

# Between fact and fiction: Henry Brinklow's *Complaynt* against rapacious landlords\*

by Margaret Yates

## *Abstract*

The purpose of this paper is to separate fact from fiction in the observations of economic trends contained in the writings of the evangelicals of 1542. It does so by examining the polemical tracts of Henry Brinklow and his fellow Protestants for their comments on rent, tenure and the engrossing of landholdings and then comparing them with data drawn from a case study of Brinklow's home parish in Berkshire. The result establishes that, although their writings did contain nuggets of truth, the evils were neither as widespread nor recent as they would imply. They were based on an established literary tradition that dated from at least the fourteenth century, augmented and justified by frequent references to biblical passages. The novelty was their urgency to bring about a godly commonwealth whilst there was still time.

This paper tackles the historian's recurring problem of how to distinguish the conventions of literature from the conditions of real life. It does so by comparing the polemical tracts of Henry Brinklow and his contemporaries with the situation in west Berkshire where Brinklow's father and brothers were farmers at Kintbury. Brinklow and the other authors considered in this paper were all Protestant evangelicals. Their primary concerns were to attack the failings of the church, especially the priesthood, and to promote new forms of religious observance that would bring about a godly society. In this they were advocates of an ideal Christian commonwealth. Social and economic concerns were secondary for them, but no less real or desired, and this article will concentrate on the specific themes of rent, tenure, and the engrossing or amalgamation of holdings. By examining texts of the same literary genre written within a year of each other, and then comparing them with the evidence from a detailed study of an area known to one of the authors, it will be possible to assess the reliability of the tracts as evidence for economic trends and make a contribution to our understanding of conditions in the early 1540s.

Brinklow and his contemporaries were anxious to bring about a godly 'commonwealth'. Their language was couched in terms of 'commen weel', 'comen welth', and 'commonality'

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when referring to an idealized state of Christian well-being that was shared by the majority of society. They were not innovators but wanted a return to the purity of true Christian belief and its code of behaviour. Their writings were laced with biblical quotations, references and justifications. A typical example is Brinklow's use of the book of Isaiah to attack the engrossers of holdings:

Here shal all Inclosars, grossers up of fermys extorcyonars and oppressers of the common welth, be offendyd at me ... but all such I send unto the fyft chapter of the prophete Esay, where he sayth: wo be unto yow which ioyned one howse to another, and bryng one land so nye unto another, tyl ye can get no more ground.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the ideas of Brinklow and the other evangelicals were not new. They can be seen as a continuation of an established literary tradition that had developed over the medieval period, and especially from the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Langland's moral Piers, for example, criticized the wealth and abuses of the church and proscribed the duties of an ideal landlord.<sup>3</sup> John Rous wrote c. 1460 against enclosures and rural depopulation in Warwickshire that were grievous to all lovers of the commonwealth.<sup>4</sup> Yet this was not necessarily a criticism of contemporary events as it was a time when the population of England was low. The themes of commonwealth were continued in political discourses such as the manifesto of the Yorkists of 1469 where reforms were called for 'the common weal of all this his realm', 'the common wealth of this land', and the 'commonweal of this land'.<sup>5</sup> The ideas persisted and in the opening of Parliament in 1484 the chancellor employed enclosure and depopulation as examples of the disease of the political body.<sup>6</sup>

The medieval tradition of an ordered society continued into the sixteenth century in works such as Edmund Dudley's *Tree of Commonwealth*.<sup>7</sup> The sentiments and fears of the reformers, such as the effects of engrossing, were already firmly established in the language of the proclamations and statutes of the early sixteenth century, especially in the years 1514 to 1516, and were taken up by Wolsey's commissions of 1517 and 1518.<sup>8</sup> Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), albeit

<sup>1</sup> Henry Brinklow, *The complaynt of Roderyck Mors, somtyme a gray fryer, vnto the parliament howse of England his natural cuntry for the redresse of certain wicked lawes, euel customs, ad cruell [sic] decreys*. (Short Title Catalogue, sec. edn [hereafter STC], I 3759.5 published in 1542), chapter xx, v. 41. Quotation taken from Isaiah 5, 8. Brinklow had just used Matthew 10, 9–10 to attack the wealth and possessions of the clergy. See W. R. D. Jones, *The Tudor Commonwealth, 1529–1559* (1970), pp. 160–1 for examples of other authors who employed this passage from Isaiah.

<sup>2</sup> Studies of these trends include Jones, *Tudor Commonwealth*, G. R. Elton, *Reform and Renewal* (1973), A. McRae, *God speed the plough* (1996), and P. Slack, *From Reformation to improvement* (1999).

<sup>3</sup> A. V. C. Schmidt (ed.), *William Langland: The Vision of Piers Plowman* (1995), VI, for details of the ideal landlord at ll. 37–54. Several of Langland's ideas were

taken up by the Lollards in their writings, A. Hudson *Lollards and their books* (1985). In addition, some were included amongst the demands of the peasants at Smithfield in 1381, such as, according to the Anonimale Chronicler, a fair distribution of land and the disendowment of the church. R. B. Dobson (ed.), *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381* (1983), pp. 164–5.

<sup>4</sup> A. R. Myers (ed.), *English Historical Documents*, IV, 1327–1485 (1969), pp. 1014–15.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 300–01.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 1016–17.

<sup>7</sup> Written in 1510. D. M. Brodie (ed.), *The Tree of Commonwealth. A treatise written by Edmund Dudley* (1948), pp. 14–17, and continued in the text itself.

<sup>8</sup> For example, the proclamation 'Prohibiting enclosure and engrossing of farms' of 6 Henry VIII, pr. in P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin (eds.), *Tudor Royal Proclamations* (3 vols, 1964–9), I, pp. 122–3.

written in Latin and not for the common people, also dealt with the evils of enclosure, evictions and decay of housing, manipulation of prices, poverty and vagrancy; all themes that would be returned to by the reformers.<sup>9</sup> Simon Fish's *Supplication for the Beggars* of c. 1529 was a more general attack on the greed of the church and the poverty that this caused, rather than rents and enclosures.<sup>10</sup> The necessity for improving 'the true common weal' was addressed by Thomas Starkey in his *Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* which is now believed to have been first drafted in 1529–32.<sup>11</sup> Elton argued that the ideas of Starkey had a profound effect upon Cromwell, especially in the formation of his economic policies.<sup>12</sup> A break with the past occurred when Cromwell moved to convert ideas into actions in his programme of reforms of the mid- and late 1530s.<sup>13</sup> It was the failure to exploit the opportunities presented in 1536, and the shortcomings of the legislation, that led to disillusionment and disappointment amongst the reformers and fuelled the writings of 1542 which are the subject of this paper.

The ideas of Brinklow and his colleagues would continue after 1542 in works such as Thomas Smith, *A discourse of the common wealth of this realm of England*, those by John Hales, and in Bishop Latimer's sermons. The broader movement for reform and regeneration of the 'commonwealth' advocated by the evangelicals was, arguably, a serious influence in Edward VI's reign and particularly on Somerset's government.<sup>14</sup> Jones' assessment, however, is that ideas of the commonwealth continued to be essentially medieval in character between 1529 and 1559.<sup>15</sup>

The early 1540s were a time of enormous religious, social and economic change which took place against a background of an increasing population.<sup>16</sup> The Protestant Reformation had been instigated, the Dissolution of the Monasteries enacted, and the massive re-distribution of these lands into lay hands was at its peak.<sup>17</sup> The Pilgrimage of Grace had been suppressed.<sup>18</sup> War with Scotland was about to break out again.<sup>19</sup> The growing levels of government expenditure and costs of Henry's wars had placed a heavy burden on the taxable population.<sup>20</sup> In addition, prices were rising and the first debasement of that year accelerated the trend.<sup>21</sup> More positively, it was

<sup>9</sup> Thomas More, *Utopia* (1965), pp. 46–8, 54–5.

<sup>10</sup> Printed in F. J. Furnivall (ed.), *Four Supplications 1529–1553 A.D.*, (Early English Text Society [hereafter EETS], Extra ser. 13, 1871), pp. 1–18.

<sup>11</sup> T. F. Mayer (ed.), *Thomas Starkey. A dialogue between Pole and Lupset* (Camden Soc., Fourth ser., 37, 1989). For the date, pp. x–xii.

<sup>12</sup> Elton, *Reform and renewal*, p. 52.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>14</sup> D. MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant* (1999), pp. 122–6 where, additionally, he argues that the language of the rebels of 1549 was also drawing on this tradition.

<sup>15</sup> Jones, *Tudor Commonwealth*, pp. 81–3, 215. For Slack the shift in ideas in the years between Edward IV and Edward VI had implications for the future. Slack, *Reformation to improvement*, pp. 9, 11.

<sup>16</sup> For general introductions to the period see R. Tittler and N. Jones (eds), *A companion to Tudor Britain* (2004); K. Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities.*

*Economic lives in Early Modern Britain* (2000). C. G. A. Clay, *Economic expansion and social change: England 1500–1700* (2 vols, 1984). The increase in population is discussed in J. Hatcher, 'Understanding the population history of England 1450–1750', *Past and Present* 180 (2003), pp. 83–130.

<sup>17</sup> F. Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (2003). J. Youings, *The dissolution of the monasteries* (1971). For the specific context in which Brinklow was operating, see S. Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (1989).

<sup>18</sup> R. W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the politics of the 1530s* (2001).

<sup>19</sup> There was actually a lull in the conflict with France prior to Henry and Charles V making an agreement for a joint invasion of France in 1543.

<sup>20</sup> R. W. Hoyle, 'Taxation and the mid-Tudor crisis', *EcHR* 51 (1998), pp. 649–75.

<sup>21</sup> R. B. Outhwaite, *Inflation in Tudor and early Stuart England* (1969). The most intensive phase of price rises was to come with the debasements of 1544–5.

a time of fairly good harvests, and expanding industrial activity, especially in the production of cloth.

## I

Henry Brinklow was a man of many parts.<sup>22</sup> He was a successful merchant and member, by 1531, of the Mercer's Company when he was the lessee of a large property belonging to the company in St Laurence Lane.<sup>23</sup> He was a Citizen of the City of London and travelled to Antwerp and elsewhere in Europe in the course of his trading activities as a Merchant Adventurer.<sup>24</sup> Henry promoted the mercers' interests when he was involved in putting forward a bill against merchant strangers in 1544, although it was ultimately unsuccessful.<sup>25</sup> In his *Complaynt* Brinklow criticized the level of customs import duties and attacked the rising cost of cloth.

Than demand the clothyer, if he lyved not better, whan he sold his clothys for a resonable price the pack, and his carseys for xxii or xxiii pownd the pack, than he doth now, sellyng them for xxx pound the pack.<sup>26</sup>

Henry's brothers Hugh and Anthony were apprenticed to him as mercers and they traded together as a family firm. After Henry's death Hugh and Anthony continued to trade as mercers.<sup>27</sup> The Brinklows' commercial activities were similar to those of the Johnson brothers, a family firm of drapers and staplers who were also Protestants.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, John Johnson was a business acquaintance and had a trading account with Henry.<sup>29</sup>

Henry was married to Margery and they had a son John. Relationships within the Brinklow family were maintained as Henry remained in contact with his father and brothers in Berkshire. He and his son were beneficiaries of his father's will.<sup>30</sup> In his own will of June 1545 Henry mentioned his brothers John, George, Hugh, William and Anthony.<sup>31</sup> John and George,

<sup>22</sup> Biographical details are derived from J. M. Cowper (ed.), *Henry Brinklow's Complaynt of Roderyck Mors*, (EETS, Extra ser. 22, 1874), introduction; A. Ryrie, 'Brinklow, Henry (d. 1545/6)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3437>, accessed Dec. 2004]. The wills of the Brinklow family are cited below.

<sup>23</sup> He was granted the lease 'of a greate tenemente in the voyde place in Sainte laurence lane', Mercers Company Archives, Acts of Court, 1527–60, fo. 55.

<sup>24</sup> Frans de Pape of Antwerp bought cloths valued at £38 Flemish from Henry Brinklow at the Bamismarkt in 1539. O. de Smedt, *De Engelse Natie te Antwerpen in de 16<sup>th</sup> eeuw (1496–1582)* (2 vols, 1950–4), II, p. 342.

<sup>25</sup> H. Miller, 'London and parliament in the reign of Henry VIII', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 35 (1962), p. 146.

<sup>26</sup> Brinklow, *Complaynt*, Second chapter, v. 9.

<sup>27</sup> '1541 Hugh Brynckelowe late apprentice to Henry Brynckelowe'. '1545 Antonye brinckelowe late apprentice

to henrye brinckelowe.' Mercers Company Archives, Register of Freemen of Company, 1347–1914. As apprenticeship took 10 years, this implies that Henry was a member of the company by 1531. I have Dr Anne Sutton to thank for the insights into apprenticeship and these references. In 1545 Hugh was in Hamborow with John Dymcoke acting as letter carrier back to Paget in England. *Letters and Papers of the reign of Henry VIII* (hereafter *LP*) XX (i), 1273. In 1565 Anthony Brinklow mercer owed £16 to John Isham. G. D. Ramsay (ed.), *John Isham, Mercer and Merchant Adventurer* (Northamptonshire Record Soc., 21, 1962), p. 94.

<sup>28</sup> Their letters and accounts survive due to the bankruptcy of John Johnson in 1553. B. Winchester, *Tudor Family Portrait* (1955).

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 45, 212.

<sup>30</sup> TNA, PROB 11/29/24.

<sup>31</sup> TNA, PROB 11/31/20. His overseers were the London mercers Hugh and Anthony.

who lived at Kintbury, were in debt to Henry. Henry had remained in affectionate contact with the village as he bequeathed 20s. in apparel and money to each of ten of the poorest parishioners there. A successful merchant, he left an estate of over £350 divided into three as was the custom of the City of London: the first part to Margery his wife, the second to his son John, and the third, which was Henry's own part, to his brother Hugh. And he mentioned the uncertainties of being a merchant:

I being a marchaunt whose state is mutche unconstante and specialie in those which have their gooddes in strange cuntries farr from theyme as at this present tyme myne be.<sup>32</sup>

Brinklow is famous as the Protestant polemicist who published under the pseudonym Roderick or Roderigo Mors. His two most well-known works, *The complaynt of Roderick Mors*, and *The lamentacion of a Christian, against the cite of London*, were both published in 1542.<sup>33</sup> Brinklow held strong Protestant beliefs including a rejection of the real presence in the Eucharist, and denounced the whole doctrine of purgatory and the need for masses and prayers for the dead. Indeed he felt so strongly that he ordered that no one was to wear mourning for him after he died and went as far as to threaten to disinherit his wife:

Other morening gownes to be worne for me I utterly forbidde aswell my wiff and my childe as all other my Freendes and that uppon the peane unto my wiffe of forfaiting the execution of this my testament and the bennefittes that to her shoulde come by vertue of the same ... I freely geve to Margery my wiffe uppon condicion aforesaid that she were no worldely fantastickal dessembling black gowne for me nor no other by her appoyntment'.<sup>34</sup>

As a Merchant Adventurer Brinklow travelled abroad where he came into contact with Protestant beliefs, and of course the Mercers were involved in the early trade in printed books.<sup>35</sup> They supplied many early Protestant works, for example William Locke had obtained books for Anne Boleyn when he 'used to go beyond sea'.<sup>36</sup> Brinklow was a member of a cell of evangelicals within the Mercer's Company and part of a close network of friends and business associates who shared similar beliefs.<sup>37</sup> The group also included their wives and daughters. His widow Margery became the second wife of the merchant, diplomat and friend of Cromwell, Stephen Vaughan. 'I have long known the woman' Vaughan told Paget.<sup>38</sup> Indeed there are several letters from Vaughan to Paget and Wriothesley in 1545 and 1546 asking for their advice on the matter of taking a new wife and mother for his children.<sup>39</sup> Margery may have had rather more talents than just concern for domestic matters as in early 1547 Queen Catherine Parr's debts included £116

<sup>32</sup> TNA, PROB 11/31/20.

<sup>33</sup> The versions employed in this paper are: Henry Brinkelow, *The complaynt of Roderick Mors, somtyme a gray fryer, vnto the parliament howse of England his natural cuntry for the redresse of certen wicked lawes, euel customs, ad [sic] cruell decreys* (STC I 3759.5); id., *The lamentacion of a Christian, against the cite of London made by Roderigo Mors. Anno Domini M.D.XLII.* (STC I/3764). Other versions are published in Cowper (ed.), *Henry Brinlow's Complaynt*.

<sup>34</sup> TNA, PROB 11/31/20.

<sup>35</sup> A. F. Sutton, 'Caxton was a mercer: his social milieu and friends', in N. Rogers (ed.), *England in the fifteenth century* (1994), pp. 118–48.

<sup>36</sup> Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 127.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 411–13.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p. 418. For Vaughan's biographical details see S. T. Bindoff (ed.), *The House of Commons, 1509–58* (3 vols, 1982), III, pp. 519–20.

<sup>39</sup> LP XXI (i) p. 47, dated from Antwerp, 22 Jan. 1545.

to Stephen Vaughan, 'husband of [Margery] Vaughan, late your grace's silk woman.'<sup>40</sup> They all married within their group (perhaps the women would not compromise their faith) and were active in maintaining this close-knit community.<sup>41</sup>

## II

The farming members of the Brinklow family lived at Kintbury in western Berkshire. This is a large parish of c. 7,800 acres, crossed by the river Kennet and lying to the west of Newbury in an area of woodland pasture where mixed farming was the dominant form of agricultural activity in the sixteenth century.<sup>42</sup> It was also a diversified economy as tenants exploited the woodland and other natural resources, and were involved in cloth manufacture that was associated with the town of Newbury. The lands of the parish were largely divided between two manors held by the religious houses of Amesbury and Nuneaton. In addition there were several much smaller manors, and these included Anvilles and Balsdon where the Brinklows were leasehold tenants.<sup>43</sup>

Henry's father, Robert Brinklow, was living in Kintbury in 1522 where he was described as a householder assessed on £20 of goods, 'And hath harnesse for ii men & ii billes And is servante of Sir Edward Darell knight and kepeth his park of Balston [Balsdon]'.<sup>44</sup> Robert Brinklow died in 1543 and left a will in which he described himself of Hanfeldis (Anvilles) and wished to be buried in the churchyard of Kintbury 'besides the body of my mother'.<sup>45</sup> He may also have had Protestant leanings as he bequeathed his soul to 'almighty Jesu my maker and Redemer in whom and by the merits of whos blissid passhion is all my hole trust of clere remission and forgevenes of my synnes'. It is worth mentioning in this context that Newbury had been a centre of religious dissent and heresy in the later middle ages and as such drew in people from the surrounding villages.<sup>46</sup> Robert left a wife Sibyl and nine children.<sup>47</sup> He was obviously living and farming at Anvilles where he held the tenancy from Sir Edward Darell. His house was well

<sup>40</sup> Bindoff, *House of Commons*, III, pp. 519–20. After Vaughan died she went on to marry George Rolle and then Sir Leonard Chamberlain.

<sup>41</sup> Anne Vaughan married Henry Locke, from another evangelical family, and she became a great friend of John Knox. Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 418.

<sup>42</sup> For details of the economy and society of Kintbury and cloth production in Newbury and the rural area see M. Yates, *From medieval to modern. Society and economy from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries in western Berkshire* (forthcoming).

<sup>43</sup> For the manorial descent of these manors see *VCH Berkshire*, IV, pp. 206–14.

<sup>44</sup> 1522 Military Survey for Berkshire TNA, E315/464. In the 1524 Subsidy he was also assessed on goods of £20 and his name was followed by two men who were assessed on wages and may have been his servants, but the relationship was unspecified. TNA, E179/73/125, and also in 1525 E179/73/121.

<sup>45</sup> TNA, PROB 11/29/24. This implies that the family may have been resident in Kintbury for some time, although their origins remain unknown.

<sup>46</sup> J. A. F. Thomson, *The later Lollards, 1414–1520* (1965), ch. 3; A. D. Brown, *Popular piety in late medieval England* (1995) and A. Hudson, *The Premature Reformation* (1988). The town had a strong association with Lollardy and a series of heresy trials took place in 1491 that involved townspeople as well as those from the surrounding parishes including Thatcham, Shaw, and Speen. D. P. Wright (ed.), *The register of Thomas Langton, bishop of Salisbury, 1485–93* (Canterbury and York Soc., 74, 1985), pp. 69–79.

<sup>47</sup> In his will he mentioned his children: Henry as his eldest son, Joan Crowther, Agnes Chapperleyn, John, Alice Revell, George, Hugh, William, Anthony, also John his grandson and son of Henry, and two granddaughters Joan and Alice Chapperleyn. TNA, PROB 11/29/24.

furnished with various wallhangings and silver vessels and he bequeathed a number of sheep and cattle.<sup>48</sup> His son John was bequeathed the lease of the farm at Anvilles with the stipulation that he was not to give it to anyone except his heirs, and he also received most of the household furnishings. George received the house and land at 'Englood' (Inglewood) in Kintbury, and William obtained the tenement in Chilton. The sons who were London mercers dealt with the administration of the will; Hugh and Anthony were the executors, Hugh proved the will in London, and Henry was one of the overseers.<sup>49</sup>

John stayed on the farm at Kintbury and was assessed in the Subsidy of 1545 on £10 of goods.<sup>50</sup> He was an active participant in the manor courts of Balsdon.<sup>51</sup> In 1551 he, along with three other tenants, agreed to enclose a common called the Hill Croft for their use.<sup>52</sup> John died in 1558 and, from the evidence in his will and inventory, was actively engaged in farming a mixed farm which had an emphasis on raising sheep.<sup>53</sup> His inventory was valued at £315 8s. *od.* and included 31 yards of russet cloth and four yards of broad russet, 35 tods of wool, in addition to various horses, oxen, cows and the sheep. Wheat and barley were appraised on this farm and that at Inglewood.<sup>54</sup> His wife Julian was executrix of the will, and the children were all under age. His eldest son Hugh was to inherit the farm, and if he died then the farm would go to John's brothers successively: Hugh, Anthony, John Revell, and Edward Butler. The overseers of the will were his brothers Edward Butler of Reading, Anthony Brinklow of Antwerp, John Revell of London, and cousin William Boghton of Andover. Two local men were asked to look after the goods 'until the time that my brothers can come down'. John's wife Julian may have died shortly afterwards as the grant of administration was made for both of them in 1562 to Anthony Brinklow of the city of London. Subsequently the family ties between Kintbury and London were maintained for the rest of the sixteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

### III

At the time that Henry Brinklow was writing his vitriolic *Complaynt*, the course of the English Reformation was suffering a reverse as conservative and radical factions at Court and in the Council were striving for dominance. London became a dangerous place for outspoken

<sup>48</sup> 180 sheep, four bullocks, two kine, two horses, and two mares.

<sup>49</sup> The other overseer was Stephen Waas. The witnesses to a codicil to the will were local men: Edward Darell esq., Martin Hollond vicar of Kintbury, Stephen Waas, Elys Wollryge, Thomas Bysgrove. TNA, PROB 11/29/24.

<sup>50</sup> TNA, E179/74/181. This was in the second tier of wealth of the vill and less than the farmers of the demesne such as Bartholomew Parrock who was assessed on £35.

<sup>51</sup> He was the first name in the list of jurors in 1552–3, and was affeerer of the court in 1553, but was fined for default of court in 1551. TNA, SC2/201/5.

<sup>52</sup> TNA, SC2/201/5.

<sup>53</sup> Berkshire RO (hereafter BRO), D/A1/39/129 in which he described himself as of Goldyngfyld in Kintbury. His sheep included 147 wethers, 292 ewes, 145 tegs and 14 rams which appears to represent an increase in the numbers since the time of his father's will.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Dolman was a witness to the will and appraiser of the inventory. BRO, D/A1/39/129. Dolman's place of residence was never specified and so it is impossible to ascertain whether he was the famous Newbury clothier of that name. The presence of quantities of cloth in the inventory may be significant in this context.

<sup>55</sup> Anthony Brinklow of the City of London was granted probate for two John Brinklows in 1562 and 1571. BRO, D/A1/167, fos. 120, 149.

evangelicals following the enforcement of the 1539 Act of Six Articles and fall of Cromwell in 1540. Bishop Gardiner, who wished to restore the country to orthodoxy, initiated a campaign against heresy and especially against the dissemination of heretical books which were outlawed.<sup>56</sup> Some of Brinklow's friends were arrested, such as the reformist preacher Robert Wisdom, and Brinklow stood surety for him when he was imprisoned in 1543.<sup>57</sup> Henry himself escaped identification by employing a pseudonym, describing himself as a Franciscan friar, and by having his books published abroad.<sup>58</sup> Indeed Bishop Gardiner wrongly identified Roderick Mors as George Joye, 'a knave lurkyng in a corner, as Joye doth at Antwerpe' and described reading the *Lamentacion* as 'so moch displeasour as I received in reding of this most abhominable booke'.<sup>59</sup> The *Lamentacion* was publicly burned in London in 1546 along with many other books considered at the time to be heretical. It was not until the 1550s, and after Brinklow's death, that John Bale revealed that Brinklow was the secret author.<sup>60</sup>

Brinklow then was one of the most outspoken evangelicals of his time.<sup>61</sup> He wrote vigorously demanding that all remnants of the old religion be swept away, particularly attacking bishops whom he described as the 'forked cappes'. He openly criticized Henry VIII's ambivalent attitude to the Protestant cause. Yet he did not stick to religious issues. He attacked the general decline in morality, the greed of merchants, corruption of lawyers, called for the reform of the judiciary, and for the two houses of Parliament to be merged. Indeed, he can be read as propounding an egalitarian and almost socialist state when he put forward a programme for the full-scale redistribution of the wealth of chantries.<sup>62</sup> The source of his ideas may have been derivative, but the force of his language, the variety of subject matter, and scale of reforms he advocated were exceptional.

To provide close comparisons, additional context and aid evaluation, the works of Brinklow's fellow protestant authors who were also writing in 1542–3 have been selected for detailed examination. They were Thomas Becon (d. 1567 or 1570), Robert Wisdom (d. 1568) already mentioned, and the anonymous author of BL Royal 17 B. XXXV. Thomas Becon was vicar of Brensett near Romney in Kent at this time and wrote under the pseudonym Theodore Basil.<sup>63</sup> He was less successful than Brinklow in keeping his identity hidden and was spotted and arrested in 1541 and 1543, was made to recant his beliefs, and left London for the rest of Henry's reign.<sup>64</sup> A prolific writer, the two examples written in 1542 and employed here for comparison are *The new pollecey of warre* and *A newe pathway vnto prairie*, and they were included in the

<sup>56</sup> Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 345–52, E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (1992), pp. 423–5, 432–3.

<sup>57</sup> Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 349.

<sup>58</sup> The various editions were published in different places including Geneva, Nuremberg and Turin. For details see Cowper (ed.), *Henry Brinklow's Complaynt*, p. xxii.

<sup>59</sup> J. A. Muller (ed.), *The letters of Stephen Gardiner* (1933), pp. 160, 163.

<sup>60</sup> R. L. Poole and M. Bateson (eds), *Index Britanniae Scriptorum. John Bale's index of British and other writers* (1902, repr. 1990), p. 159.

<sup>61</sup> I am indebted to Dr Alec Ryrie for this interpretation.

<sup>62</sup> See quotations below with reference to the poor in London.

<sup>63</sup> After which he was rector of St Stephen Walbrook on the presentation of the Grocers Company and one of the preachers of Canterbury. For further biographical details see S. B. House, 'Becon, Thomas (1512/13–1567)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1918>, accessed Dec. 2004] and the 'Biographical Notice' in J. Ayre (ed.), *The early works of Thomas Becon* (Parker Soc. 9, 1843).

<sup>64</sup> For Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire.

list of books proclaimed heretical in 1546.<sup>65</sup> Becon's fortunes changed on the accession of Edward VI when he returned to London and a place of influence at court.<sup>66</sup>

Brinklow and Becon were both friends of Robert Wisdom, the Oxfordshire-born protestant reformer, parson of Stisted in Essex, who by 1540 was also a preacher in London's evangelical circles.<sup>67</sup> He was also arrested in 1541 and 1543, recanted publicly at Paul's Cross, and left London for Staffordshire where Becon eventually joined him. He was tortured by guilt at having recanted (unlike Becon) and wrote a lengthy *Revocation* of his recantation in 1543.<sup>68</sup> In 1546, during the next major crackdown, the Privy Council ordered his arrest, but this time he escaped to exile in Bremen where he remained for the rest of Henry's reign.

The final text that will be examined in detail is by an anonymous London reformer written in 1541–2.<sup>69</sup> He wrote in a lively and interesting style and often employed tables to illustrate how clerical corruption led to general economic desolation.<sup>70</sup>

#### IV

A close examination of the texts of these reformers reveal their secular concerns in 1542. Certain common patterns of thought become apparent concerning rents, tenure, the engrossing of land (but not enclosure), and the plight of the poor. These are considered in detail and are followed by an examination of the 'reality' of the situation as experienced by Brinklow's father and his brothers living in western Berkshire.

Common to all the authors was their condemnation of landlords for increasing the rent and entry fines charged for land. Yet their explanations of the causes of this problem differed. Brinklow was very clear that the perpetrators for the rise in rents and many of the social and economic evils of the day were the new owners of monastic lands:

Consyder yow, what a wickednes is comonly used thorow the realme unponysshed, in the inordinate inhansyng of rentys, and takyng of unresonable fynys, and every day worse than other: and evyn of them specially, to whom the kyng hath geven and sold the landys of those Impys of Antichrist, Abbays and nonryes.<sup>71</sup>

For Becon the increase in the cost of land was due to the new breed of gentlemen:

kepyng slender houses and hongry hospitalite; but also after suche sorte let out theyr londes to other, yea and that for so hygh a pryce, as they were never wonte to be in tymes

<sup>65</sup> The quotations are taken from the two 1542 editions: Thomas Becon, *The new pollecye of warre* (STC / 1735). id., *A newe pathway vnto praier* (STC / 1734). Both were also published in Ayre, *Early works of Thomas Becon*.

<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, he was imprisoned in the Tower under Mary and subsequently fled to Strasburg before returning to England on the accession of Elizabeth.

<sup>67</sup> A. Ryrie, 'Wisdom, Robert (d. 1568)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29785>, accessed Dec. 2004].

<sup>68</sup> Emmanuel College Cambridge, MS 261, fos 88–130, from which the extracts are taken. He also wrote metrical psalms, a cycle of liturgical sermons, and translated several works by continental reformers.

<sup>69</sup> BL, Royal 17 B. XXXV, fos 1–21. I have to thank Dr Ryrie for drawing my attention to this document.

<sup>70</sup> For a pictorial illustration see MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant*, p. 124 although he dates the document to 1544–5. For a more general discussion of this text as part of the rhetoric of 'commonwealth', *ibid.*, pp. 122–6.

<sup>71</sup> Brinklow, *Complaynt*, Second chapter, v. 6, f. 7.

past, in so moch that they whiche hyre them, are utterly beggered & redact to extreme poverté.<sup>72</sup>

Robert Wisdom in his *Revocation* denounced the rich in general:

that pillesh the pore and scrapeth them even to the bones, Their pride and ambytion, their excesse and vayne apparell, their banketting and dronkenhippe till every place be full of vomyt their vayne buildings as though thei wolde lieu here ever, their layinge howse to house and cowpling feld to fealde till pore men be eaten owt of the contraye, their engrossinge of fermes some man xxti in to his handes, their raysing of rents vnto the vtter empoverishinge of the pore.<sup>73</sup>

The Anonymous author set out his text in tabular form. The 'Enhawncements of rents' was due to a desire for 'Private lucre' caused by a lack of preaching as may be seen in Table 1.<sup>74</sup>

Closely associated with the increase in the cost of land were changes in tenure. Only Brinklow made the direct association with the change to leasehold which would become a feature of the literature later in the decade:

And now the latyng and engrossing of them (leassys I meane) is one great cause of the inhansing of rentys: wherfore I pray god these leassys may have a fall, and come to an end shortly.<sup>75</sup>

Other common features of their writing were concerns about the engrossing of farms, depopulation, and shrinkage of settlement; although these subjects received less attention from the evangelicals than the enhancing of rents. It is important to note that there was no widespread outcry against enclosures during this particular period; it had been part of the earlier dialogue, and would come back in 1548, and especially 1549.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, it was not a theme in the discourses of the early 1540s when the emphasis was on engrossment.

The proscription in Brinklow's *Complaynt* was for one man to have one farm and certainly no more than two in a context of advocating a social ideal of a fair apportionment of farms and a more even distribution of wealth.<sup>77</sup> It was a cry against the engrossing of holdings and rural depopulation, particularly for sheep, that was part of a more general concern over depopulation, both rural and urban mentioned earlier.

And evyn as a pryst shuld have but one benefyce, so make that one man, of what degree so ever he be, shal hold and kepe in his own handys or occupyeng no more than one ferme, maner, or lordshyp beyng a competent lyvyng, as of xx pownd yerely rent: so that it may be lauful for one man to kepe ii if thei both together be not above xx pownd: but no man to

<sup>72</sup> Becon, *The new pollecey of warre*, v. 58, f. 59. For a discussion of the significance of hospitality at this time see R. W. Hoyle, 'The origins of the dissolution of the monasteries', *Historical J.* 38 (1995), 275–305.

<sup>73</sup> Emmanuel College, Cambridge, MS 261, fo. 118v, by permission of the Master and Fellows.

<sup>74</sup> BL, MS, Royal 17 B XXXV, fos. 15v, 16.

<sup>75</sup> Brinklow, *Complaynt*, Second chapter, v. 7.

<sup>76</sup> J. Thirsk, 'Enclosure and engrossing', in Thirsk (ed.), *Agrarian History IV*, pp. 200–55. R. C. Allen, *Enclosure and the Yeoman* (1992), pp. 71–2 was influenced by Thirsk but he is now arguing that enclosure was less important as an instrument of change, 'Progress and poverty in early modern Europe', *ECHR* 56 (2003), pp. 403–43.

<sup>77</sup> He echoed the Statute of 25 Henry VIII, *Statutes of the Realm* (10 vols, London, 1810–22), III, pp. 451–4.

TABLE 1. The ‘pestilent evylls’ set out in British Library, Royal Ms. 17B XXXV

| seduction rebownde upon their owne<br>Forheddes to their owne confusion and shame                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                               |                                                                                                                               |                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ignoraunce and<br>non residence of the<br>clergie breedeth lak<br>of preaching lak of<br>preaching breedeth<br>lak of hearing lak of<br>hearing breedeth lak<br>of faith lak of faith<br>breedeth lak of charite<br>lak of charite breedeth<br>universally privat<br>lucre that is a private<br>affection wherby<br>every man is<br>soblinded that<br>withowt feare of god<br>a loove of the comen<br>welth he careth not<br>how many be un doon<br>so that he may enrich<br>him self. | {<br>Enhawncements<br>of rents<br>and<br>pluralite of<br>fermes<br>}          | {<br>Private<br>lucre<br>}                                                                                                    | {<br>decaly of man<br>rode<br>and<br>Famyne of the<br>poore<br>} |
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| Inclosure of tyllag<br>wastes and commens<br>}                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | {<br>Unversall povertie<br>of alle estates<br>within the realm<br>}           | {<br>Intollerable exactions<br>and<br>lawes of manifest<br>unrightwisnes<br>}                                                 | {<br>Thindignation of god<br>and<br>Endless dampnation<br>}      |
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| Universall dearth<br>of all things<br>necessarie for life<br>}                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | {<br>Officers of a most<br>insatiabie coove<br>tooseness<br>}                 | {<br>privey spoile of<br>the kings beasure<br>and<br>Powling of the kings<br>true subiects<br>}                               | {<br>A weake realme<br>and<br>strong enemyes<br>}                |
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| A generall enrich<br>ment of all foren<br>cuntrees<br>}                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | {<br>Corage to warr<br>agenst us<br>and<br>hope easely to<br>overcome us<br>} | {<br>A poore king<br>and<br>Riche officers<br>desier to revenge<br>and<br>hate of the pour<br>that will not<br>suffer it<br>} | {<br>Sedition<br>and<br>Felonye<br>}                             |
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| contempt of the<br>power<br>and<br>defection to<br>foren princes<br>}                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | {<br>desolation<br>}                                                          | {<br>desolation<br>}                                                                                                          | {<br>desolation<br>}                                             |
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Source, BL, Royal MS. 17. B xxxv, fo. 15v–16r.

kepe above iii be thei never so smal rent. This were a brotherly and godly act. For by your oppressors and extorcyoners, how be the townys and villagys decayed? where as were viii, x, xii, yea, xvi howsoldys and more, is now but a shepe howse and ii or iii shepardys ... So if ye seke this godly redresse, where as ye have a fewe in a contry, which be inordynate rych extorcyonars and a great multytude of poore peple, than shal ye have but a fewe poore, and a gret nowmber of a meane and reasonable substance, and fewe poor, & lesse extorcyoners: which wold be no smal ease to the common welth.<sup>78</sup>

Becon, in his *Pathway to Prayer*, placed engrossment within the general context of his criticism of greed, both lay and clerical:

Where are these Catarpillers & Extorcioners of the poore people ... Where are these rytch men, to whome God hath commytted the goodes of this world, which like insactable dogges havynge neuer ynough, do continuallye hunte after the augmentation of mundane treasures, as by ioinyng Lordshyp to Lordshyp, ferme to ferme, lond to lond, pasture to pasture, house unto house, benefyce to benefyce, ... & yet are they unmercyfull to the poore people, despyse the mayntaynaunce of hospitalite, which the holye scriptures commend so highly in every place<sup>79</sup>

Wisdom, as we saw in the earlier quotation, was concerned with the effects of the engrossing of farms until 'pore men be eaten owt of the contraye'. For the Anonymous author the enhancement of rents and plurality of farms led to enclosure of tillage, wastes and commons, that resulted in the decay of manhood and famine of the poor, a weak realm and strong enemies, the indignation of God and endless damnation. He was the only author at this time who specifically mentioned enclosure of tillage.

The outcome from these evils, according to the evangelicals, would be the detriment of the commonwealth and a rise in the number of poor people in rural and urban areas, especially in London. Brinklow expressed his outrage about the economic problems of London and was highly critical of the Londoners. The plight of the poor of the city was very obvious at this time and the visible differences between the very rich and the very poor were apparent:

Oh ye Cytezens if ye wold turne but even the profettes of your chauntries and your obbettes to the fyndyng of the poare, with a pollytique and godly provysyon, where as now London beyng one of the flowres of the world as touchyng worldly riches, hath so many, yee unnumerable of poare people, forced to go from doare to doare, and to syt openly in the streates bedgyng, and many not able to do ere other, but lye in their houses in most grevous paynes, and dye for lack of ayde of the riche, to the greate shame of the Oh London!<sup>80</sup>

Indeed, there are numerous examples of the sentiments expressed in this type of discourse.<sup>81</sup> The Merchant Adventurers implemented various welfare measures of their own and in 1538

<sup>78</sup> Brinkelow, *Complaynt*, ch. 20, f. 41, v. 41.

<sup>79</sup> Becon, *A newe pathway vnto prairie*, f. 5, v. 5.

<sup>80</sup> Brinkelow, *Lamentacion*, v. 10, f. 11.

<sup>81</sup> In the City of London until the 1530s there were occasional committees for debating 'matters concerning

the common weal of the city' that compiled agendas for reform of everything from weights and measure to vagabonds and unruly behaviour. Slack, *Reformation to Improvement*, p. 13.

Richard Gresham petitioned for the re-establishment of St Bartholomew's and St Thomas's 'not to the maintenance of chanons, priests, and monks, to live in pleasure', but for 'the miserable people lying in every street, offending every clean person passing by the way, with their filthy and nasty savours'.<sup>82</sup>

The emphasis that Brinklow placed on the new owners of monastic land as the originators of social ills was not original. It has to be viewed in the more general context of the reformers' disenchantment after the dissolution. Their leaders, such as Latimer and Cranmer, had initially supported the dissolution in the belief that it would provide resources for charity and education, and both had preached on the subject at Paul's Cross in the 1530s.<sup>83</sup> The dispersal of lands, however, was dictated more by the need for revenue than by any social agenda. We need to establish if Brinklow was justified in singling out for attack the new owners of monastic land. To do this we can examine the evidence from the area where his family lived and farmed. In western Berkshire the religious houses held 27 per cent of the total income from land in 1522 and 45 manors changed hands as a result of the dissolution.<sup>84</sup> The majority of initial transfers were of grants by the king, only four being direct sales. In another four cases the current tenant or lessee obtained the manor and would have provided some measure of continuity for the inhabitants. The remaining manors changed hands frequently, particularly in the 1540s, and the chief beneficiaries were the gentry, nobility and merchants.<sup>85</sup> At Kintbury both the large manors of Amesbury and Nuneaton remained with the king from 1539 until 1542, the year of the *Complaynt* and *Lamentacion*. Kintbury Amesbury was then given to John Cheyney of neighbouring West Woodhay in exchange for West Enborne, whilst Kintbury Eaton was granted to the Earl of Hertford who sold it in 1544 to Richard Bridges of Shefford.<sup>86</sup> Thus when Brinklow wrote his *Complaynt* the main manors of Kintbury were in the process of being transferred into the possession of members of the gentry.

Whilst the evangelicals were unanimous in their criticism of the rise in rents, charting what happened to the cost of land and level of rent in the early sixteenth century is not straightforward. Rent was determined by the type of tenure and estate in the land, and landlords were further constrained in their ability to benefit from the general rise in land values by the custom of the individual manors.<sup>87</sup> In the decade preceding the dissolution many tenants held by

<sup>82</sup> J. Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials* (3 vols in six, 1822), I (i), p. 410. Gresham also ordered collections for the City's poor at the weekly sermons at the Paul's Cross during Lent 1538. Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 293. Nevertheless, he was not adverse to profiting personally through the acquisition of monastic land as discussed below.

<sup>83</sup> Hoyle, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, ch. 3; McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, p. 29. Starkey had criticised the government for its failure to redirect the resources of the monasteries towards projects that would improve the commonwealth in his manifesto of 1536. Sections are printed in S. J. Herrtage (ed.), *England in the reign of Henry VIII* (EETS, Extra ser. 32, 1878), pp. xlvi–lxiii.

<sup>84</sup> The percentage figure is derived from the landowners listed in the 1522 Military Survey TNA, E315/464, and

the land transfers from the manorial descents in *VCH Berkshire*, III and IV.

<sup>85</sup> For details of the transfers of land see Yates, *From medieval to modern*, ch. 2. The Berkshire figures are in line with those found elsewhere in England, see Youings, *Dissolution*.

<sup>86</sup> *VCH Berkshire*, IV, pp. 207–8.

<sup>87</sup> This is a technically complex subject and will not be examined here in the interests of space. An excellent introduction that covers both the medieval and early modern developments is M. Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England* (1996), pp. 30–35, 147–186, 191–2. For the sixteenth century see Allen, *Enclosure and the Yeoman*, App. 1. R. W. Hoyle, 'An ancient and laudable custom. The definition and development of tenant right in north-western England in the sixteenth century',

TABLE 2. Income from lands in western Berkshire

| <i>Lord in 1522</i>    | <i>Total manors</i> | <i>1522</i>   | <i>1539–40</i> |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Abingdon Abbey         | 11                  | £393 15s. 2d. | £409 17s. 11d. |
| Amesbury Abbey         | 4                   | £90 8s. 4d.   | £135 12s. 10d. |
| Beaulieu Abbey         | 5                   | £118 7s. 2d.  | £102 3s. 2d.   |
| St John of Jerusalem   | 3                   | £37 12s. 9d.  | £62 14s 4 ½d.  |
| Sheen Priory           | 1                   | £14 6s. 8d.   | £36 15s. 0d.   |
| St Frideswide's Priory | 1                   | £18 19s. 0d.  | £22 0s. 0d.    |
| Battle Abbey           | 1                   | £27 13s. 4d.  | £32 0s. 0d.    |
| Cirencester Abbey      | 1                   | £22 16s. 3d.  | £38 7s. 3d.    |
| Glastonbury Abbey      | 1                   | £40 0s. 0d.   | £4 17s. 6¼d.   |
| Nuneaton Abbey         | 1                   | £20 0s. 0d.   | £27 15s. 4d.   |

Sources: William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (6 vols in eight, 1849), volumes 1–3, 5–6, *passim*. TNA, E315/464, SC6/HENVIII/3986, 2402, 3739.

secure forms of tenure, or had recently renewed their tenancies, and thus the new owners of monastic land had few opportunities to manipulate their income from rents. The best chances a landlord had for increasing the cost of land were relating to tenancies-at-will, life tenancies, or to persuade customary tenants to exchange their copies for indentures of leases. Some lords, such as the earls of Pembroke, were able to benefit, but many were not.<sup>88</sup> Sir Richard Gresham did raise some of his rents at Fountains Abbey in 1541.<sup>89</sup> More significantly perhaps, in terms of the profit Gresham made from his purchase of the abbey, was the under-valuation by the Augmentations survey when compared with the income revealed from subsequent accounts. The evidence from Berkshire reveals a wide range and diversity of experience on manors that had been held by the dissolved houses. Table 2 presents a comparison of the assessments of income from land in 1522 with those of the first ministers' accounts after the dissolution on 29 manors. The tendency, overall, was for the rents to increase but with two notable exceptions.<sup>90</sup> These figures, however, should be treated with some caution because they do not distinguish between different types of lands and conditions of tenure. Leasehold tenure allowed the lord greater flexibility to change the level of rent on a property to reflect the current value of the land as economic rent. The rents on free and customary lands, which formed the larger part of the lands of Berkshire, had usually been established at a fixed rate at some point in the past and will be discussed below.

*Past and Present* 116 (1987), pp. 24–55; id, 'Tenure and the land market in early modern England: or a late contribution to the Brenner Debate', *EcHR* 43 (1990), pp. 1–20. P. Bowden, 'Agricultural prices, farm profits and rents', in *Agrarian History*, IV, pp. 674–5.

<sup>88</sup> J. Youings, 'The Church', in *Agrarian History*, IV, pp. 345–6.

<sup>89</sup> R. B. Smith, *Land and politics in the England of Henry VIII* (1970), pp. 240–2. A point that is expanded in

a comparison of the rents between the pre-dissolution Valor and the 1544 ministers account for Fountains Abbey, see J. R. Wilbran (ed.), *Memorials of the Abbey of St Mary of Fountains* (Surtees Soc. 42, 1834), pp. 307–85, 396–418.

<sup>90</sup> They were Ashbury belonging to Glastonbury Abbey and Farringdon belonging to Beaulieu Abbey, and to a lesser extent the manors of Chieveley and Uffington belonging to Abingdon Abbey.

Beyond Berkshire, the data on the movement of rents and cost of land drawn from a number of other English case studies provide further evidence that the increases were not as dramatic or uniform as Brinklow and his contemporaries would lead us to believe. The variety of experience was more significant. The best series are those produced by Kerridge where the data for the Herbert and Seymour estates generally support the argument for a rise in the cost of land as shown in the Table 4 below, whereas those from the crown estates do not.<sup>91</sup> The figures are, however, averages and therefore suppress the fluctuations which were a more realistic picture of the situation. Elsewhere the pattern was more changeable and depended on different landlords, types of tenure and geographical location. Blanchard found an increase in arable and pasture rents in Derbyshire but with important chronological variations of peaks in 1475–85 and 1505–20, but stagnation in 1520–40.<sup>92</sup> In Northallerton there was little attempt to re-vitalize rent and farm revenues before 1540.<sup>93</sup> In the south of England, especially in the areas around London, there was an increase in the cost of land. In the Lea valley rents on leasehold properties, of tenants-at-will, and sub-tenants did rise dramatically from the 1540s, whereas the bulk of the land, which was held by secure forms of copyhold, remained stable.<sup>94</sup> In north-east Norfolk on the manor of Hevingham Bishops, rents, fines and overall manorial revenues changed little in the period 1450 to 1575. Nevertheless, the price tenants charged each other for the sale of customary tenures increased in the 1530s and then steeply after 1544.<sup>95</sup>

Details from individual Berkshire case studies provide further comparisons. The data in Table 3 relate to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to create a long view and chronological background to Brinklow's comments. The table sets out the different amounts of rent due under different forms of tenure, whether by lease of the demesne or mills, or free tenancies or customary holdings. It is immediately apparent that the rents of leases were not constant but subject to fluctuations. For example, the rent of the demesne of Kintbury Eaton did not change in the early sixteenth century, whilst that at Kintbury Amesbury rose by 7½ per cent. The rent from the lease of the mills appears to be the closest to a concept of economic rent. The whole area of the Kennet valley was expanding both economically and demographically by the end of the fifteenth century and this is reflected in the rents of the mills of Kintbury and Shaw, but was not consistently found in the rents of the demesne lands.

<sup>91</sup> E. Kerridge, 'The movement of rent, 1540–1640', first published in *EcHR* 6 (1953), but see the preliminary results of Hoyle's reworking of these figures with additional material in R. W. Hoyle, 'Estate management, tenurial change and capitalist farming in sixteenth-century England', in S. Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Il mercato della terra secc., XIII-XVIII* (2004), pp. 353–82, and especially 358–64, 376–7, 382. In figure 1 he demonstrates that the first marked rise in fines for copies for two lives was between the 1540s and 1550s.

<sup>92</sup> I. Blanchard, *The Duchy of Lancaster's estates in Derbyshire 1485–1540* (Derbyshire Archaeological Soc. Record Ser. 3, 1971 for 1967), pp. 3, 8, 10–13. He also found rising pasture rents more generally on the Duchy of Lancaster's pastoral manors of the Pennine chain between 1485 and 1547, 'Population change, enclosure,

and the early Tudor economy', *EcHR* 23 (1970), pp. 433–4.

<sup>93</sup> C. M. Newman, *Late medieval Northallerton. A small market town and its hinterland, c. 1470–1540* (1999), pp. 67–73, esp. p. 72.

<sup>94</sup> P. Glennie, 'In search of agrarian capitalism. Manorial land markets and the acquisition of land in the Lea Valley, c. 1450–c. 1560', *Continuity and Change* 3 (1988), pp. 15–18, 25. Nevertheless, rents and entry fines at Havering remained fixed and did not reflect true land values. M. K. McIntosh, *A community transformed. The manor and liberty of Havering, 1500–1620* (1991), pp. 94, 98–100, 117.

<sup>95</sup> J. Whittle, *The development of agrarian capitalism. Land and labour in Norfolk, 1440–1580* (2000), pp. 82, 106–114.

TABLE 3. Rents *per annum* on select west Berkshire manors

| <i>Manor and date</i> | <i>lease of demesne</i> | <i>Customary rent</i> | <i>Free and customary rents</i> | <i>Lease of mills</i> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Kintbury Eaton        |                         |                       |                                 |                       |
| 1406                  |                         | £13 1s. 1d.           |                                 |                       |
| 1421                  | £6 0s. 0d.              | £13 1s. 1d.           |                                 | £1 13s. 4d.           |
| 1450                  | £5 6s. 8d.              | £14 14s. 5d.          |                                 | £3 6s. 8d.            |
| 1539                  | £5 6s. 8d.              | £11 15s. 11d.         |                                 | £4 0s. 0d.            |
| Kintbury Amesbury     |                         |                       |                                 |                       |
| 1535                  | £15 10s. 2½d.           |                       | £20 14s. 3d.                    |                       |
| 1540                  | £16 13s. 4d.            |                       | £21 2s. 11d.                    |                       |
| Shaw                  |                         |                       |                                 |                       |
| 1406                  | £12 10s. 0d.            |                       |                                 | £3 13s. 4d.           |
| 1449                  | £10 0s. 0d.             | £4 19s. 2d.           |                                 | £2 5s. 0d.            |
| 1498                  | £12 12s. 4d.            |                       |                                 | £5 6s. 8d.            |
| 1528                  | £13 2s. 4d.             |                       |                                 | £6 13s. 4d.           |
| 1547                  | £13 2s. 4d.             | £7 9s. 10d.           |                                 | £6 13s. 4d.           |
| 1570                  |                         |                       |                                 | £8 0s. 0d.            |

Sources: Kintbury Eaton, BL, Add. Rolls 49266, 49268, 49236, TNA, SC6/HENVIII/3739; Kintbury Amesbury, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, II, p. 242, TNA, SC6/HENVIII/3986; Shaw, TNA, SC2/154/53, LR2/187, Berkshire RO, D/ENm M13, 52, 55, D/ENm1 T2.

The level of rent on free and customary lands was usually static. In general, free lands rendered a fixed notional rent to the lord. The rents on customary holdings had been fixed by 1400. They might change subsequently in specific circumstances, such as when holdings were amalgamated, or labour services commuted, or the quota of animals for pasture was apportioned, but these were isolated instances. At Shaw, where customary rents appear to have risen, it was due to the erection of additional buildings on the customary holdings, such as the tanhouse and cottages.

The estate by which tenants held their customary lands in western Berkshire usually comprised three lives, the named tenant, his wife (so long as she did not remarry when her continuation in the tenancy would require special permission), a named child in many, but not all cases, and there existed the possibility of extending the tenancy with the purchase of a reversion.<sup>96</sup> The cost of customary land to the tenant was a combination of the payment of annual rent, plus the two one-off sums of an entry fine at the beginning of the tenancy, and a heriot at the end. Should the length of the tenancy be extended, then another payment would be demanded.<sup>97</sup> One of Brinklow's concerns was over the rise in entry fines, as he said, it meant

<sup>96</sup> See Yates, *From medieval to modern*, ch. 4 for a detailed discussion of customary tenure, rents and entry fines in this area.

<sup>97</sup> Indeed, on occasion, tenants were prepared to pay

heavily to obtain property as at Kintbury in 1431 when Robert Walrond paid 40s. for the reversion of the property currently held by Nicholas Alesaunder. BL, Add. Roll 49227, court of 4 July 1431.

TABLE 4. Index of approximate rents per acre on new holdings in Wiltshire

|        | <i>Herbert family manors</i> | <i>Seymour family manors</i> | <i>Crown manors</i> |
|--------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1510–9 | 100                          | 100                          | 100                 |
| 1520–9 | 95                           | 134                          | 100                 |
| 1530–9 | 202                          | 144                          | 116                 |
| 1540–9 | 210                          | 153                          | 117                 |
| 1550–9 | 308                          | 159                          | 142                 |

Source: E. Kerridge, 'The movement of rent, 1540–1640', *EcHR* 6 (1953), Tables 2, 5, 7.

that 'tenants are halfe undone in their incomnyng'. Indeed, entry fines are traditionally regarded as more responsive to the underlying economic conditions of the time than rents. Nevertheless, there were marked variations in the ways in which these were levied depending on local circumstances. In northern Berkshire, in the Vale of the White Horse, there was no evidence for a significant rise in the level of entry fines before 1550.<sup>98</sup> In the south of the county the situation was more varied. At Kintbury the amounts charged as entry fines remained relatively stable. On the manor of Kintbury Eaton entry fines were set at a mark or fraction of a mark, unless the holding contained items of value such as woodland.<sup>99</sup> Heriots were also set by custom, usually at 20*d.* for a cottage and 5*s.* for a virgate of land. Only occasionally were increases in fines discernable. For example, a messuage and virgate of land in 1471 had yielded 13*s.* 4*d.*, which had doubled in 1500 to 26*s.* 8*d.*; on another messuage with cottsettle of land the entry fine was 8*s.* 4*d.* in 1427, in 1454 6*s.* 8*d.*, and in 1500 13*s.* 4*d.*<sup>100</sup> Entry fines were more varied on the manor of Kintbury Amesbury in 1540, albeit with some standardisation of sums of money.<sup>101</sup>

The rise in entry fines is in fact much clearer on the manor of Shaw, situated closer to Newbury in the Kennet region and held by Winchester College. The increases of the sixteenth century were a continuation of a longer pattern. Entry fines fluctuated markedly before 1440, then rose in the 1440s, and again in the late 1480s, and throughout the sixteenth century. A typical example is 'Dikars', a standard holding of a messuage and half virgate of land which had an unchanged rent of 5*s.* *per annum*, and rendered an entry fine of 3*s.* 4*d.* in 1480, 11*s.* 4*d.* in 1538, and in 1605 40*s.* That is, the entry fine had more than trebled on each occasion whilst the rent remained unchanged. The increase in entry fines of cottages was proportionately greater. In 1539 a fine of 13*s.* 4*d.* was paid for two cottages which had an annual rent of 11*s.* 8*d.* *per annum* and in 1605 these were surrendered and taken again at the same rent, but the fine was £4 13*s.* 4*d.*<sup>102</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Yates, *From medieval to modern*, ch. 4.

<sup>99</sup> For example John Collins paid 33*s.* 4*d.* for a messuage, virgate and the near wood of Inglewood. BL, Add. Roll 49227, court of 3 July 1433.

<sup>100</sup> But note, these were unusual as there were many more other properties where the level of entry fine remained unchanged.

<sup>101</sup> TNA, SC6/HENVIII/3986. The sums received as

entry fines in 1540 were: for one messuage and two virgates of land, 26*s.* 8*d.*, one messuage and two virgates of land, 13*s.* 4*d.*, one messuage and one virgate of land, 13*s.* 4*d.*, one messuage and one virgate of land, 10*s.*, one messuage and half a virgate of land, 10*s.*

<sup>102</sup> For a more detailed discussion of these changes see Yates, *From medieval to modern*, ch. 4.

The *Complaynt* was also concerned with the matter of tenure and especially the effects of the rise in incidence of leasehold tenure.<sup>103</sup> The majority of land in western Berkshire, however, was held by customary tenure. It was predominantly the demesne lands that were leased for a period of years and had been since direct management had ceased, almost entirely before 1450. Brinklow's concerns over developments in leasehold tenure and more generally the insecurity of tenure was less, perhaps, a particular Berkshire phenomenon, but rather a reflection of what was happening in the law courts. The act of 1489 'agaynst pullyng down of tounes' had outlawed depopulating enclosures and stimulated an increase in judicial activity that involved the articulation of concerns over the security of copyholders and leaseholders.<sup>104</sup> Subsequent legislation continued these themes. The increase in the number of cases of tenants using the common law courts to secure their rights of tenure was an important aspect of the development of property law in the sixteenth century.<sup>105</sup> These various proceedings alerted lords and tenants to the legal position of the enforceability of customary and leasehold tenure.<sup>106</sup> This may have been the context for Brinklow's comments and for his father's concerns that the lease of the farm at Anville's was neither alienated, sold or given away to anyone except his son's direct heirs.<sup>107</sup> It did not necessarily imply that the tenurial position of copyholders was weak in Kintbury, or that there was an increasing tendency for lords to convert to leasehold tenure.<sup>108</sup>

The final theme to be examined in detail is the engrossing of holdings. The picture that Brinklow painted finds support from the evidence at Kintbury, but over an extended period of time. The engrossing of farms here and elsewhere in western Berkshire had a long history and was not new in the sixteenth century. On the manor of Kintbury Eaton there had been a decline in the number of direct tenants over the course of the fifteenth century, and farm sizes increased proportionately.<sup>109</sup> There were already individuals with multiple holdings by the early fifteenth century.<sup>110</sup> Subtenants were allowed on this manor and licenses to do so were granted throughout the fifteenth century though they increased in number after 1480. Early enclosure was a feature of the area and by 1400 some land was already held in closes and developments continued quite briskly in the first half of the fifteenth century.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, by 1600 as much as 40 per cent of the parish may have been enclosed.<sup>112</sup> John Houne, a farmer of Kintbury, was reported to the enclosure commissioners in 1517 for having converted one ploughland to pasture for animals in 1506 and evicting four people.<sup>113</sup> He was certainly active in the parish, both

<sup>103</sup> See quotation above.

<sup>104</sup> Thirsk, 'Enclosure and engrossing', pp. 200–55. These concerns continued to be expressed in the returns of the commissioners of 1517 and in the proceedings of the subsequent cases in Chancery and King's Bench.

<sup>105</sup> Hoyle, 'Tenure and the land market', pp. 10–11.

<sup>106</sup> Allen, *Enclosure*, pp. 71–2.

<sup>107</sup> TNA, PROB 11/29/24.

<sup>108</sup> In my larger study no evidence was found for either taking place in western Berkshire by 1542. Yates, *From medieval to modern*.

<sup>109</sup> From 19 customary tenants in 1448 to 13 in 1522. BL, Add. Roll 49235, court of acknowledgment 13 June 1448, and TNA, E315/464.

<sup>110</sup> For example Robert Godestok renewed his

customary holding of one messuage and half a virgate of land in holt called odestokkes, one toft and one virgate of land in holt called Childerlonde, and one toft and half virgate of land in Holt called Popelonde, in all a total of over 60 acres of arable land. BL, Add. Roll 49223, court of 15 Dec. 1422.

<sup>111</sup> Thereafter tenants were not prosecuted in the manor courts and one wonders whether enclosures continued but went unchallenged, or whether they had ceased.

<sup>112</sup> J. R. Wordie, *Enclosure in Berkshire, 1485–1885*, (Berkshire Record Soc., 5, 2000), p. 97.

<sup>113</sup> I. S. Leadam (ed.), *The Domesday of Inclosures, 1517–18* (2 vols, 1897), I, p. 136.

peaceably and violently.<sup>114</sup> One cannot establish what made his enclosing behaviour noteworthy in the context of this parish; it was certainly not new. John Hales' comment that the worst was over by 1485 may have been applicable to Kintbury.<sup>115</sup>

Brinklow and his contemporaries argued that the effects of the engrossing of holdings would be rural depopulation and an increase in poverty. We have seen how concerns about depopulation had been a recurring element in the literature since the fifteenth century. A large number of case studies have been undertaken to investigate the history of rural settlements, their continuity, decline and desertion and these reveal a wide diversity of experience with a marked regional dimension.<sup>116</sup> We need to consider the situation in Kintbury where Brinklow's family lived. As we would expect from an area of woodland pasture there was evidence for a severe shrinkage in the size of some hamlets, and these were located in the south of the parish. Both Holt and Inglewood, where Brinklow's father had another farm, appear in the list of Deserted Medieval Village sites in Berkshire.<sup>117</sup> Holt's decline can be reconstructed from several sources: there were 29 individuals taxed in 1327, 23 paid the poll tax of 1381, there were 19 customary tenants in 1448, and 13 in 1522.<sup>118</sup> Thereafter details of the hamlet were subsumed into those for the parish as a whole. The site of the medieval settlement remains unknown but may have been situated in the vicinity of Holt Manor Farm.<sup>119</sup> The other hamlets of Anvilles, Titcombe and Templeton, all in the south of the parish, also experienced a reduction in population during this period. Decline and desertion, however, were not universal in the parish as the main settlement of Kintbury continued to flourish, as did the hamlets of Clapton and Elcot in the north of the parish. Shifts in the pattern of settlement within this parish do not support a picture of rural depopulation.

Both Brinklow and Wisdom were concerned that, as a consequence of engrossing, there would be an increase in the numbers of poor people. We cannot establish whether this was the case at Kintbury as the only evidence relates to the early 1520s and not to an earlier period. This does reveal that wealth was concentrated in the hands of the large farmers, especially the lessees of the manorial demesnes, whilst 75 per cent of the population had assessments of under £5 at this time.<sup>120</sup> Indeed these farmers were wealthier than Brinklow's father who was assessed on £20 of goods compared with neighbours like John Stevens (£55), Bartholomew Parrock (£50) or Robert Wace (£55).<sup>121</sup> The proportion of wage labour in Kintbury was also high: 41 per cent

<sup>114</sup> For example, in 1500 John Hounne acted as pledge for John Cheyney for arrears of rent of two years being 10s. for a pasture called Le Fryth. BL, Add. Roll 49255, court 12 Nov. 1500. In 1520 John Cheyney was prosecuting Hounne in the court of common pleas over a case of violent trespass that caused damage to crops valued at 40s., TNA, CP40/1030, Mich. 1520. In 1493 John had obtained a license to take a subtenant for his lifetime, BL, Add. Roll 49249, court 4 July 1493. John may have been the son of Henry Hounne who had been a tenant on the manor since 1473 and therefore from a settled family in the parish.

<sup>115</sup> M. Beresford, *The lost villages of England* (1999 edn), pp. 149–50.

<sup>116</sup> See C. Dyer's introduction to the 1999 edition of Beresford, *Lost villages*.

<sup>117</sup> M. W. Beresford and J. G. Hurst, 'Introduction to a first list of deserted medieval village sites in Berkshire', *Berkshire Archaeological J.* 60 (1962), pp. 92–7.

<sup>118</sup> TNA, E179/73/6, 55; BL, Add. Roll 49235, court of acknowledgment 13 June 1448, TNA, E315/464.

<sup>119</sup> NMR Numbers SU 46 SW 4, SU 46 SW 16.

<sup>120</sup> £50+, 3%; £20–<50, 1%; £10–<20, 7%; £5–<10, 14%; £2–<5, 36%; <2, 39%. Military Survey of 1522, TNA, E315/464.

<sup>121</sup> There was no assessment beside John Hounne's name in 1522, but in 1524 he was assessed on goods of £30.

in 1522, and 48 per cent of those assessed for the lay subsidies of 1524 and 1525.<sup>122</sup> This did not necessarily mean impoverishment as, in addition to employment on the large farms, there were opportunities for diversified forms of economic activity in this area. Additional sources of income could make a relatively small farm viable; and there continued to be a large number of small holdings at Kintbury. In the 1520s there were no assessments on income from land in the parish and it was the yeoman farmers, rather than the gentry, who were the wealthy inhabitants. The social structure of the parish had changed by 1545 when, although these farmers continued to have large assessments based on moveable goods, there were also members of the gentry living in the parish. Thomas Knight of Templeton manor had been one of those active in buying up the lands of the dissolved monasteries in the Kennet area generally. Whilst the widow of John Cheyney of neighbouring West Woodhay, who obtained the Amesbury manor from the king in 1542, was assessed on lands in the 1545 subsidy, and one presumes was resident on this manor.<sup>123</sup>

Finally, if the evidence from Kintbury does not support Brinklow's vitriolic criticisms, did he have a specific individual in mind as the target for his attack? We will never know. Certain individuals, such as Sir Richard Gresham, were engaged in activities that made them suitable objects for Brinklow's condemnation. Gresham was also a mercer and merchant adventurer when Brinklow was active; but was engaged in a much larger scale of operation as in 1534 he was assessed at £2,000.<sup>124</sup> Unlike Brinklow, Gresham achieved high office in the company and City of London. He was elected warden of the company in 1525 and served as master in 1533, 1539 and 1549. He was prominent in the City as sheriff, alderman, MP, and was elected lord mayor in 1537. Richard Gresham's religious affiliations and allegiances were ambiguous and pragmatic. In 1534 Gresham was one of seventeen commissioners for London to inquire into the value of benefices prior to the suppression of the abbeys and he was active in the dissolution of the monastery of Walsingham. On the other hand, he was appointed as one of the commissioners, along with his brother John, to enforce the Six Articles that had such a detrimental impact on Brinklow's evangelical friends.<sup>125</sup> In 1540, with John Godsalue, he examined Henry Dubbe, a stationer of London, who was suspected of publishing 'a naughty booke made by Philipp Melanchton'. Gresham was certainly one of the new owners of monastic lands. He obtained large grants of monastic lands, in most cases by purchase, in Suffolk, Norfolk and Yorkshire. The chief of these possessions was Fountains Abbey which he bought in 1540 for £11,737 11s. 8d. Gresham was a landowner who was able to raise some of his rents at Fountains in 1541, just before Brinklow was writing. He died in 1549 and was unpopular enough to be the subject of at least one posthumous attack in the form of an 'epitaph' against his activities as a money lender and buyer of lands.<sup>126</sup> Gresham may not have been Brinklow's specific target but he did possess several of the characteristics that the author criticized.

<sup>122</sup> TNA, E315/464, E179/73/121, 125.

<sup>123</sup> TNA, E179/74/181.

<sup>124</sup> Biographical details taken from I. Blanchard, 'Gresham, Sir Richard (c. 1485–1549)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11504> accessed Dec. 2004], and Bindoff (ed.), *House of Commons, 1509–1558*, II, pp. 248–50 and

other sources given below.

<sup>125</sup> J. Strype (ed.), *Ecclesiastical Memorials* (2 vols, 1822), pp. li, 565–7.

<sup>126</sup> A. G. Rigg, 'Two poems on the death of Sir Richard Gresham (ca. 1485–1549)', *The Guildhall Miscellany* 2 (1967), pp. 389–91.

## V

This paper has attempted to separate fact from fiction in the observations of economic trends contained in the writings of the evangelicals in 1542. Their chief anxiety, and one on which they were all agreed, was the increased cost of land. Yet the 'facts' derived from the local case study revealed greater variety in the level of rents and entry fines than had been suggested by the evangelicals. Rapacious landlords were not a universal feature of 1542. The other shared concern of the authors was the engrossing of holdings and this was found to have been a common feature by the early 1540s. Nevertheless, engrossing of holdings was not new; it had a history extending over 100 years. Of particular interest was the *lack* of emphasis on the evils of enclosure that was not a subject of the writings of this period; although it had been, and would be again. It would appear that enclosure was not a part of the popular dialogue of 1542. So why did the authors continue to repeat ideas that had such weak foundations in contemporary events? To emphasize and give strength to their arguments we have shown that they employed concepts and images that were familiar to contemporaries, were based on an established literary tradition that dated from at least the fourteenth century, and they justified their arguments by frequent references to scripture. Their material did contain kernels of truth concerning the contemporary situation; but the evils were not as widespread or recent as they would imply. What was new in 1542 was their level of frustration. The potential for social improvement and reform of the 1530s had not been realised. Their godly commonwealth had not been achieved; but they had not given up hope. Whilst they felt there was still time they wrote vehemently, marshalling a ranch of popular and biblical ideas, in pursuit of their moral ideals. The writings of the polemicists do not have to remain 'somewhat mysterious to us'.<sup>127</sup> By fully contextualising the authors and their works we can indeed distinguish between fact and fiction, and are provided with a delicate instrument with which to view the concerns and discourse of the mid-sixteenth century.

<sup>127</sup> P. Collinson, *The birthpangs of Protestant England* (1988), p. 10.