partook at the same table as myself, and sat in the same room of an evening, talking over what we had done, how we might have done it better, and how we could best do the work tomorrow, or next week. It was the same in my father's time, and neighbouring farmers, with their regular farm servants.³⁶

Nevertheless, whilst Rothwell's memory of farm service at the turn of the nineteenth century may have been flawed, he was certainly not romanticising the relationship between farmers and servants in 1850. Significantly, for an agricultural improver, and for a perceptive and critical agricultural writer, he was in favour of service. He argued that 'Those who board with the farmer, live in a better style' than casual labourers. He also observed the poor, and declining, standard of living of day labourers generally and argued that 'task-work' was 'more practised than formerly'. While there is more than a tinge of paternalism in Rothwell's analysis, farm servants were not necessarily a bar to agricultural improvement.³⁷

It may be the case that Lancashire farmers generally, except perhaps the small minority of large farmers, enjoyed better relations with their farm servants than the estate owners Eccleston and Dewhurst and the cleric, Walkden. Each of them was of a higher social status than many of their neighbours, and none of them were dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Although Walkden frequently worked alongside his servant, ineptitude became apparent when Wilkinson was working alone. Dewhurst never records working alongside his servant, which therefore provided the opportunity for Ramsbottom to neglect his duties. This lack of supervision perhaps explains the independence but lack of skill demonstrated by their servants. It is

³⁵ Billington, *Captain Dewhurst*, entries for 20, 22 Jan. 26 Jul. 1785, 10, 11 Jun. 1784, 17 Jan. 12 Aug., 26 Oct., 5 Nov. 1785, 9 Feb. 1786.

³⁶ Rothwell, *Report*, pp. 125-7. See also app., pp. 51-2.

³⁷ Rothwell, *Report*, app., p. 51.

unlikely that the abundant opportunities for non-agricultural employment and rising real wages were sufficient to *cause* the apparent neglectful, carefree, but confident attitude of servants. In 1758, James Warne, who farmed 'on a substantial scale' in Dorset, confidently wrote that 'I'm like to have work folk a plenty', yet the indiscipline, independence and absenteeism of his farm servants were a source of constant frustration.³⁸

In Northumberland and the East Riding of Yorkshire, where capitalist farming in the nineteenth century depended upon farm service, the scale of farming was such that a highly structured form of service evolved which made it a largely self-regulating system. Indeed, in the East Riding, 'servants had virtually no contact with their employers'. The hierarchy of farm service, although different in each region, provided supervision and added responsibilities for those individuals at the top. On the small farms of Lancashire, the farmer did not have the means to be a mere manager, and servants would find themselves working alongside their masters. This is clearly reflected in Rothwell's reminiscences. Although farmers and servants were socially differentiated by the labour contract and the cash nexus, this social division was much narrower for the majority of Lancashire farmers than it was for the well-documented gentlemen farmers. Moreover, Mutch has shown that in 1871 in north Lancashire 48 per cent of farm servants were farmers' sons, which further highlights the general lack of social distance between small farmers and their servants. Nevertheless, it remains to be said that close supervision was the key to the effectiveness of farm service rather than any intrinsic motivation that the servants possessed.³⁹

If labour motivation was not the reason for the increased numbers of farm servants in late eighteenth-century Lancashire, why did the changes in the rural social structure take the form they did? It is no coincidence that the new social order was created during a period when agriculture was going through a transitional phase, taking advantage of the new market opportunities. The swelling of the body of farm servants in Lancashire was not a product of agrarian inertia but was a necessary consequence of wider economic and social change, and they were a fundamental part of an improving agrarian regime. The farmers employing them were commercial farmers producing cash crops for sale on open market. They were directly dependent upon the urban-industrial capitalist market economy for their prosperity.

In order to take advantage of the new opportunities it was necessary for them to secure a supply of labour. However, facing fierce competition from industry, this was not straightforward. Marshall argues that there was no 'serious labour shortage' in agriculture in early nineteenth-century Lancashire. However, the labour shortage was only avoided by offering long contracts at wage levels that were significantly higher than southern wages in the same period. The take-off period for the agricultural regime of Lancashire coincided with the industrial take-off period, and the associated developments in the transport infrastructure. Agriculture was in conflict with industry for land and capital, and farmers were in direct competition with industrial employers for labour. One correspondent from industrial east Lancashire commented in 1798, 'We have no servant – they are not to be got here for money'.⁴⁰

³⁸ G. Mingay, 'The diary of James Warne, 1758', *AgHR* 38 (1990), pp. 72, 75–7.

³⁹ A. Howkins, *Reshaping rural England: a social history, 1850–1925* (1992), p. 53; Caunce, 'Farm servants and

capitalism', p. 56; Mutch, 'Farming ladder', p. 174.

⁴⁰ Marshall, 'Lancashire rural labourer', p. 127; LRO, DDX 1609/1, Jno Rutter, Littleborough, to Jane Rutter, Croston, 8 Feb. 1798.

Farmers would use their social contacts in their efforts to secure a labour supply, often over distances of many miles. Basil Thomas Eccleston of Eccleston, for instance, used his contacts in Scarisbrick thirteen miles distant to secure both casual and tied labour. Henry Blundell of Little Crosby on numerous occasions in the early 1790s wrote to John Barrow, a Catholic priest in Claughton near Garstang, looking for reliable servants. Blundell clearly had difficulty in finding servants, especially ones of the right character. In 1792, when he was looking for a groom, he explained to Barrow that 'I frequently hear of serv[an]ts., grooms etc. who have been in places, but parted with for some irregularity. Such servants seldom ans[we]r. I sh[oul]d always prefer a man out of the country, who will soon learn his business'. Servants were no more abundantly available in Claughton as Barrow explained that the 'print houses, cotton factories, forges etc. in this neighbourhood employ the whole of both sexes, so that good servants of any denomination are become very scarce'. Nevertheless, Barrow did manage to supply a succession of servants and dairymaids to Blundell, although in 1795 he explained the reluctance of individuals to be bound in service. Claughton was detached from the main centres of cotton production, and yet even here it employed the majority of the female population. Industry provided economic independence for women 'who are keen of being their own mistresses and living free from constraints'. This economic competition made it 'difficult to procure proper servants'.⁴¹

The difficulties encountered in procuring farm labour encouraged farmers to offer long contracts and servants would expect substantial financial reward for binding themselves. Thus, from the late eighteenth century onwards the ranks of the farm servant swelled to unprecedented levels. From the second quarter of the nineteenth century regional developments diverge. In south-west Lancashire farm service entered a decline as they were replaced by a more casualized farm labour force made possible by the provision of labourers' cottages. For a brief period farming prosperity was dependent upon the labour of farm servants, but once improvements had begun to take effect the farmers of the 1830s and 1840s began to expect greater social distance between themselves and their labourers. As the built environment was improved, and farmers began to live in greater domestic comfort, the number of servants declined accordingly and by 1851 the day labourer dominated the rural workforce, despite the comparatively large numbers of family labourers and farm servants.

Even by the mid-nineteenth century, individual farmers did not normally employ more than two or three labourers, but although the scale of farming was small, it was undoubtedly capitalistic, and markedly different from the farming regime and agrarian social order that existed half a century earlier, which was in turn different from that of the mid-eighteenth century. Two-fifths of the male agricultural workforce in Lancashire in 1851 were either farm servants or family members, yet the persistence of such forms of labour does not necessarily indicate an inefficient, ossified farming system. The high wages of the Lancashire rural labourer would have made large-scale capitalist agriculture inefficient or even unprofitable and labour supply might not have satisfied the demand. In Cumbria, Wensleydale and Swaledale in the later nineteenth century the low labour costs of small farmers gave them a commercial advantage over the larger 'capitalist' farmers, allowing the former to prosper in adverse economic circumstances. The labour supply of family labourers varied over the life-cycle, but was relatively fixed in any given year, providing

⁴¹ Gritt and Virgoe, *Eccleston memoranda books*, 25 Oct. 1762, 27 Jul. 1772; LRO, RCCI 2/51, letters dated 31 Jan., 19 Feb. 1792, 16 Nov. 1795.

inputs for minimal expenditure. Consequently, as Critchley argues, 'capital is not released for other uses by their idleness or wasted by their uneconomic employment'. Family farming was labour intensive but family labour was not capital intensive.⁴²

The same is true of farm servants and to look for the reasons for the 'survival' of farm service in the north of England is a red herring. Farm servants were not a 'survival' but a fundamental part of the development of specialized, commercial production for capitalist markets. Theoretically, service provided farmers with guaranteed levels of labour at a fixed rate. Their employment contract places them outside the true proletariat and despite the social distance between servants and farmers, servants did not demonstrate a proletarian consciousness. Yet, as we have seen, servants could demonstrate a fiercely independent attitude, even if this was sometimes accompanied by ineptitude. During the transitional phase of agricultural development from the late eighteenth century, farm servants occupied the position of the waged labourer in the tripartition of rural society.

Yet servants were more common in the arable districts of west Lancashire than they were in the pastoral/industrial districts of east Lancashire. The presence of cottage industry in east Lancashire, and its survival into the mid-nineteenth century provided a pool of reserve casual labour and the distinctions between agricultural labour and industrial labour only became clear with the onset of the discipline of factory employment. Peter Walkden's farm servant, Harry Wilkinson, was employed in spinning wool when he was not engaged in agricultural work, which also supplemented his wages. Roger Dewhurst's farm servant, James Ramsbottom, was engaged in mowing hay alongside several local 'crofters'. Handloom weavers were not likely to abandon the loom for the scythe in the prosperous years of the late eighteenth century, but by the 1840s agricultural work might have provided a welcome supplement to their family income. This pool of reserve labour was not present in west and north Lancashire, where industry was significantly less important to the domestic economy, and without long contracts the labour supply would have been deficient in these areas. By the mid-nineteenth century, when service was in decline, farmers in west Lancashire were increasingly dependent on Irish migrant labour which provided sufficient levels of labour inputs at times of peak demand. After mid-century farmers in south-west Lancashire increasingly looked to technological solutions to their labour requirements.⁴³

Farm service in nineteenth-century Lancashire was not a survival, a hangover from a pre-capitalist era. Indeed, farm service only became significant at the precise moment that agriculture was becoming increasingly capitalist, commercial and market-oriented, in response to wider changes in Lancashire's economy. Farm service may not have provided a skilled, motivated workforce, but as a supplement to family labour and the labour of the landholder, closely supervised servants were a necessary component of the intensification of farming from the late eighteenth century.

⁴² Searle, 'The odd corner of England', pp. 425-6; C. Hallas, *Rural responses to industrialisation: The North Yorkshire Pennines, 1790-1914* (1999), p. 24; J. S. Critchley, *Feudalism* (1978), p. 170. The efficiency of family labourers and the extent to which their employment was 'uneconomic' is more complex than Critchley suggests. Many family farms in the northern uplands were not purely agricultural families, and often combined farming

with industry. Uneconomic farm work would, therefore, be detrimental to the family economy if that time might be more profitably spent weaving. I intend to investigate the relationship between handloom weaving and family farms on a future occasion.

⁴³ Chipping Local History Society, *Walkden Diary*, 5 Sept., 23 Oct. 1733; Billington, *Captain Dewhurst*, 12 Aug. 1785. 'Crofters' were bleachers of cotton cloth.