

The Agricultural History Review

Volume 51 Part I 2003

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Forthcoming Conferences

British Agricultural History Society

Winter Conference 2003

The Winter Conference will be held at the institute of Historical Research
on Saturday 6 December 2003 on 'Retailing Agricultural Produce'.

Speakers will include Dr James Davis (Cambridge), Dr Wendy Thwaites (Lincolnshire),
Professor John Chartres (Leeds) and Dr Rosie Cox, Dr Lewis Holloway, Dr Moya Kneafsey
and Laura Venn (Coventry).

Full details and a booking form can be obtained from the Society's website,
www.bahs.org.uk

Spring Conference 2004

The Spring Conference will be held at the University of Edinburgh
on 5-7 April 2004.

Offers of papers should be directed to the Society's Secretary, Dr John Broad,
to arrive before 31 July 2003.

Society Notices

Jubilee Essay Competition

The Society is pleased to announce that the first prize in the Jubilee essay competition was awarded to Dr David Stone who holds a joint research fellowship at Corpus Christi College Cambridge and Corpus Christi College Oxford. The judges awarded the second prize to Dr Nicola Verdon of the Rural History Centre, University of Reading. The Society offers its congratulations to both winners. The winning essays appear in this issue of the *Review*.

Postgraduate Research Assistance

From April 2003, the Society is able to offer three research and travel bursaries of up to £250. These are available to postgraduate students who are members of the Society (student membership is £5 per annum) and who have not completed their research degree in rural or agrarian history broadly construed.

We welcome applications for funds to cover the cost of travel to archives, and for research expenses such as photocopying or microfilming of sources. Application is by letter including a) a brief outline of the thesis plan and methodology; b) a statement of what the grant would be used for, and how that related to the furtherance and completion of their research; and c) detailed costings of all aspects of their bid.

Applicants should also include the name of their supervisor and ask that person to provide a supporting reference direct by post or e.mail. They should also include their own e.mail address.

Applicants may make no more than one application per year. No individual will normally receive more than one award during their postgraduate career. Successful applicants will be asked for a written report of 200 words to the Society on completion of their project.

The Society will continue to offer a limited number of bursaries to assist postgraduates attend the its conferences.

Applications for either postgraduate research assistance (or for conference bursaries) should be sent to the Society's secretary, Dr John Broad, Department of Humanities, Arts and Languages, London Metropolitan University, 166–220 Holloway Road, London, N7 8DB who is happy to answer queries about either scheme by e.mail (j.broad@londonmet.ac.uk).

Agricultural History Review: the second half century

As the *Review* enters its second half-century of publication, its editors take the opportunity to restate the *Review's* editorial policy.

Rural and Agrarian History has evolved into a diverse inter-disciplinary subject, with practitioners drawn from wide range of academic disciplines: it also possesses very strong roots in the study of locality and local culture. *Agricultural History Review* recognises this by publishing articles on all aspects of the history of agriculture, rural society and rural economy, particularly in the last millennium. Whilst preserving its long-standing engagement with the agricultural and rural history of medieval and early modern England, it is eager to encourage writing which investigates the changing fortunes of farming and rural society in the twentieth century.

The normal geographical focus of the *Review* is the agrarian and rural history of the British Isles (and here the editors hope to receive more papers on Irish rural history). Papers on the rural history of Europe, North America and Australasia are also welcome, especially where they make a comparative contribution to our understanding of British developments.

The *Review* is open to papers employing a wide range of methodologies. Whilst the majority of its contributors employ orthodox historical approaches informed by economic and social history, the *Review* is equally concerned to publish articles which employ archaeological, landscape or placename evidence or which apply insights derived from quantitative economic history, contemporary rural sociology, modern literary studies or gender studies. The *Review* welcomes papers which are methodologically innovative whilst placing a premium on their accessibility to a wide audience.

The editors will also look favourably on submissions of short edited texts where these bring to our attention documents of general significance.

The editors of the *Review* will maintain the traditional approach of the *Review* towards local history. The *Review* does not carry papers which are solely of local interest: but many advances in our understanding of the rural economy and society have come from the detailed investigation of single places, single farms and individuals. Hence the *Review* remains committed to the publication of the closely-wrought paper which seeks to make a contribution to our knowledge of larger issues through discussion of a one locality, one farm, one individual.

It remains our policy to publish occasional book-length supplements to the *Review*.

Our aim, in short, is to carry the most interesting, innovative and literate work being undertaken in Rural and Agrarian History, no matter what school or discipline its authors might owe allegiance or whatever methodologies they might employ. We believe that this is the appropriate strategy to ensure that as it enters its second half-century, *Agricultural History Review* remains the leading journal in the field.

GOLDEN JUBILEE PRIZE ESSAY

The productivity and management of sheep in late medieval England

by David Stone

Abstract

Sheep husbandry played a vital role in late medieval English agriculture, but evidence from demesne farms reveals that it was blighted by falling fleece weights and rising mortality rates. These trends are currently thought to have been caused by a long term climatic shift towards colder winters. This essay, however, argues that these trends, together with rising fertility rates on some manors, can be explained by changes in the way in which demesne flocks were managed after the Black Death. Rather than being thwarted by their environment, demesne officials were, in essence, responding rationally to worsening economic conditions.

Sheep farming was already of great importance when the Black Death arrived on the shores of Dorset in 1348, but in the hundred years that followed its place in the rural economy of England grew.¹ During this often difficult period for farmers, raising sheep became one of the more lucrative forms of agricultural enterprise, not least because – in an era of steeply rising wages – it required comparatively low labour inputs. The response of the great landlords, whose meticulous record-keeping provides the bulk of our information about medieval agriculture, was swift and decisive: numbers of sheep on their estates increased substantially almost immediately after the Black Death. For example, there were approximately 22,500 sheep on the bishop of Winchester's estate in 1348, but this had increased to about 30,000 by the mid-1350s, peaking at nearly 35,000 in 1369. The scale of the change could be even greater at a local level: there were 107 sheep on the Ramsey Abbey demesne of Warboys (Hunts.) in the early 1340s, but 1005 20 years later.²

Numbers reveal little about the human drama that must sometimes have accompanied these changes. For instance, the villagers of Rougham (Norfolk) seem to have been forced from their homes in the late 1370s and early 1380s in order to provide the lord of the manor with suitable land on which to graze his sheep, and appear to have taken their revenge during the local uprising

¹ With the exceptions, in terms of seigniorial agriculture, of the East Midlands and the North of England: B. M. S. Campbell, *English seigniorial agriculture, 1250–1450* (2000), pp. 163–4.

² M. J. Stephenson, 'Wool yields in the medieval

economy', *EcHR* 41 (1988), pp. 385–6; id., 'The productivity of medieval sheep on the great estates, 1100–1500' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1986), p. 395.

of 1381.³ But in the cold light of day, profits were what mattered most to landlords, and the swing to pastoral farming was reflected in the balance of returns from their estates. By the late 1370s, revenue from wool on the bishop of Winchester's estate reached about 80 per cent of arable revenues, while on the Westminster Abbey demesne of Kinsbourne (Herts.) pastoral farming accounted for 70 per cent of total net profits in the late fourteenth century.⁴ Many demesnes were run as mixed farms until they were eventually leased out, which frequently took place in the period c. 1380–1430, but such were the potential gains to be made from sheep husbandry that some landlords continued to manage their flocks directly even after they had ceased to cultivate most of their arable land. In the 1430s, for example, the duchy of Lancaster kept in excess of 1000 sheep on pasture retained from three manors on the Berkshire and Wiltshire downs.⁵ Even so, most large estates had given up their sheep flocks by the middle of the fifteenth century, but it was not only the landlords who were involved in large-scale sheep farming during the later middle ages. For instance, the Giffard family of north Gloucestershire grazed over 2000 sheep on a grange leased from a Cistercian monastery in the late 1440s, while a decade later, Henry Harlegrey of Mildenhall (Suffolk) bequeathed a flock of 840 sheep to his two sons.⁶

Sheep farming plainly played a crucial part in the lives of late medieval men and women. But it is not for this reason alone that the nature of the pastoral economy in the century after the Black Death should be examined. For it is not only the potential but also the problems of sheep farming that shape our understanding of rural fortunes in this period. In particular, trends in wool yields seem to constitute some of the most explicit evidence that we have for the impact of environmental change in the later middle ages. Stephenson revealed a general and pronounced decline in average fleece weights on the bishop of Winchester's estate between about 1370 and 1450, as Figure 1 shows, and he attributed this collapse chiefly to climatic deterioration. He argued that this period saw 'A significant drop in average winter temperatures allied to an increased frequency of very severe winters', and indicated that such a change would have adversely affected the wool yield of sheep in three ways: excessively hard winters would have prompted the gradual development of a shorter, coarser fleece; restricted access to winter grazing, combined with falling fodder supplies, would have reduced stock nutrition and hence wool growth; and harsh winters and lower levels of nutrition would have made flocks more susceptible to diseases such as sheep scab, which brought falling wool yields as the fleece became 'ragged and torn'.⁷

The appeal of Stephenson's explanation for declining wool yields is not difficult to appreciate. His sample is large and geographically widespread, yet the fall in fleece weights was remarkably consistent from manor to manor. For example, mean fleece weights at Twyford (Hants.) and Downton (Wilts.) fell by 31 per cent and 29 per cent respectively between the 1330s and the 1410s.⁸ Even at places further afield, such as Hinderclay (Suffolk) and Wisbech (Cambs.), the

³ A. Davison, *Six deserted villages in Norfolk* (East Anglian Archaeology Report, 44, 1988), pp. 55–7.

⁴ Stephenson, 'Productivity of medieval sheep', p. 149; D. Stern, *A Hertfordshire demesne of Westminster Abbey: profits, productivity and weather* (2000), pp. 147, 231–3.

⁵ C. Dyer, *Making a living in the middle ages: the*

people of Britain, 850–1520 (2002), p. 333.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 343; P. Northeast (ed.), *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury, 1439–1474, I, 1439–1461* (Suffolk Records Soc., 44, 2001), pp. li, 417.

⁷ Stephenson, 'Wool yields', pp. 381–5 (quotes taken from pp. 381, 382).

⁸ Stephenson, 'Productivity of medieval sheep', p. 315.

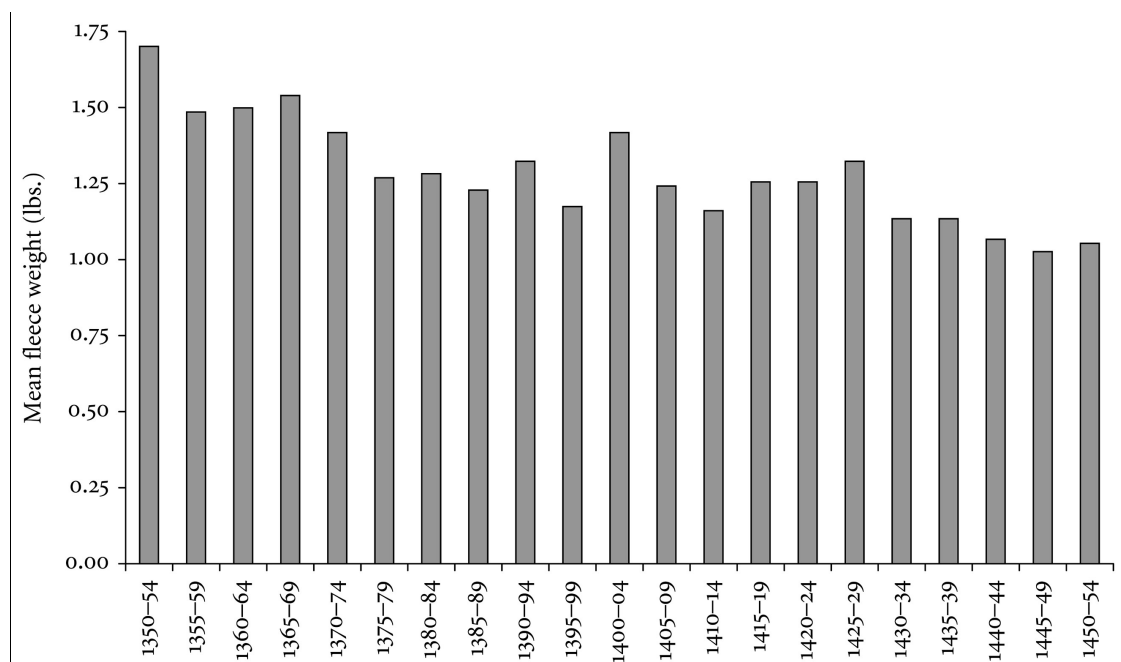


FIGURE 1. Fleece weights on the bishop of Winchester's estate, 1350–1454.

Source: Stephenson, 'Wool yields', p. 378.

trend in fleece weights follows a broadly similar pattern.⁹ Many historical climatologists – including the aptly named H. H. Lamb – also indicate that the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries witnessed a string of unusually harsh winters, with the 1430s singled out as the coldest decade of the second millennium.¹⁰ Furthermore, cold winters and settling snow would have had a severe impact on the mortality rates of sheep, as well as affecting the productivity of those that survived, and death rates did increase substantially on the Winchester estates after the Black Death, especially during the period from October to March, as the trend in ewe mortality at East Meon (Hants.) in Figure 2 shows. Indeed, the connection between poor weather and ovine productivity has been deemed sufficiently strong for fleece weights and mortality rates to be used as 'proxy data' for medieval weather conditions.¹¹

This gloomy portrayal of the power of exogenous forces in the century after the Black Death not only adds to our picture of medieval farmers as being adrift on an ecological sea, but it would also seem to confirm the later middle ages as a period of insurmountable crisis in the countryside. But convincing though this explanation for the falling productivity of medieval sheep might appear, there are several indications that climatic change may not have been as influential as Stephenson believed. First, a recent reinterpretation of the documentary evidence

⁹ Fleece weights dropped at Hinderclay by over 26% between 1305–34 and 1370–96 and at Wisbech by 19% between 1327–48 and 1349–1428: Chicago University Library (hereafter Chicago UL), Bacon Mss, 438–61, 484–506; Cambridge University Library (hereafter CUL),

EDR, D8/1/6–9, 13–17, D8/2/2–8, D8/3/5–30, D8/4/1–6.

¹⁰ H. H. Lamb, *Climatic history and the future* (1985), pp. 564–8.

¹¹ Stern, *Hertfordshire demesne*, pp. 85–102.

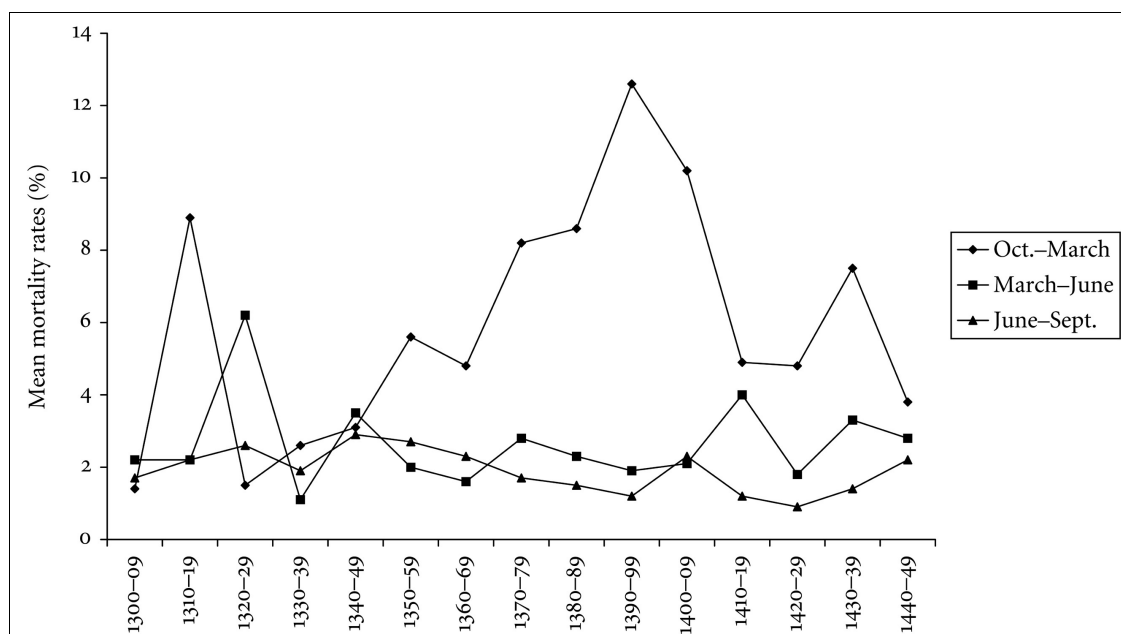


FIGURE 2. Ewe mortality at East Meon (Hants.), 1300–1449.

Source: Stephenson, 'Productivity of medieval sheep', p. 306.

for medieval weather suggests that the period 1370–1430 in fact witnessed less severe, rather than more severe, winters.¹² Secondly, not all data on livestock productivity support the idea of a deterioration in climate. For example, not all livestock suffered rising mortality after the Black Death: at Wisbech (Cambs.), non-working animals such as sheep and pigs were badly affected by murrain at this time, but the mortality rate of cattle actually declined.¹³ Most significantly of all, severe winters and outbreaks of diseases such as sheep scab should also have caused lambing rates to decline, yet – while lambing success did fall on some manors – this was by no means a general experience.¹⁴ Indeed, there could be great variation in the behaviour of lambing rates even on adjacent manors, both on the Winchester estates and elsewhere, as the divergent pattern of lambing rates for the Ramsey Abbey manors of Warboys (Hunts.) and Upwood (Hunts.) in Figure 3 shows.¹⁵ Moreover, the trend in lambing rates and fleece weights could be very different on the same manor. For instance, at Wisbech (Cambs.) and at Knoyle (Wilts.) lambing rates increased in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries at the same time as fleece weights collapsed.¹⁶

These data strongly suggest that the productivity of sheep in the later middle ages was also

¹² A. Ogilvie and G. Farmer, 'Documenting the medieval climate', in M. Hulme and E. Barrow (eds), *Climates of the British Isles: present, past and future* (1997), pp. 120–1.

¹³ CUL, EDR, D8/1/1-D8/4/8.

¹⁴ R. Trow-Smith, *A history of British livestock husbandry to 1700* (1957), pp. 155–6. For evidence of falling lambing rates, see Stephenson, 'Productivity of medieval sheep',

pp. 112–4, 311–12; M. Bailey, *A marginal economy? East Anglian Breckland in the later middle ages* (1989), pp. 124–5.

¹⁵ Lambing rates in this essay are defined as the percentage of ewes bearing a lamb, excluding those ewes dying, sold, or otherwise disposed of before lambing.

¹⁶ Below, fig. 8; Stephenson, 'Productivity of medieval sheep', pp. 313, 315.

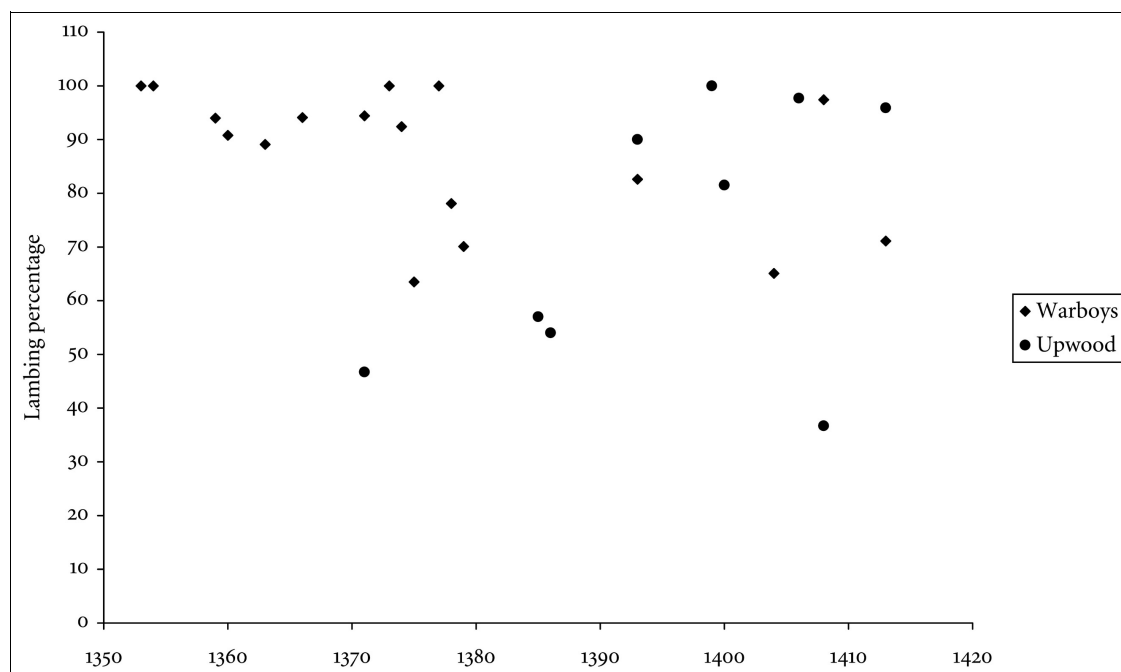


FIGURE 3. Lambing rates at Warboys and Upwood (Hunts.), 1353–1413.

Source: Stephenson, 'Productivity of medieval sheep', pp. 394, 399.

influenced by non-climatic factors. The obvious area to explore in this respect is the management of flocks. After all, farmers were constantly having to make decisions about the best way to utilize their resources, and recent work has added considerably to our understanding of the consequences of such decisions for levels of productivity in medieval England. This is particularly the case with crop yields, which were plainly influenced by the careful adjustments made to levels of inputs as grain prices changed.¹⁷ Decisions also needed to be made about inputs in pastoral farming, not least with regard to the quantity of fodder given to livestock, whether to buy fresh stock or rely on the reproduction of existing animals, and the amount of labour to employ in caring for them. Yet the nature and impact of changes in pastoral management in the later middle ages has hitherto received little attention. Historians who have worked in this area have often employed a broad brush to portray the general state of medieval livestock husbandry, and as a result provide little sense of change over time. Meanwhile, although Thornton and Page highlight the importance of managerial changes in determining the fertility and mortality of flocks and herds, both focus exclusively on the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.¹⁸

¹⁷ See, for example, D. Stone, 'Medieval farm management and technological mentalities: Hinderclay before the Black Death', *EcHR* 54 (2001), pp. 612–38.

¹⁸ C. Thornton, 'Efficiency in medieval livestock farming: the fertility and mortality of herds and flocks at Rimpton, Somerset, 1208–1349', in P. R. Coss and

S. D. Lloyd (eds), *Thirteenth century England*, IV, *proceedings of the Newcastle upon Tyne conference, 1991* (1992), pp. 25–46; M. Page, 'Agrarian innovation on the bishop of Winchester's estate in the later middle ages' (paper presented at the Economic History Society conference, 2002).

The potential significance of management for the productivity of sheep in the period after the Black Death is further emphasized by movements in wool prices. During the last quarter of the fourteenth century – at precisely the time when fleece weights started to fall – the price of a stone of wool collapsed, and it continued to drift downwards during the first half of the fifteenth century.¹⁹ Demesne farm managers responded to falling grain prices at that time by deliberately reducing the intensity of arable cultivation, a strategy which probably resulted in declining crop yields. This essay explores whether a similar relationship can be observed between flock management and the productivity of sheep in the century after the Black Death. The essay focuses on lowland England – essentially the area south of a line stretching from the Severn to the Wash – since this region is especially well represented by surviving manorial account rolls, and forms a broadly homogeneous area in terms of the availability and use of land.²⁰ Medieval sheep farming may appear to be a narrow and specialized field of history, but explaining changes in yields, and establishing the extent of human influence over such changes, lies at the heart of the agricultural history of any period. Moreover, sheep have been a major agricultural resource for most rural communities in the past and medieval demesne accounts provide by far the most robust data on the productivity and management of sheep in the pre-modern era.

I

One change in management policy after the Black Death which seems to have affected fleece weights concerns the way in which wool was marketed. When fleece weights can be calculated, it is often the case that they refer to wool that was sold. Manorial wool clips were commonly sold immediately after shearing, or at any rate prior to accounting in September. However, this was not always so: in years in which the price of wool was considered to be low, fleeces were sometimes kept and not sold until the following accounting year in the hope that the price of wool would increase. With generally lower wool prices in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, finding a buyer at an acceptable price was not always possible, and the sale of old wool occurred much more frequently. At Wisbech (Cambs.), old wool was sold on only two occasions between 1314 and 1368, but from then until the demesne was leased in 1430 the wool clip was often kept and sold after it had been stored for up to 15 months.²¹ This strategy is also apparent on demesnes that were still engaged in sheep farming during the recession of the 1440s and 1450s. For example, newly shorn wool frequently remained unsold in these decades on the manors of Shapwick (Dorset), Alciston (Sussex), and Lakenheath (Suffolk).²²

As Lloyd noted, 'Medieval wool did not have good keeping qualities and when a clip was held over from one year to the next it was often sold at a lower price than that fetched by new wool'.²³ This price difference reflects a deterioration in the quality of old wool, but it also seems

¹⁹ D. Farmer, 'Prices and wages, 1350–1500', in E. Miller (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, III, 1348–1500 (1991), pp. 462, 512–4.

²⁰ Campbell, *English seigniorial agriculture*, pp. 33, 98–9.

²¹ CUL, EDR, D8/1/1–D8/4/8.

²² T. H. Lloyd, *The movement of wool prices in medieval England*, (*EcHR Supplement*, 6, 1973), p. 26; M. Mate, 'Pastoral farming in south-east England in the fifteenth century', *EcHR* 40 (1987), p. 527; Bailey, *Marginal economy?*, p. 290.

²³ Lloyd, *Movement of wool prices*, pp. 2–3.

likely that the weight of fleeces kept in storage for a year or more decreased as the wool dried out. For instance, at Wisbech (Cambs.) in 1348, 24 fleeces were retained at the end of the accounting year, weighing a total of three-and-a-half stone; when the same 24 fleeces were sold the following year, it is recorded that they weighed only two-and-a-half stone. Similarly, a late fifteenth-century Norfolk wool house received wool at 15 lbs. to the stone but sold it after storage at 14 lbs. to the stone, a practice which 'was probably designed to allow for a decrease in weight'.²⁴

But while storing wool may well have contributed to falling fleece weights in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it cannot account for the general and prolonged decline in wool yields. Farm managers at Wisbech were highly responsive to cyclical variations in price and so oscillated between selling new and old wool as prices fluctuated, yet fleece weights there remained low throughout this period.²⁵ Moreover, much of the wool on the Winchester estates was sent to a central collecting point rather than being sold locally; whether it was subsequently stored before sale or not is immaterial in terms of the trend in Winchester fleece weights, for the wool was weighed on the demesne farms each year before being sent out.²⁶

II

The reason for the fall in fleece weights probably has more to do with how the sheep themselves were managed. As Stephenson rightly diagnosed, one of the main factors affecting the health of a flock and the yield of wool is the amount and quality of fodder provided for sheep, particularly during the winter season when natural grazing was restricted. The chronic under-feeding of sheep both reduces the growth and thickness of wool and affects their ability to withstand outbreaks of disease. Indeed, in his sheep-farming manual of 1837, William Youatt listed 'bad keep' and 'starvation' at the head of his list of possible causes of sheep scab.²⁷ But whereas Stephenson attributed a reduction in levels of nutrition after the Black Death to climatic change, the evidence from manorial accounts suggests instead that farm managers deliberately cut fodder provision in response to falling wool prices.

The main fodder for all livestock over the winter period was meadow hay, which had been gathered and stored during the previous summer. Most manors had access to some meadowland, but on the bishop of Winchester's manor of Crawley (Hants.) meadow was scarce and most of the hay provided for livestock was bought at market; tracing patterns in fodder provision here is thus a relatively simple task since these purchases were invariably recorded in the accounts from year to year. Although the size of the sheep flock at Crawley stayed comparatively stable, the amount of money spent on hay dropped enormously after the Black Death, as Figure 4 shows, from about 55s. *od.* per annum in the 1360s and 1370s to about 11s. *od.* per

²⁴ CUL, EDR, D8/2/2, 4; K. J. Allison, 'Flock management in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *EcHR* 11 (1958), p. 107.

²⁵ CUL, EDR, D8/3/5–30, D8/4/1–6.

²⁶ D. Farmer, 'Marketing the produce of the countryside, 1200–1500', in Miller (ed.), *Agrarian History*, III, pp. 397–400. However, some outlying Winchester

manors remained outside this system: see Farmer, 'Prices and wages', p. 463, where he notes that, 'On two occasions eight years supply [of wool] accumulated at Wargrave and Witney before the bishop of Winchester was able to sell it'.

²⁷ W. Youatt, *Sheep, their breeds, management and diseases* (London, 1837), p. 537.

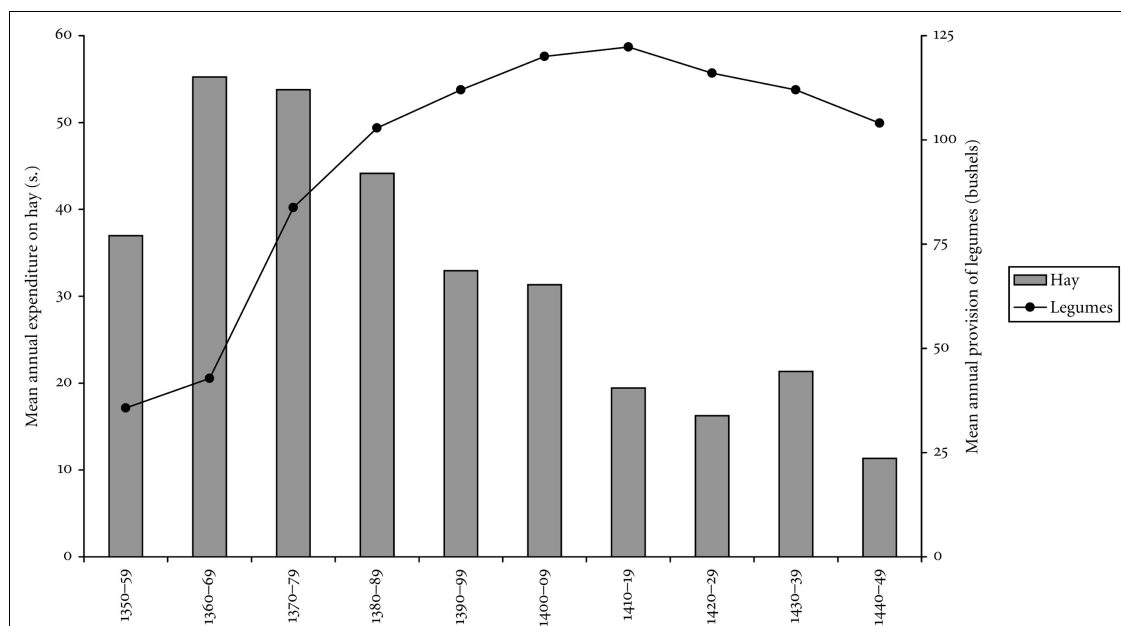


FIGURE 4. Fodder provision at Crawley (Hants.), 1350–1449.

Source: Gras and Gras, *Economic and social history*, pp. 329–31, 364–6, 370–2.

annum in the 1440s.²⁸ It is unlikely that this can be explained simply by falling prices per unit of hay. Such prices are seldom recorded in account rolls, but, where they are, the value of hay seems in fact to have crept up during this period, presumably reflecting the generally high demand for fodder at this time.²⁹ The decline in expenditure on hay at Crawley instead suggests a rational response to changing economic conditions, not least because it began at about the same time that wool prices started to fall. The Crawley sheep were not, however, entirely deprived of winter fodder, for as Figure 4 also shows, the decline in hay in the late fourteenth century was mirrored by a rise in the amount of peas and vetches provided for livestock from the crops grown at Crawley itself. Nonetheless, this change in fodder provision is likely to have affected the health and welfare of the Crawley flock, for hay is generally considered to be much more nutritious for sheep as well as being more to their taste. As Allan Fraser – a shepherd turned lecturer in animal husbandry – commented, ‘As a winter feed for sheep it is true of say of hay as Bottom [of *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream*] said of hay: “Good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow”’. Significantly, Fraser went on, ‘The old-fashioned beans, peas, and oats silage

²⁸ The flock numbered approximately 1500 sheep in the decades immediately after the Black Death, and about 1400 in the first half of the fifteenth century. Other than the draught beasts required for arable cultivation, sheep were the only livestock kept at Crawley in this period. A sample of accounts suggests that the sheep were given all the hay that was bought and all the leguminous fodder

at this time: N. S. B. Gras and E. C. Gras, *The economic and social history of an English village* (1930), pp. 272, 274–5, 298, 300, 329, 331, 401–19.

²⁹ For example, at Hinderclay (Suffolk) the price of a cartload of hay increased from 3s. 0d. in the years 1373–80, to 3s. 4½d. in 1384–96, and 4s. 2¾d. in 1401–4: Chicago UL, Bacon Mss, 485–91, 494–509.

mixture that was popular on some dairy farms ... was well-nigh useless for sheep.' Sheep, it seems, just picked at the leaves and left the rest.³⁰

Even where hay was available locally in greater abundance than at Crawley, it is by no means certain that sheep would have been better fed after the Black Death. On the bishop of Exeter's manor of Clyst (Devon), hay yields doubled during the early fifteenth century, but the extra hay that was produced was sent to the bishop's palace at Exeter for his horses rather than being fed to the farm livestock.³¹ The situation was even more desperate for sheep when hay yields fell, for they were not necessarily the top priority for farm managers when it came to distributing this scarce resource. At Wisbech (Cambs.), hay yields fell drastically in the decades after the Black Death when hired mowers were replaced by less skilled customary labourers, and the amount of hay given to sheep decreased accordingly, the first priority being the horses and oxen that pulled the manorial ploughs and carts. Notably, fleece weights and lambing rates at Wisbech fell at the precise moment that hay yields collapsed.³²

To some extent, the health and productivity of sheep was also determined by the level and nature of nourishment provided for them when they were lambs. As Youatt put it, 'if the fleece is to be good ... the lamb must not be stinted and starved when young'.³³ This, however, is precisely what happened on some demesne farms in the aftermath of the Black Death. At Hinderclay (Suffolk), the ewes were milked for most of the fourteenth century. During the first few decades of the century, an alternative supply of milk was bought for the lambs to replace the ewes' milk that they would otherwise have consumed, as Figure 5 reveals. This was presumably cows' milk, the value of which was considerably lower than ewes' milk: at Chaceley (Worcs.), where ewes' milk was occasionally purchased for lambs, a gallon of milk cost 1³/₄d. in 1346–47, but at Hinderclay the price of the milk that was bought was only 1d. per gallon.³⁴ Nor would the Hinderclay lambs have been alone in this respect, for lambs on the estates of Peterborough Abbey were also fed cows' milk in the early fourteenth century.³⁵ At Hinderclay, the cows' milk was clearly a direct replacement for suckling in this period: as the number of ewes that were milked fell, so too did the amount of milk bought; in years in which no ewes were milked, cows' milk was seldom bought; and there was an extremely close relationship between the two variables in the 1330s. But, as Figure 5 also shows, when the Hinderclay ewes were milked during the second half of the fourteenth century, no extra milk at all was provided for the lambs, presumably in order to cut costs.

Indeed, the amount of legumes given to lambs at Wisbech (Cambs.) was almost certainly related to the prevailing price of wool, for at the turn of the fifteenth century – a time of

³⁰ A. Fraser, *Sheep husbandry* (sec. edn, 1951), pp. 263–5.

³¹ N. W. Alcock, 'An east Devon manor in the later middle ages, I, 1374–1420, the manor farm', *Reports and Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 102 (1970), p. 157; id., 'An east Devon manor in the later middle ages, II, leasing the demesne, 1423–1525, 1525–1650', *Rep. and Trans. of the Devon. Assoc.*, 105 (1973), pp. 152–3.

³² D. Stone, 'The productivity of hired and customary labour: evidence from Wisbech Barton in the fourteenth century', *ECHR* 50 (1997), pp. 640–56; CUL, EDR, D8/1/14–

D8/3/4.

³³ Youatt, *Sheep*, p. 48.

³⁴ Westminster Abbey Muniments 21082, 21086; I am grateful to Barbara Harvey for this reference. The author of the anonymous thirteenth-century *Husbandry* noted that a gallon of sheep's milk at that time was worth as much as one-and-a-half gallons of cows' milk: D. Oschinsky (ed.), *Walter of Henley and other treatises on estate management and accounting* (1971), pp. 428–9.

³⁵ K. Biddick, *The other economy: pastoral husbandry on a medieval estate* (1989), p. 114.

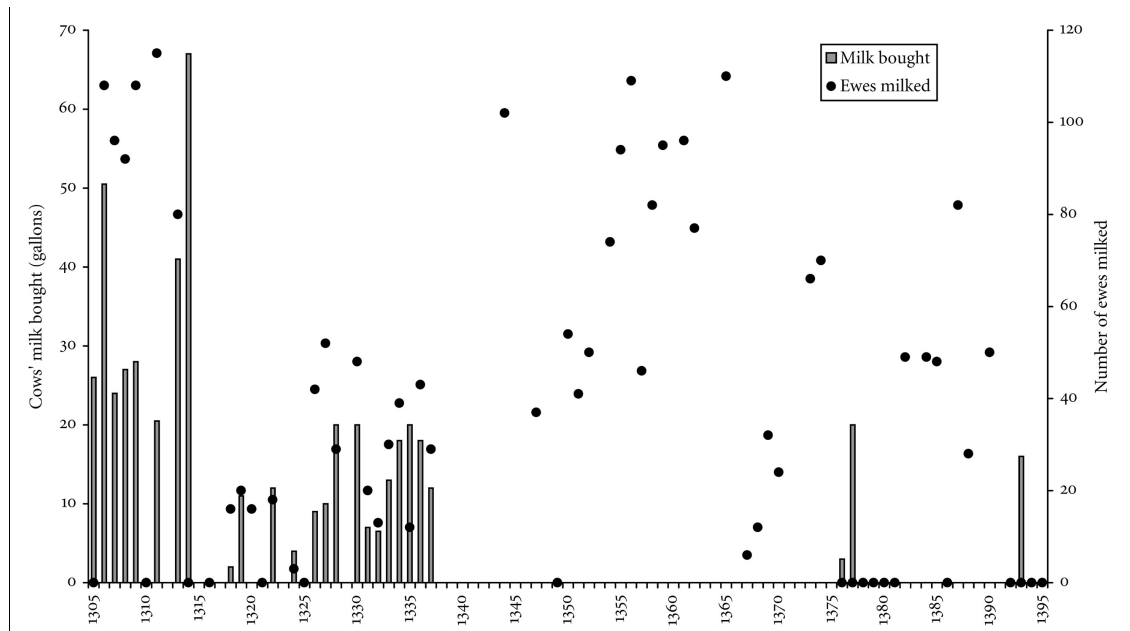


FIGURE 5. The provision of cows' milk for lambs at Hinderclay (Suffolk), 1305–1395.

Source: Chicago UL, Bacon Mss 438–505.

particularly low wool prices – the quantity of legumes provided for lambs was cut by more than half, from over 30 bushels per 100 lambs at weaning in the mid-1390s to under 15 bushels a decade later. This reduction may well have increased the susceptibility of these sheep to disease and affected the growth of wool throughout their lives, for fleece weights at Wisbech fell substantially during the first decade of the fifteenth century.³⁶

Supplementary feeding of livestock is of vital importance since grass only grows for part of the year and all pastures occasionally fail. Nevertheless, the management of grazing resources should not be overlooked. Historians tend to assume that, with the fall in human population, demesne sheep had access to more and better pasture after the Black Death. However, this was not necessarily the case. Larger peasant flocks stimulated an increased demand for grazing land during this period and this often encouraged lords to lease out some of their pasture, a policy which could prove comparatively lucrative.³⁷ For example, while several areas of pasturage at Twyford (Hants.) had been used for the lord's stock in 1301–2, much of this land was then sold in 1409–10, fetching £3 6s. 4d.³⁸ Nor was leasing the only form of competition for demesne

³⁶ CUL, EDR D8/3/5–10, 12–16, 26. Notably, the decision to reduce the amount of fodder provided for lambs was subsequently reversed when wool prices recovered slightly, and during the 1410s and 1420s fleece weights at Wisbech returned to their 1390s level.

³⁷ On Bruton Priory's manor of Horsley (Gloucs.) it has been estimated that over £25 was lost on the rents of meadows and pastures that were reserved for the lord's

sheep during the period 1444–52. In using the meadow and pasture themselves, the priory made a net loss in that period of just over £1: Lloyd, *Movement of wool prices*, p. 26.

³⁸ M. Page (ed.), *The pipe roll of the bishopric of Winchester, 1301–2* (Hampshire Record Ser., 14, 1996), p. 268; id., *The pipe roll of the bishopric of Winchester, 1409–10* (Hampshire Rec. Ser., 16, 1999), p. 362.

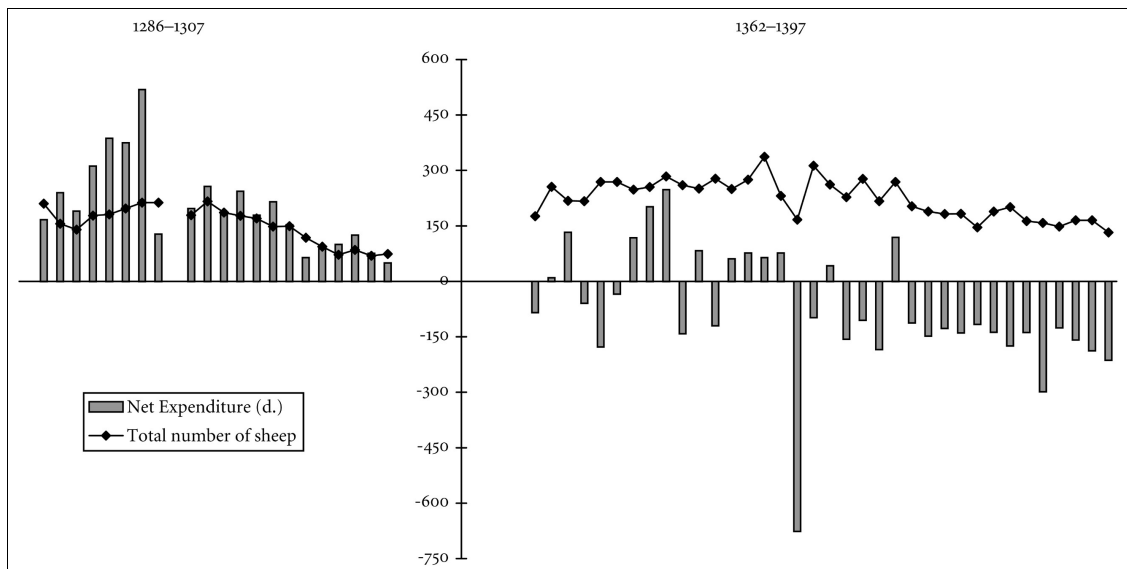


FIGURE 6. Sheep numbers and net expenditure on livestock fodder at Kinsbourne (Herts.), 1286–1307 and 1362–1397.

Source: Stern, *Hertfordshire demesne*, pp. 211–14, 217–22, 229–33.

pasture. At Cheriton (Hants.), nothing was made from the milking of ewes in 1409–10 ‘on account of the want of pasture’. Yet the lord’s cattle at Cheriton were let loose on five areas of pasturage that year and a further two areas were leased.³⁹ This is suggestive more of the prioritization of resource use rather than simply a shortage of pasture.

An overall picture of changes in fodder and grazing provision after the Black Death emerges from the calculations made by Stern for the demesne of Kinsbourne (Herts.). For each year in the periods 1286–1307 and 1362–97, he calculated the cost of corn given to livestock, added the cost of pasture and hay that had been purchased, and subtracted the value of pasture that was leased and hay that was sold. These figures are reproduced in Figure 6, together with the total number of sheep on the demesne each year. The resulting pattern clearly shows that while net expenditure on fodder closely shadowed the number of sheep in the period before the Black Death, the generally larger Kinsbourne flock of the late fourteenth century was much less well served.

Even altering grazing arrangements, which must have been common after the Black Death, may well have been counterproductive, not least because sheep seem to react badly to changes in pasture. As Fraser put it, ‘All sheep are conservatives’, adding that ‘It is not suggested that the converse is necessarily true!’ He went on to explain that ‘Sheep thrive and make better use of pastures to which they are accustomed ... for sheep can be desperately homesick’.⁴⁰ Historians sometimes refer to the psychological impact of the Black Death; perhaps sheep should be included in such an interpretation. Fortunately, the effects of changes in pasture at this time

³⁹ Page (ed.), *Pipe roll, 1409–10*, pp. 340–1.

⁴⁰ Fraser, *Sheep husbandry*, p. 257.

are sometimes more tangible. At Wisbech (Cambs.), sheep were pastured chiefly on demesne herbage in the decades before the Black Death and housed in a sheep cote during the winter months. But at times of low wool prices in the later middle ages the herbage was often leased, no money was spent on the upkeep of the sheep cote, and sheep were instead grazed on an area of marshland to the west of the manor.⁴¹ The danger of this arrangement is made explicit in the accounts: not only were 373 sheep drowned in the marsh in December 1398, by what the reeve stressed to his auditors was 'a sudden rise in water', but the sheep also became increasingly susceptible to liverfluke, an emaciating disease caused by parasitic flatworms and hosted by moisture-loving snails, referred to by contemporaries as sheep rot.⁴² One symptom of sheep rot mentioned by Houghton in the seventeenth century was that 'the wooll would drop from their backs of it self';⁴³ at Wisbech, the increased incidence of liverfluke, brought on by changes in grazing arrangements, may well have contributed to the fall in fleece weights.

III

The health and productivity of flocks also appears to have been affected by changes in the organization of sheep farming after the Black Death. As wool prices dropped in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and the buying of new animals began to cut deeper into the purses of landlords, many estates relied to a much greater extent on breeding as a means of replacing their stock. At this time, the manors on large estates were increasingly divided between those which mainly kept ewes and bred lambs, and those which primarily produced wool from flocks of wethers supplied by the breeding manors. The development of this more integrated and isolated approach to sheep farming took place, for example, on the Lancaster, Hungerford, and Bury St Edmunds Abbey estates in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and was sometimes reflected by the appearance of centralized accounting for sheep, as on the estates of Norwich Cathedral Priory in the 1390s.⁴⁴ The impact of such changes on the inflow of fresh stock can be seen on the bishop of Ely's manor of Wisbech (Cambs.), where new sheep were purchased in 70 per cent of years between 1314 and 1371, but in only 23 per cent of years between 1372 and 1430; indeed, in maintaining a flock of over 500 sheep in the 1410s and 1420s, farm managers at Wisbech bought only one ram and 37 lambs.⁴⁵

Such a policy, though cheaper, brought considerable risks. As Youatt warned, after 'breeding too long from close affinities', sheep 'do not bear the severity of the weather quite so well, and perhaps ... are somewhat more subject to disease'.⁴⁶ His apprehension is certainly borne out by medieval evidence. At Kinsbourne (Herts.), a temporary reliance on breeding rather than market purchases at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries ushered in a decade of increased disease and falling fleece weights. At Clyst (Devon), the introduction of new stock

⁴¹ CUL, EDR, D8/1/6-D8/3/17.

⁴² CUL, EDR, D8/2/16-17, D8/3/11, 17.

⁴³ Quoted in Trow-Smith, *History of British livestock husbandry*, p. 249.

⁴⁴ Stephenson, 'Productivity of medieval sheep', pp. 58-9; Bailey, *Marginal economy?*, pp. 291-2; Chicago UL, Bacon Mss, 506-10; Campbell, *English seigniorial agriculture*, p. 236, n. 191. There were exceptions: on the

duchy of Lancaster's Berkshire manors of Aldbourne, Chipping Lambourne, and Berwick, numbers of wethers were maintained by buying new stock, even in the late 1430s: Lloyd, *Movement of wool prices*, p. 25. The duchy must have had a very good reason for persevering with such an expensive policy.

⁴⁵ CUL, EDR, D8/1/1-D8/4/8.

⁴⁶ Youatt, *Sheep*, pp. 494-5.

TABLE 1. Sheep disease, purchases, and fleece weights at Wisbech (Cambs.), 1395–1412

Year	Disease and mortality		Sheep bought		Fleece weight (lbs.)
	No. bald	Mortality (%) ^a	Adults	Lambs	
1395	0	4.9	0	0	2.02
1396	4	10.2	0	0	—
1397	1	12.7	0	0	1.79
1398	3	6.2	0	0	—
1399	0	64.7	116	129	2.12
1401	0	4.8	0	0	1.90
1402	0	10.6	0	10	2.06
1403	0	11.3	0	0	1.55
1404	0	4.6	0	0	1.95
1405	0	5.0	0	0	1.91
1406	5	17.9	0	0	1.55
1407	2	36.5	0	29	1.51
1408	0	9.8	105	40	1.71
1409	11	13.2	170	0	1.63
1410	0	8.4	0	0	2.26
1411	0	3.4	0	0	2.05
1412	0	8.1	0	0	1.93

Notes: ^a excluding lambs.

Source: CUL, EDR, D8/3/7–20, 26.

became less frequent in the 1390s and 1400s, and the number of sheep that could not be shorn because they were ‘naked’ or ‘plucked’ rose.⁴⁷ Apart from anything else, increased self-sufficiency probably aided the spread of highly contagious diseases such as sheep scab; hence the reference to ‘naked’ sheep, since loss of wool was one of the chief symptoms of scab. The chain of cause and effect can be seen in more detail in the virtually continuous series of accounts for Wisbech (Cambs.). From the late fourteenth century onwards, references to bald sheep begin to appear in the Wisbech accounts, again presumably referring to scab. As Table 1 shows, these references occur in runs, as in the years 1396–8 and 1406–9, which suggests that once scab had become established in the flock, it took several years to disappear. As the table also shows, outbreaks of scab were reflected by higher levels of mortality in the Wisbech flock in general, the only exception being 1399 when (as we saw) the heavy loss was caused by drowning.⁴⁸ Significantly,

⁴⁷ Stern, *Hertfordshire demesne*, pp. 85–6, 139, 229–30; Alcock, ‘East Devon manor, I’, pp. 161–2, 166. Notably, whenever fresh stock was acquired at Clyst, the number of naked sheep decreased temporarily.

⁴⁸ Some historians have doubted whether scab actually caused death, though it is instructive that Henry Best wrote of the effects of scab in 1642 that ‘oftentimes (after

a long declininge and going backe) [they] turne up their heeles’, a diagnosis which modern experts confirm: D. Woodward (ed), *The farming and memorandum books of Henry Best of Elmswell, 1642*, (Records of Social and Economic History, new ser., 8, 1984), p. 31; D. W. Tarry, ‘“Sheep scab” and other forms of mange’, in W. B. Martin and I. D. Aitkin (eds), *Diseases of sheep* (2nd edn, 1991), p. 261.

the factor that seems to have been most influential in breaking these cycles of scab was the purchase of considerable quantities of sheep in 1399 and 1408–9. Moreover, these purchases also seem to have had a beneficial effect on average fleece weights. Fleece weights were low in 1397 and between 1406 and 1409, when disease was present in the flock, but in the years 1399–1402 and 1410–12, just after purchases of sheep, fleece weights were substantially higher.

It seems highly probable, then, that a long-term policy of greater self-sufficiency would have had an adverse effect on the health of flocks in the later middle ages, and that this in turn helped to depress fleece weights. But with the high incidence of disease among sheep flocks in the period after the Black Death, lambing success should, in theory, have been reduced along with wool yields, even if the practice of selling old wool sometimes depressed the latter to a greater extent. An explanation is clearly required for the improved performance of lambing evident on some demesnes, such as Wisbech, in the later middle ages.

Levels of ewe fertility in medieval sheep breeding were doubtless affected by a wide range of factors, some of which are easily quantifiable, such as the ratio of ewes to rams, and others of which are not, such as the quality of the rams. However, the factor which seems to have had the greatest impact on trends in fertility rates after the Black Death was the health and strength of the ewe, and the chief determinant of this was whether or not they were milked. Milking had a more debilitating effect on ewes than the suckling of lambs, since milking often went on beyond the date at which lambs would have been weaned. As Ryder wrote, 'whereas a normal lactation will cease when the lambs are weaned at about five months, milking will extend the lactation period to seven months after birth'.⁴⁹ Lactation has the effect of delaying the return of the normal cyclical pattern of oestrous behaviour in the ewe through the release of prolactin.⁵⁰ As Fitzherbert exclaimed – rather less clinically – in 1523, 'Howe be it they vse in some places to mylke theyr ewes, whan they haue wayned theyr lambes: but that is great hurte to the ewes, and wyll cause them, that they wyll not take the ramme at the tyme of the year for pouertye, but goo barreyne'.⁵¹ Thirteenth-century agricultural writers were clearly also concerned about the effects of prolonging lactation, though notably they disagreed on the date at which milking should cease. The author of the *Seneschaucy* noted that 'no ewe ought to be milked after the Nativity of Our Lady [8 September] because they are then slow to mate'. By contrast, readers of the anonymous *Husbandry* were warned not to risk milking ewes after 1 August 'because they would become worth less'.⁵² Nor was knowledge of the adverse effects of milking confined to the writers of treatises, as the large fine levied on the lord's shepherd at Walsham le Willows (Suffolk) in 1346 'because he milked the ewes, against the orders of the lord and his bailiffs' suggests.⁵³

⁴⁹ M. L. Ryder, *Sheep and man* (1983), p. 689.

⁵⁰ P. Mauleon, 'Manipulation of the breeding cycle', in G. L. Tomes, D. E. Robertson, and R. J. Lightfoot (eds), *Sheep breeding* (2nd edn, 1979), pp. 443–5.

⁵¹ W. W. Skeat (ed.), *The book of husbandry by Master Fitzherbert* (1882), p. 61. See also Youatt, *Sheep*, p. 49, where he suggested that 'that which should have ... brought her regularly and effectually into season for impregnation or given her strength to yean a full-grown and healthy lamb, has been gradually abstracted in the

milk ... He who followed it up too closely was sure to have fewer lambs'.

⁵² The author of the Gloucester Treatise compromised by suggesting that milking could take place until Michaelmas (29 September), but that it was best to stop by 1 August in order to ensure the ewes' strength for winter: Oschinsky (ed.), *Walter of Henley*, pp. 286–7, 428–9, 472.

⁵³ R. Lock (ed.), *The court rolls of Walsham le Willows, 1303–50* (Suffolk Rec. Soc., 41, 1998), p. 297.

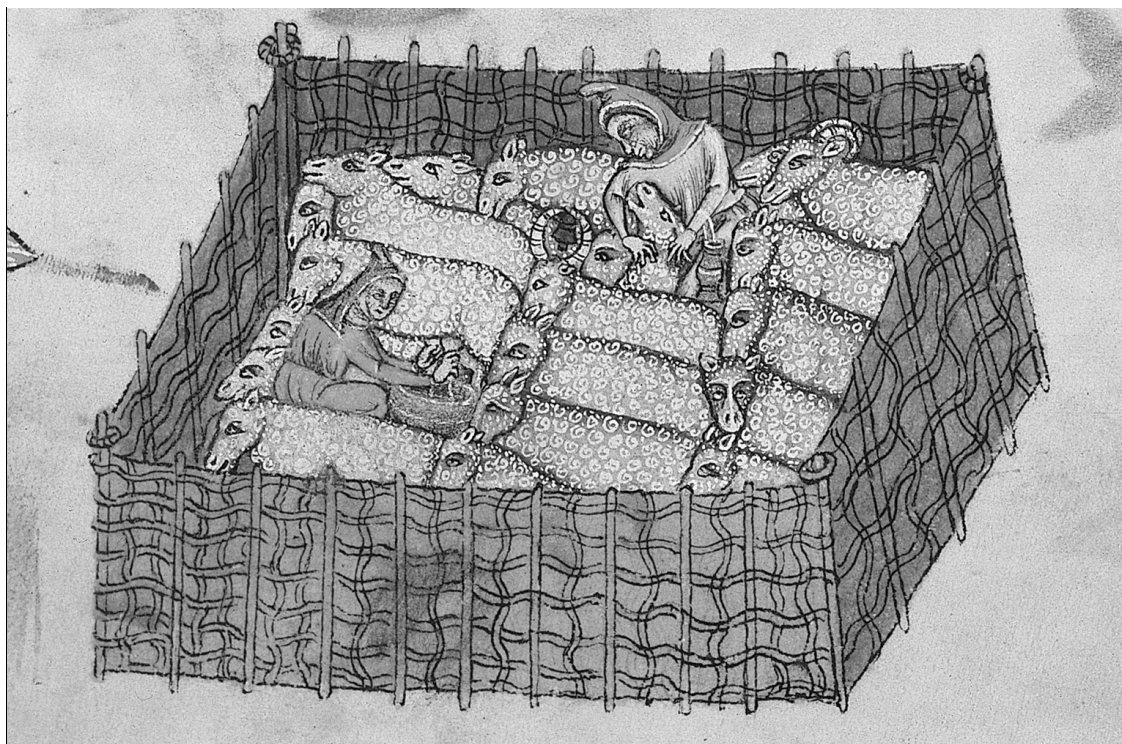


FIGURE 7. Milking and salving sheep in the Luttrell Psalter of c. 1340.

Source: British Library 42130 fo. 163v. By permission of the British Library.

Nevertheless, as the celebrated picture from the Luttrell Psalter of c. 1340 reflects (Figure 7), it was generally common practice to milk ewes in the years before the Black Death. Most of the milk produced in this period was probably consumed as cheese. On the bishop of Winchester's estate, for example, '[t]he manors selling cheese were the manors with flocks of ewes, for most of the Winchester cheese at that time came from the milk of sheep, not cows'.⁵⁴ But the illustration effectively marks the end of an era, for on many demesne farms the practice of milking ewes seems to have died out in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The regular milking of ewes ceased at Kinsbourne (Herts.) in the 1360s, at Wisbech (Cambs.) in the 1370s, at Farleigh (Somerset) by the 1380s, at Hinderclay (Suffolk) in the 1390s, at Monks Deverill and Longbridge Deverill (Wilts.) by about 1400, and lactage payments disappeared almost entirely from the Winchester accounts by the 1410s. It was not the case everywhere – for example ewes were regularly milked in Sussex until the late fifteenth century – but nonetheless there does seem to have been a general retreat from the milking of ewes in the decades after the Black Death.⁵⁵

The cessation of ewe-milking at this time may partly reflect the declining value of their

⁵⁴ Farmer, 'Marketing the produce', p. 401.

⁵⁵ Stern, *Hertfordshire demesne*, p. 189; CUL, EDR, D8/2/13-D8/3/3; E. Miller, 'Farming practice and tech-

niques: the southern counties', in Miller (ed.), *Agrarian history*, III, pp. 295–6; Chicago UL, Bacon Mss, 497–506; Mate, 'Pastoral farming', p. 528.

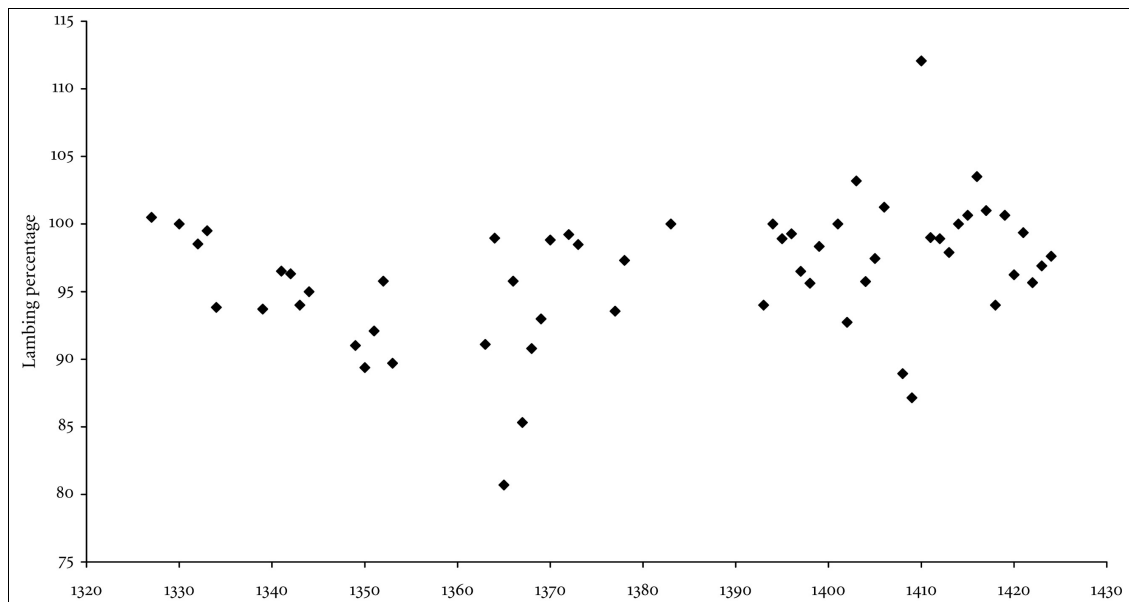


FIGURE 8. Lambing rates at Wisbech (Cambs.), 1327–1424.

Source: CUL, EDR D8/1/6–D8/4/3.

milk,⁵⁶ but it probably also represents an attempt to maximize the breeding potential of ewes as part of the move towards greater self-sufficiency. Either way, it does seem to have led to higher lambing rates. At Wisbech, for example, the fertility of ewes generally rose from the 1370s onwards, as Figure 8 shows. Lambing rates on this demesne had initially fallen in the aftermath of the Black Death, when the hay rations of sheep had been cut, but by the turn of the fifteenth century, even though disease was still rife in the Wisbech flock, fertility rates were boosted to a level exceeding even that of the early fourteenth century. Indeed, although there has previously been little evidence for twinning in medieval sheep, some ewes at Wisbech clearly bore twins on several occasions in the early fifteenth century.⁵⁷ Similarly, at Crawley (Hants.), the cessation of milking in the 1410s brought higher lambing rates in the 1420s and 1430s.⁵⁸

So the move towards an increased reliance on breeding had benefits as well as drawbacks for the productivity of sheep. But we should not simply assume that the breeding of lambs was entirely free from problems in the early fifteenth century. As the Wisbech evidence shows, lambing rates could still vary considerably from year to year at this time. The main problem seems to have been that some of the young ewes were barren, as Table 2 reveals.⁵⁹ The generally

⁵⁶ At Wisbech (Cambs.), ewes fetched 3–4d. per head for lactage between 1314 and 1354, but only 2–3d. per ewe in the 1360s and 1370s: CUL, EDR, D8/1/1–D8/2/24.

⁵⁷ See Trow-Smith, *History of British livestock husbandry*, p. 151. The Wisbech evidence is supported by specific references to ewes producing two lambs at Hinderclay (Suffolk) in the mid-1350s: Chicago UL, Bacon

Mss, 473–5.

⁵⁸ Miller, 'Farming practice', p. 296.

⁵⁹ Medieval accounts often seem to have distinguished sterility from miscarriage, as at Downton (Wilts.) in 1301–2, when the reeve noted that of 48 ewes not bearing a lamb '28 were sterile and 20 aborted': Page (ed.), *Pipe roll, 1301–2*, p. 70.

TABLE 2. Retarded fertility among young ewes at Wisbech (Cambs.), 1401–1409

<i>Year</i>	<i>Lambing rate (lambs per 100 ewes)</i>	<i>% young ewes in breeding flock</i>	<i>% young ewes barren</i>	<i>Lamb mortality 2 years earlier (%)</i>
1401	100	46.1	0	7.7
1402	93	25.9	28.1	— ^a
1403	103	18.6	0	5.6
1404	96	17.4	24.4	9.3
1405	97	16.2	15.8	11.0
1406	101	34.4	0	8.0
1408	89	27.0 ^b	41.0	19.3
1409	87	18.6 ^b	69.2	27.5

Notes: ^a Although a death rate cannot be calculated for 1400, due to a gap in the series of accounts, the bare statistics on the size of the flock in Sept. 1399 and Sept. 1400 suggest that mortality was fairly high between those dates: by Sept. 1400, the total size of the flock had fallen below 400 for the first time since the 1370s.

^b the proportion of young ewes cannot be calculated precisely because some ewes (of unknown age) were bought before lambing.

Source: CUL, EDR, D8/3/11–18, 26.

lower reproductive rates of young ewes is a recognized fact of sheep farming.⁶⁰ Yet this was clearly not a constant problem at Wisbech, for excellent lambing rates were sometimes achieved despite there being large numbers of young ewes in the breeding flock. Fluctuating lambing rates at this time can in fact be explained more consistently by examining the life-cycles of young ewes. As Table 2 also shows, the incidence of barrenness among young ewes at Wisbech corresponds very closely with high mortality in the flock two years earlier, that is during the season in which the young ewes were born. Likewise, years in which fertility was high correspond with low death rates among lambs two years earlier. On the assumption that mortality rates provide a reasonable indication of the health of the surviving lambs, it seems that weakened female lambs were more likely to be barren during their first reproductive cycle. Even in terms of fertility, then, the move towards self-sufficiency was not an unqualified success: a reduction in milking may have brought higher productivity, but self-sufficiency also encouraged the spread of disease and in some years this could hamper the development of young ewes.

IV

High lamb mortality also had a knock-on effect on lambing success at Wisbech in the late 1410s and 1420s, but on this occasion the blame seems to have lain with the demesne shepherds, or at least the relative lack of them. The sharp rise in the death rate of Wisbech lambs during this period corresponds very closely with a marked decline in labour inputs per lamb: in fact, correlating lamb mortality rates for the years 1410–22 with labour inputs per lamb born, using

⁶⁰ As Owen wrote, 'Ewe lambs ... have lower ovulation rates than more mature ewes, as well as poorer conception rates'. J. B. Owen, *Sheep production* (1976), p. 183.

the number of man days worked by shepherds over a six-month period, produces a Spearman Rank coefficient of -0.702 , which is significant at a 1 per cent level of probability.⁶¹

Indeed, labour in shepherding may generally have had a significant influence on the health and productivity of late medieval sheep. Labour is often overlooked as a dynamic factor in pastoral husbandry, not least because sheep farming – as is well known – is much less labour intensive than arable farming. But that should not blind us to the crucial role that shepherds played in maintaining the health and welfare of their flocks. Indeed, shepherding could often be laborious, particularly at lambing time in the spring, or when salving sheep with tar and grease in the autumn in order to protect them against lice, scab, and harsh winter weather, a task being undertaken by the higher of the two figures in the picture from the Luttrell Psalter (Figure 7). An indication of the arduous nature of the latter task is provided by Henry Best, who noted in 1642 that no more than seven sheep could be smeared in one day.⁶² At that rate, shepherds on the bishop of Winchester's demesne at Downton (Wilts.) would have required 177 man-days in the autumn of 1409 to smear the whole flock.⁶³ Nor was the responsibility of a shepherd restricted to performing tasks such as this, for an equally important part of a shepherd's job was to observe the behaviour of the flock and act swiftly and appropriately if need be. In particular, the attentiveness and skill of the shepherd could have a massive impact on mortality rates in the first few months after lambing. For example, suckling could be a potentially fatal process for ewes and lambs alike if shepherds were not watchful. Suckling ewes can suffer from inflammation of the udder, a problem which, while easily treated, can result in the death of the ewe if not caught in sufficient time. Walter of Henley, writing in the thirteenth century, warned of the need for shepherds carefully to 'pulle away the woolle betwene the teates of the eawes for often it happeneth that the woolle getteth into the mouthes of the lambes and they swallowe it downe and it abydethe in theyr stomacke and therof a great many doe perishe'.⁶⁴ The weaning of lambs was also a process which required extraordinary care. Lambs that are hurried too quickly onto pasture are prone to suffer from an inflammatory fever known as 'staggers' or 'The Blood'; as Fitzherbert put it, 'shepe, that hath that, wil dye sodeinly ... and the skyn wyll be ferre ruddyer, lyke blode'.⁶⁵ Sometimes there might only be an hour or so between a lamb appearing to be in perfect health and then abruptly dying, and others would quickly die from the same cause unless the shepherd acted quickly. Because of the need for careful timing of weaning, hawk-like observation, and prompt action, Youatt was at pains to point out that 'where this [disease] is found it is attributable to bad management'.⁶⁶

Two developments in particular suggest that demesne sheep received less care and attention in the century after the Black Death than they did in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. First, as the Wisbech evidence suggests, there was often an increase in the number of sheep that shepherds were expected to look after. On some estates, the increase was comparatively modest: for instance, on the bishop of Winchester's estate the average number of

⁶¹ CUL, EDR, D8/3/18-D8/4/1.

⁶² Woodward (ed.), *Farming and memorandum books*, p. 31. Later in the seventeenth century, Houghton noted that 12 sheep could be greased in a day: Trow-Smith, *History of British livestock husbandry*, p. 249.

⁶³ The flock at that time comprised 416 wethers, 8

rams, 511 ewes, and 304 yearlings. Page (ed.), *Pipe roll, 1409–10*, pp. 66–7.

⁶⁴ Youatt, *Sheep*, pp. 514–5; Oschinsky (ed.), *Walter of Henley*, pp. 338–9.

⁶⁵ Skeat (ed.), *Book of husbandry*, p. 47.

⁶⁶ Youatt, *Sheep*, p. 478.

sheep that each shepherd watched over grew by 14 per cent between 1305–6 and 1381–2. But elsewhere the change was more dramatic. For example, on five Glastonbury Abbey manors, the number of sheep per shepherd rose by 88 per cent between 1340 and 1420, while on the Hungerford manor of Heytesbury (Wilts.) there was an increase of 190 per cent between 1341 and 1379.⁶⁷ Such a reduction in labour inputs per animal, although potentially injurious to their productivity, was by no means irrational; on the contrary, given the general rise in the level of wages relative to the capital value of livestock, this was an entirely rational response to the economic conditions ushered in by the Black Death. The balance between the cost of labour and capital had probably been moving hesitantly in this direction since the late thirteenth century, but – judging by the example of Turweston (Bucks.) – it seems that it was only in the last quarter of the fourteenth century that the change in relative values gathered momentum. Here, the annual stipend of a shepherd increased from 7s. 0d. in the 1370s to 11s. 0d. in the 1390s, at the same time as the average market value of a wether dropped from about 2s. 3d. to 1s. 7d.⁶⁸

Secondly, some medieval demesnes may well have found it increasingly difficult to attract good shepherds after the Black Death. In part, this was because of the comparatively low rates of pay that they were prepared to offer in an era of labour scarcity. On the Westminster Abbey manor of Bourton on the Hill (Gloucs.), the shepherd, carters, and ploughholders had all been paid 5s. 6d. per year in the 1340s, but while the annual stipend of carters and ploughholders had increased to 16s. by the 1390s, the shepherd was paid only 10s. Notably, the bishops of Winchester must have found it almost impossible to attract and keep good shepherds, for until the last decade of the fourteenth century the cash stipend for male *famuli* on this estate was usually just 4s. 0d. a year, rising to 5s. 0d. a year at the turn of the fifteenth century.⁶⁹ While this inflexible policy on stipends perhaps enabled the Winchester estates to maintain a comparatively stable ratio of shepherds to sheep, there may well have been significant repercussions in terms of the quality of these shepherds.

In fact, if contemporary social commentators are to be believed, the efficiency of labour was generally declining in the years after the Black Death: as John Gower put it in the 1370s, ‘a short time ago one [labourer] performed more service than three do now’.⁷⁰ Where it can be gleaned, evidence from manorial records regarding the quality of shepherding bears out these complaints. The court rolls of Walsham le Willows (Suffolk), which run in a virtually continuous series for much of the fourteenth century, reveal that the lord’s shepherds were hauled before the court on several occasions between 1346 and 1397 to explain their negligence in performing important aspects of their job. For example, William Lene, ‘the master shepherd’, was in mercy in 1351 ‘because a great part of the lambs died in the preceding year as a result of his lack of supervision’. Subsequently, Walter Bonde came before the court in 1368 ‘because he tended the lord’s sheep

⁶⁷ D. Farmer, ‘The *famuli* in the later middle ages’, in R. H. Britnell and J. Hatcher (eds), *Progress and problems in medieval England: essays in honour of Edward Miller* (1996), pp. 221–2. Demesne shepherds often received extra help at lambing time, but rarely at any other time during the year.

⁶⁸ Farmer, ‘*Famuli*’, pp. 232–3; id., ‘Prices and wages’,

p. 509.

⁶⁹ Farmer, ‘*Famuli*’, pp. 231–2.

⁷⁰ E. W. Stockton (ed.), *Major Latin works of John Gower: the ‘Voice of one crying’ and the ‘Tripartite chronicle’* (1962), p. 209. See also J. Hatcher, ‘England in the aftermath of the Black Death’, *Past and Present* 144 (1994), pp. 10–19.

badly, not anointing them with salve at the proper time when necessary, and as a result their condition was greatly worsened, to the lord's great loss'.⁷¹ Evidence from the pipe rolls of the bishopric of Winchester is similarly damning. On this estate after the Black Death, sheep – especially lambs – began to die in considerable numbers from a summer disease labelled the 'Red Death' (*rubeo morbo*). The first reference to the 'Red Death' in these accounts comes in 1353, when 29 wethers and 210 lambs died at Knoyle (Wilts.), and allusions to this disease became increasingly common in the next hundred years.⁷² The seasonality, description, and victims of this disease suggest that this may have been 'The Blood'. If this was the case, it is hard to escape the conclusion that at least some of the problems with disease and productivity on the Winchester estates and elsewhere were caused, as Youatt suspected, by 'bad management'.

V

Harsh winter weather doubtless brought significant difficulties for sheep farmers in some years during the later middle ages. But in explaining the long term decline in the performance of seigniorial sheep husbandry at this time, the role of climatic change has been exaggerated. Mortality rates of demesne sheep frequently rose and fleece weights generally collapsed, but these trends seem to have been the result, primarily, of changes in flock management. Unfortunately, our knowledge of the management of medieval flocks is by no means complete. For example, we know little about the quality of wool that was shorn from demesne sheep and how this may have changed over time. Perhaps those landlords who continued to buy sheep in the later middle ages were actively seeking animals with a better quality of wool in order to secure higher prices? After all, there clearly were different breeds of sheep in medieval England, and a finer fleece could often prove more valuable than a coarser one even though it might be substantially lighter.⁷³ Nevertheless, many aspects of demesne flock management can be traced, and where trends can be discerned, these show that management changed in significant ways after the Black Death. Many of these changes were made in response to falling prices and rising costs. It may well have been the case that the clarity and speed of this response was greater on those demesnes on which sheep farming was no longer part of an integrated arable system, yet most of the examples in this essay relate to demesnes that were still engaged in mixed farming. Even on these farms, as wool prices fell, and the cost of labour and hay rose, less provision was made for feeding sheep and lambs, demesne pasture was often leased rather than being used for the lord's stock, the regular inflow of fresh stock was stemmed, and labour inputs in shepherding were reduced. Nor was it simply a matter of the quantity of inputs changing, for so too it seems did the quality of fodder, the nature of pasture that was provided, and the efficiency of labour. The relative importance of these factors presumably varied from one estate to another and from manor to manor, yet all of them were likely to have affected the productivity of sheep.

⁷¹ R. Lock (ed.), *The court rolls of Walsham le Willows, 1351–99* (Suffolk Rec. Soc., 45, 2002), pp. 37, 99. See also pp. 132, 197 in this volume, and Lock (ed.), *Court rolls of Walsham le Willows, 1303–50*, p. 293.

⁷² Stephenson, 'Productivity of medieval sheep', p. 87.

⁷³ J. P. Bischoff, "I cannot do't without counters":

fleece weights and sheep breeds in late thirteenth and early fourteenth century England', *Agricultural Hist.* 57 (1983), pp. 142–60; M. L. Ryder, 'Medieval sheep and wool types', *AgHR* 32 (1984), pp. 23–8; Stephenson, 'Productivity of medieval sheep', pp. 32–3, 127–9.

If managerial changes on demesne farms were of paramount significance in determining trends in the productivity of sheep, then it must be questioned whether these trends were replicated throughout the pastoral economy of late medieval England. We may not have data of comparable quality for the productivity of non-demesne flocks, which must have formed a large proportion of the total ovine population of England in the century after the Black Death, but several speculative points about the management of these sheep can be made. For instance, it seems unlikely that commercial peasant producers would have been able to afford to store their wool from one year to the next, so that selling old, lighter wool was hardly a realistic option for them. Some peasants had sizeable flocks, but many probably owned only a handful of sheep; indeed, among those making wills in Burwell (Cambs.) in the 1440s and 1450s were men such as John Payntor, who bequeathed four ewes, four lambs, and two other sheep, and John Rolff, who bequeathed five ewes and five lambs.⁷⁴ Smaller flocks must have been easier to observe and keep in reasonable health, and peasants and village shepherds probably had more incentive to manage their sheep with care in the later middle ages than many of their seigniorial counterparts. Access to sufficient grazing may well have been problematic for tenants at times, yet the lord of Halesowen (Worcs.) had been willing to licence numerous enclosures between 1350 and 1450, and it was only after about 1440 that the fixing of stints for pasture became commonplace in the West Midlands.⁷⁵

Nor are we entirely without plausible indications of the productivity of non-demesne sheep. For example, the ratio of ewes to lambs in the Burwell wills, which were proved in May and July respectively, suggests that villagers could achieve lambing rates of 100 per cent and keep subsequent levels of mortality to a minimum. Furthermore, zooarchaeologists report that the size of medieval sheep, as measured by the width of surviving bones from sites including Lincoln, Closegate in Newcastle, and Launceston Castle (Cornwall), hardly changed at all between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries, which is not what we would anticipate if sheep were generally as undernourished as they seem to have been on many demesnes after the Black Death.⁷⁶ More generally, even though prices of livestock and wool were affected by a wide range of factors, it might be expected – if the wool yield per fleece on every late medieval animal declined as decisively as it did on demesne farms – that the value of wool would rise relative to the cost of a sheep.⁷⁷ However, as Figure 9 shows, the relative price of wool in fact remained remarkably stable in the century after the Black Death.

Stephenson was very keen to demonstrate that the management of medieval sheep was far from primitive.⁷⁸ The evidence presented in this essay suggests that while medieval flock management could be extremely good, the quality of management and the level of care depended to a great extent on economic circumstances. This plainly had consequences for the productivity of livestock, but it also illustrates the broader point that – by making decisions about the most

⁷⁴ Northeast (ed.), *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, pp. 58, 397–8.

⁷⁵ C. Dyer, 'Farming practice and techniques: the West Midlands', in Miller (ed.), *Agrarian History*, III, pp. 226, 238.

⁷⁶ S. J. M. Davis and J. V. Beckett, 'Animal husbandry and agricultural improvement: the archaeological evidence from animal bones and teeth', *Rural Hist.* 10

(1999), pp. 10–12.

⁷⁷ For a similar use of animal and product prices as an indicator of productivity, see M. Overton, *Agricultural revolution in England: the transformation of the agrarian economy, 1500–1850* (1996), pp. 115–6.

⁷⁸ Stephenson, 'Productivity of medieval sheep', pp. 44, 49, 79, 88–9, 257.

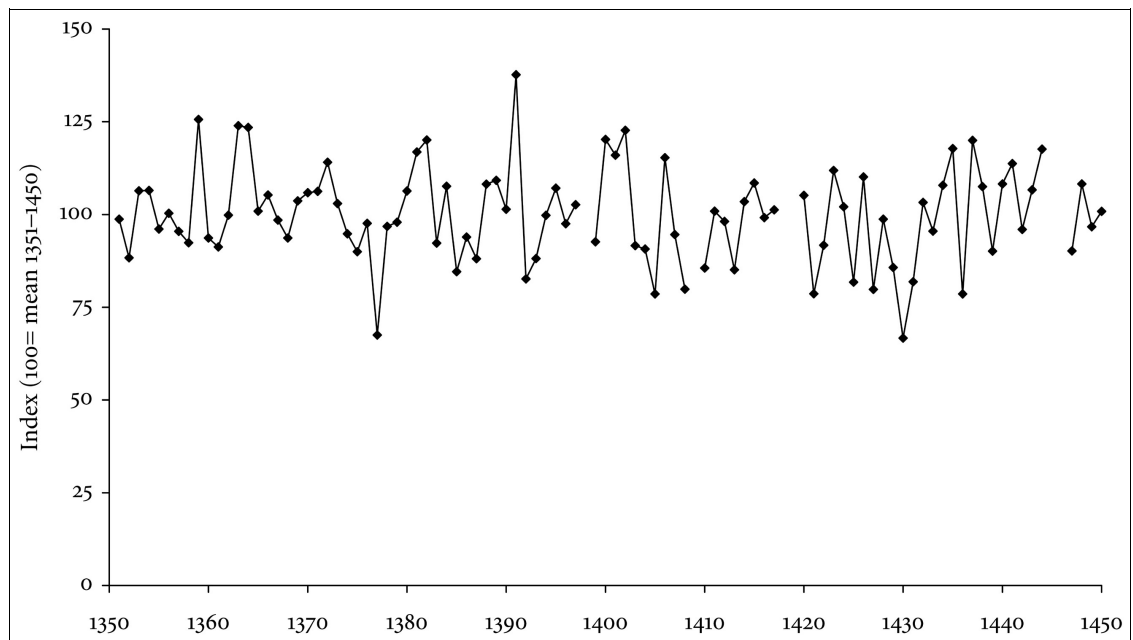


FIGURE 9. Index of wool prices relative to the price of wethers, 1351–1450.

Source: Farmer, 'Prices and wages', pp. 508–14.

profitable level of inputs to use – commercial farmers often chose not to maximize yields. The implications of this are by no means restricted to medieval pastoral husbandry, for historians of all periods tend to rely on yields as a means of assessing agricultural progress or backwardness. Those seeking indications of agricultural or managerial progress are usually drawn to periods of rising productivity, perhaps most strikingly in the ongoing debate about the timing of the agricultural revolution. Conversely, low and declining yields are frequently thought to be symptomatic of technological inadequacy or ecological crisis, as in the early fourteenth century. But the evidence of late medieval sheep farming – and indeed the discretionary adoption of arable techniques such as weeding, manuring, marling, and legume cultivation during the middle ages and beyond – demonstrates that yields are an inadequate guide to either progress or crisis. Medieval and early modern farmers were perfectly capable of producing high yields, but only when they found it in their interests to do so.⁷⁹ For many, low yields were in fact the result of rational choice; techniques for raising productivity were known, but were simply abandoned or used less intensively as economic circumstances deteriorated. As one Essex farmer put it in the late nineteenth century, making wheat pay at depression prices was 'no mystery at all': the key was to produce only 'fairly good' crops 'at a minimum of cost'.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ See, for example, Stone, 'Medieval farm management'; and P. Glennie, 'Continuity and change in Hertfordshire agriculture, 1550–1700, II: trends in crop yields and their determinants', *AgHR* 36 (1988), pp. 145–61.

⁸⁰ E. H. Hunt and S. J. Pam, 'Managerial failure in late Victorian Britain? Land use and English agriculture', *EcHR* 54 (2001), p. 259.

GOLDEN JUBILEE PRIZE ESSAY

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‘... subjects deserving of the highest praise’: farmers’ wives and the farm economy in England, c. 1700–1850

by Nicola Verdon

Abstract

The farmer’s wife remains one of the most elusive figures in agrarian history. Her labour on the farm (and in the farmhouse) was largely unpaid, and therefore unrecorded. Historians have acknowledged the contribution made by farmers’ wives, but no attempt has yet been made to examine in detail the whole range of tasks usually undertaken by them and the value attached to this work. This article seeks to redress this neglect. Using a range of agricultural literature (farming manuals, encyclopaedias, journals and tours), it will be argued that the position of the farmer’s wife depended on status and region, and whilst some women had withdrawn from active participation in the farm economy by the early nineteenth century, this trend should not be overstated.

It is common practice among them, on marriage, to give to their wives what is called *pin-money*: this consists of poultry, pigs and the whole produce of the dairy; with which supply the wife is expected to clothe and (exclusive of bread, corn and other vegetables) support the whole household: and here it is but common justice to say, that the industry and attention to business of the farmers’ wives and daughters ... are subjects deserving of the highest praise.¹

In recent years women’s work has emerged from the margins of agricultural history. Several studies examining the work performed by female day labourers and farm servants in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been produced.² But despite this upsurge in

¹ Charles Vancouver, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Devon* (London, 1808), p. 112.

² See for example, Joyce Burnette, ‘Laborers 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; Judy Gielgud, ‘Nineteenth-century farm women in Northumberland and Cumbria: the neglected workforce’ (DPhil thesis, University of Sussex, 1992); Celia Miller, ‘The hidden

workforce: female fieldworkers in Gloucestershire, 1870–1901’, *Southern Hist.* 6 (1984), pp. 139–161; Pamela Sharpe, ‘The female labour market in English agriculture during the Industrial Revolution: expansion or contraction?’, *AgHR* 47 (1999), pp. 161–181; Helen V. Speechley, ‘Female and child agricultural day labourers in Somerset, c. 1685–1870’ (PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 1999); Nicola Verdon, *Rural women workers in nineteenth-century England: gender, work and wages* (2002).

interest, a group of women workers who carried out a wide range of tasks on the farm and in the farmhouse remain elusive: the wives of farmers. Was the farmer's wife the frivolous character caustically condemned in the 1820s by William Cobbett as the 'Mistress within', delighting in the showy decorations of her newly refurbished parlour and overseeing the education of her children into 'young ladies and gentlemen'?³ Or was she a business partner, directing certain departments of the farm economy with 'so large a portion of skill, of frugality, cleanliness, industry, and good management ... that without them the farmer may be materially injured', as one of Cobbett's contemporaries proposed?⁴ In reality, her productivity spanned the whole spectrum from the tirelessly hard-working companion to the genteel, leisured spouse. Farmers' wives were, and remain, a remarkably diverse group in rural society. The scale and character of their labour in the period 1700 to 1850 was influenced by many factors: status, income, farm size, location and type were all important. These need to be understood in much more detail before the enduring generalizations about farmers' wives can be dismantled and remodelled. The intention of this article then, is to open a debate on farmers' wives, and point to future areas of research.

The labour of the farmer's wife has not received the same attention as other rural women workers, but it has not been entirely neglected. Overviews of gender and work in England since 1700 include sections on the farmer's wife, although analysis of her work is rather cursory. Bridget Hill highlights the changing role of the farmer's wife as farms became larger and began specialising in corn production after the mid-eighteenth century. Increasing distaste for manual labour and its association with necessity encouraged farmers' wives to distance themselves from direct involvement in the farm business and cultivate an urbane lifestyle and outlook. According to Hill, this process occurred earlier in the south and east and 'only later' permeated the northern counties.⁵ Robert Shoemaker also examines how shifting agricultural practices (such as the decline of farm service and the increasing commercialisation of dairying) 'largely eliminated' key activities undertaken by farmers' wives, although he also warns that as most of the evidence for this shift comes from the south and east 'we should not exaggerate this change'.⁶ Both authors draw upon Ivy Pinchbeck's pioneering 1930 study of the impact of the industrial revolution on women's work. Pinchbeck cites farmers' wives as a classic example of rural women who lost their productive functions over the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. On large farms in south-eastern England, which increasingly turned to profitable arable production, the dairy was no longer run as a business concern, farmers' wives turned domestic duties over to indoor servants and thus 'tended to withdraw from an active participation in affairs'.⁷ On the large dairy enterprises of the south-west, Pinchbeck believed that the farmer's wife was no longer willing to take on the laborious work involved, resulting in dairies being let to specialised dairymen. '... the control of what had hitherto been entirely a woman's trade', she argues, 'began to be transferred to men'.⁸

³ William Cobbett, *Rural rides* (1830, 1985 edn), p. 229.

⁴ J. C. Loudon, *An encyclopaedia of agriculture* (sec. edn, London, 1831), p. 1036.

⁵ Bridget Hill, *Women, work and sexual politics in eighteenth-century England* (1989, 1994 edn), p. 52.

⁶ Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English society, 1650–1850: the emergence of separate spheres?* (1998), p. 157. For similar views see Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds between:*

historical perspective on gender and class (1995), ch. 5. Pamela Horn also draws attention to the continuing importance of the labour of farmers' wives throughout the nineteenth century in many areas of England. See Pamela Horn, *Victorian Countrywomen* (1991), ch. 5.

⁷ Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750–1850* (1930, 1981 edn), p. 33.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Dairying, of course, has a separate literature of its own, and although much of this concentrates on structural and technological change at both the national and local level, the position of women in the industry has also received attention.⁹ Deborah Valenze sees the dairy as a contested area of power in the late eighteenth century. On large dairy farms capital investment in machinery changed the balance of the workforce and eroded the traditional role performed by the farmer's wife. For Valenze, the withdrawal of women from the dairy was not instigated by women's distaste for work, but by the increasing commercialization of the industry. As male managers and factors assumed control over the industry 'authority came from above and the autonomy of women was clearly circumscribed'.¹⁰ Sally McMurray, in contrast, finds 'a substantial element of continuity' in women's participation in cheese making in England. She argues that farmers' wives were closely involved in the cheese making process throughout the nineteenth century. Even where assistants were hired, farmers' wives 'supervised production scrupulously'. Moreover, because these activities were economically valuable, the farmer's wife was afforded an elevated status in the farm household and wider community.¹¹

Dairying though was just one facet of work for the farmer's wife. No detailed recent study has attempted to analyse the whole range of her activities on the farm and in the farmhouse in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Rural sociologists, agricultural economists and feminist geographers have produced much insightful and stimulating work on the gendered nature of farm relations and identities in Britain, North America and the Antipodes in the late twentieth century, but historically the farmer's wife remains an obscure and fragmentary figure.¹² Lack of documentary sources accounts for this neglect. Because female farm servants and day labourers were engaged and paid by an employer, records of their employment contracts, work patterns and wage rates have survived, enabling historians to reconstruct their daily working lives. But the work carried out by farmers' wives is left largely unrecorded. Although it is generally recognised that the farmer's wife made an important economic contribution to the farm business through her work, because it was mostly unpaid, assessing the quantity and value of that work is very difficult.

Farm records offer little insight into the labour input of the farmer's family. Labour and wage account books were often kept to record information about the paid workforce employed on large farms. Farms which hinged on the unpaid labour of various family members (with only

⁹ G. E. Fussell, *The English dairy farmer, 1500–1900* (1966); David Taylor, 'The English dairy industry, 1860–1930', *EcHR* 29 (1976), pp. 585–601; David Taylor, 'Growth and structural change in the English dairy industry, c. 1860–1930', *AgHR* 35 (1987), pp. 47–64; Charles F. Foster, *Cheshire cheese and farming in the north-west in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (1998).

¹⁰ Deborah Valenze, 'The art of women and the business of men: women's work and the dairy industry, c. 1740–1840', *Past and Present* 130 (1991), p. 166.

¹¹ Sally McMurray, 'Women's work in agriculture: divergent trends in England and America, 1800 to 1930', *Comparative Studies in Society and Hist.* 34 (1992), pp. 252, 257.

¹² See, for example, Berit Brandth and Marit Haugen, 'Rural women, feminism and the politics of identity',

Sociologia Ruralis 37 (1997), pp. 325–344; Ruth Gasson, *Farm work by farmers' wives* (1989); id., 'Roles of women on farms: a pilot study', *J. Agricultural Economics* 32 (1981), pp. 11–20; Jo Little and Patricia Austin, 'Women and the rural idyll', *J. Rural Studies* 12 (1996), pp. 101–111; Carol Morris and Nick Evans, '"Cheese makers are always women": gendered representations of farm life in the agricultural press', *Gender, Place and Culture* 8 (2001), pp. 375–390; D. Symes and T. Marsden, 'Complementary roles and asymmetrical lives: farmers' wives in a large farm environment', *Sociologia Ruralis* 23 (1983), pp. 229–241; Elizabeth Kenworthy Teather, 'Farm women in Canada, New Zealand and Australia redefine their rurality', *J. Rural Studies* 12 (1996), pp. 1–14; Sarah Whatmore, *Farming women: gender, work and family enterprise* (1991).

occasional outside assistance) had little need to keep similar records.¹³ Few farmers' wives left diaries. Moreover, those diaries that have survived vary widely in their content and utility. Whilst the Norfolk journal of Mary Hardy, covering the years 1773 to 1808, is a valuable description of the work carried out by Mary, her husband, their labourers and servants, the most famous and well-read late eighteenth-century account, *The Diary of Anne Hughes*, is likely to be fictitious.¹⁴ Of more immediate use is the wide range of agricultural literature produced in the period after 1700. This took several forms including practical farming manuals, tours and views of the different farming regions of the country, encyclopaedias and dictionaries of farming and rural affairs, as well as agricultural journals.¹⁵ This evidence is of variable quality and does not offer a complete representation of the farm business. Nor is it possible to claim that these sources are new and undiscovered by historians. Pinchbeck, Valenze and McMurray all use this material to reinforce their arguments. But surprisingly these sources have not been systematically analysed. They remain one of the few avenues available to reconstruct the work performed by farmers' wives over a long time-span. They also reveal, implicitly and explicitly, information about contemporary attitudes towards the work of farmers' wives. The evidence presented in this article establishes the types of labour normally undertaken by farmers' wives in the eighteenth century. This work was crucial to the farm economy. How far the nature and value of this labour changed over time will then be assessed. This will show that women did experience major dislocation in their working lives, but that the removal of farmers' wives from farm productivity by the mid-nineteenth century has been overstated. Indeed, it is the continuities in the work patterns of farmers' wives between 1700 and 1850 that are striking.

I

A number of advice manuals printed in the eighteenth century were aimed specifically at the farmer's wife (or country housewife). Part one of Richard Bradley's *The Country Housewife and Lady's Director* was first published in 1727 as an accompaniment to his tract of the previous year, *The Country Gentleman and Farmer's Monthly Director*. It follows the pattern of a monthly digest, outlining 'what is necessary to be done every month by the mistress of a farm'.¹⁶ William Ellis' *The Country Housewife's Family Companion* appeared in 1750, and in 1780 an anonymous publication entitled *The Farmer's Wife: or Complete County Housewife* was issued, containing 'full and plain' instructions to 'teach the farmer's wife, with satisfaction, how to love the happy

¹³ M. E. Turner, J. V. Beckett and B. Afton, *Farm production in England, 1700–1914* (2001), ch. 2.

¹⁴ Basil Cozens-Hardy (ed.), *Mary Hardy's diary* (Norfolk Record Soc., 37, 1968); Anne Hughes, *The diary of a farmer's wife, 1796–1797* (1981). This journal was first published in the *Farmers Weekly* in the 1930s. The material was arranged by Jeanne Preston from Anne Hughes' 'boke', which was read to Preston in childhood by an elderly acquaintance. The original manuscript has not survived. For reviews which question the authenticity of the diary, see G. H. Bunting, 'Did Anne Hughes exist?', *Local Historian* 14 (1980), pp. 168–9; Marghanita Laski,

'Down on the farm', *County Life*, 28 Aug. 1980, pp. 726–7; 'Another diary of a nobody', *Private Eye*, 4 Dec. 1981, p. 25.

¹⁵ Nicholas Goddard, 'Agricultural literature and societies' in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, VI, 1750–1850 (1989), pp. 361–83.

¹⁶ Richard Bradley, *The country gentleman and farmer's monthly director* (London, 1726), p. 101; id., *The country housewife and lady's director* (1736, 1980 edn). Parts I and II were first published in 1727 and 1732 respectively, and brought together as one edition in 1736.

country life'.¹⁷ These works had particular audiences in mind. Bradley's intended readers were prosperous and ambitious farming families. He believed that a farmer generating three to four hundred pounds a year 'may have everything about him, and live as elegantly as a gentleman of eight hundred pounds a year, if he does but know the use that may be made out of every thing under his care'.¹⁸ Ellis based his writing on a wider remit, drawing upon the current practices of 'the country gentleman's, the yeoman's, the farmer's, the labourers' wives' of his native Hertfordshire, whilst *The Farmer's Wife* was directed specifically 'to the use of the wives of our honest country farmers', although the author imagined that the advice contained within would also be helpful to 'women who move in other spheres of life'.¹⁹ Other writers such as John Mortimer, Thomas Hale and Arthur Young, whilst offering practical advice on farming operations and livestock management in general, also include suggestions for those departments of the business run by the farmer's wife. Whilst this evidence is empirical and partial, taken together it provides a useful way to analyse the range of pursuits carried out by the farmer's wife in the eighteenth century.

The labour performed by husbands and wives on farms in the eighteenth century was complimentary but distinct. In the introduction to his *Country Housewife* Bradley describes the division of male and female tasks as follows:

The art of oeconomy is divided ... between the men and the women; the men have the most dangerous and laborious share of it in the fields, and without doors, and the women have the care and management of every business within doors, and to see after the good ordering of whatever is belonging to the house.²⁰

Women were not narrowly confined to the farmhouse however, as those sections that 'belonged' to the house, and therefore the wife, included the kitchen garden, the dairy, and the farmyard. The range of activities covered in the *Country Housewife* can be generally divided into three elements. Firstly, the types of seasonal foodstuffs that could be easily grown on the farm and useful methods for pickling, preserving and cooking them, or making wine from them, are detailed. Secondly the manufacture of butter and cheeses in the dairy, and finally, rearing of pigs, hens and other poultry in the farmyard, and the ways their produce could be used, are described.

Most space is devoted to food processing, a subject which is also covered in great detail in other texts. This underlines the importance of the wife's duty to manage the farm household. She would have spent much of her day preparing provisions for the kitchen table, not only to feed the family but also any servants and labourers that were housed or fed on the farm. To do so from as much homegrown produce as possible was considered sound housewifery. Bradley argued that it was possible for a farmer to have 'everything at home, and set out a table fit for a prince, without being beholden to the markets'.²¹ Similarly Ellis believed that buying bread, bacon or pickled pork was 'ill housewifery' when they could be conveniently produced at home. Ellis extended his concept of good housekeeping to the brewing of beer at home 'where

¹⁷ William Ellis, *The country housewife's family companion* (London, 1750); Anon., *The farmer's wife; or complete country housewife* (London, c. 1780), quote taken from frontpiece.

¹⁸ Bradley, *Country gentleman*, p. 102.

¹⁹ Ellis, *Country housewife's companion*, frontpiece; Anon., *Farmer's wife*, preface.

²⁰ Bradley, *Country housewife*, pp. vii–viii.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

convenience will allow it'.²² *The Farmer's Wife* also included full details on brewing beer, although the author understood that it was not the 'immediate business' of the farmer's wife to preside over the process of domestic brewing by that time. However, it was considered 'highly proper that she should be qualified to give ample direction to her servants'.²³ Arranging and supervising the daily work routines of servants was a key aspect of the wife's management skills and could, as Ellis puts it, influence the profits of the farm, 'for according to their management they may be made either serviceable or unserviceable'.²⁴ David Henry warned that female farm servants 'required no less attention in hiring than the men', and should not be hired if they had previously worked in gentlemen's or tradesmen's houses as 'they will always be complaining of the hardships she meets with ... tho' the farmer's business will be but half done'.²⁵ Finally, as part of the self-sufficiency of the farm household economy, the farmer's wife was also expected to possess knowledge of basic medicines and remedies. This wisdom was valuable to families and neighbours alike and suggests the wider benevolent village role accorded to some farmers' wives. 'This piece of good housewifery in many of the abler sort of good women', Ellis writes, 'is happily experienced, not only by their own families, but also by many of their poor neighbours, who are unable to provide such cordial remedies'.²⁶

The connection between the farmer's wife and the dairy was seen as central and natural in the eighteenth century. Ellis thought that to ignore the advantages of keeping dairy cows in a book entitled the *Country Housewife* would render him a 'preposterous author' because the production of 'milk, cream, butter, cheese, and the management of them, generally belongs to and comes under the woman's province'.²⁷ The authority and specialist abilities acquired by farmers' wives in the dairy were widely acknowledged. Indeed John Mortimer, whose *Whole Art of Husbandry* was first published in 1707, presumed women's knowledge in this area to be innate; he thought it unnecessary to 'mention anything about the making of butter and cheese, because most good housewives are acquainted with the way of doing it'.²⁸ This attitude had shifted by the time Bradley was writing. Although female skills were still recognised, it was argued that products could be improved, and profits enhanced, if dairy procedures were reported and followed more widely. Bradley wrote in defence of including instructions for the dairy in his work:

... many farmers might have twice the benefit from their dairies, if the articles of butter and cheese were consider'd in a rational way, and the old custom could be broke through; and, moreover, if the best rules for managing of the dairy were known, and put into practice, the whole country would be the better for it, every one might have the benefit of good things: whereas for want of knowledge among some farmers, their goods are of small value, and the people are also dissatisfied.²⁹

²² Ellis, *Country housewife's companion*, p. vi.

²³ Anon, *Farmer's wife*, preface. Judith Bennett argues that as brewing became a specialised trade in the seventeenth century, men usurped the previously dominant position of women. Women's role in domestic brewing may have persisted longer however, as these eighteenth-century texts suggest. Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, beer and brewsters in England: women's work in a changing world, 1300–1600* (1996). My thanks to Jane Whittle for this

information.

²⁴ Ellis, *Country housewife's companion*, p. vii.

²⁵ David Henry, *The complete English farmer* (London, 1771), p. 69.

²⁶ Ellis, *Country housewife's companion*, p. viii.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

²⁸ John Mortimer, *The whole art of husbandry* (London, 1707, fourth edn, 1721), p. 228.

²⁹ Bradley, *Country housewife*, p. 88.

The Country Housewife therefore offers advice on regulating the temperature of the dairy, the correct way to make rennet, curd and a variety of English cheeses, and on making butter. Later writers expand on Bradley's short instructions. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the directions provided by Hale for the successful running of the dairy are comprehensive, with dairy work being viewed as complex, skilled and laborious. Like Bradley, Hale did not presume to 'take up her time' in familiarising farmers' wives with the routine procedures of the dairy, but he was keen to 'acquaint her how she shall do it to the greatest advantage'.³⁰

On farms where the dairy was small and an adjunct to the farmhouse ('generally some cool part in the lowest apartment of the house'), the farmer's wife herself was expected to perform all the usual labour of the dairy.³¹ The produce would have been mainly for home consumption, but any surplus goods would have been sold to neighbours or taken to market. This can be seen in diary entries made by the Lancashire clergyman and farmer Peter Walkden. Four cows were kept on his 40-acre farm and their milk was utilised to feed the household of eight. Walkden's wife Catherine took any excess butter to market in Preston. In February 1733 for example, he notes, 'Set my Love, and son John out towards Preston with a pot of butter, on ye mare, and I gave my Love 1s. 6d. in silver with her to buy what she had occasion for, if she sell no butter'.³² It was generally agreed that one woman could milk and process the liquid of up to ten cows. If a larger herd was kept, help was required. Dairymaids were employed on long-term contracts to assist with the production of butter and cheese. They were also expected to milk, although on some farms day workers, both male and female, did the milking. The size of dairy herds grew over the course of the eighteenth century. William Marshall considered a 20-cow farm 'middling' size in late eighteenth-century Warwickshire, with up to 50 cows being kept on some farms in the county.³³ Larger dairies though were found in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Cheshire. Specialisation also increased. Milk dairies were situated on the outskirts of large towns. Dairies near London began specialising in butter production for the metropolitan market, whilst cheese dairies were found in western counties. Spacious accommodation was constructed for these dairies.

On large dairy farms the role of the farmer's wife became supervisory, although it was not unusual for her to assist with the customary work of the dairy alongside the servants. Marshall described this practice in 1789:

The management or immediate superintendence of a large dairy, especially one of which cheese is the principal object, is not a light concern. It requires much thought and much labour. The whole of the former, and much of the latter necessarily falls on the immediate superintendent; who, though she may have her assistants, sees or ought to see herself, to every stage of the business; and performs, or ought to perform, the more difficult operations.³⁴

The control and management skills of the farmer's wife were therefore the decisive factors in securing the prosperity of a large dairy. Arthur Young believed that unless a farmer 'has a very diligent and industrious wife, who sees minutely to her dairy ... he will assuredly lose money

³⁰ Thomas Hale, *A compleat body of husbandry* (London, 1756), p. 562.

³¹ Henry, *Complete English farmer*, p. 23.

³² Chipping Local History Society (trans.), *A Diary from January 1733 to March 1734 written by the Reverend*

Peter Walkden (2000), p. 4.

³³ William Marshall, *Rural economy of the Midlands counties* (2 vols, London, 1790), I, p. 349.

³⁴ William Marshall, *Rural economy of Gloucestershire* (2 vols, Gloucester, 1789), I, p. 263.

by his dairy'.³⁵ Cleanliness, diligence and industry were also of primary importance inside the dairy. These were seen as feminine attributes, but dairy work was far from easy. Excessively long hours (especially during the peak months of May, June and July) and heavy manual labour (notably turning and pressing heavy cheeses weighing up to 120lbs) turned the dairy into 'a manufactory – a workshop – and, in truth, a place of hard work'.³⁶ Although men fed, tended and maintained the dairy herd, the farmer's wife was also expected to possess knowledge of the stock and its management. Hale urged the farmer's wife to have 'in her mind in the purchase' the amount of milk a cow was likely to produce and 'whether she be gently and kind'. If the cow were of an 'unruly disposition' Hale believed its value could be halved.³⁷

Is it possible to put a price on the work of the farmer's wife in the eighteenth-century dairy? Hale calculated that a cow could, on average, yield a gallon and a half of milk per session, enough for one quart of cream or a pound of butter. 'It will not be difficult, from this modest estimate', he contended, 'to compute what the industrious and careful housewife will make of a good number of cows'.³⁸ An observation on the profits of dairy cows from the 1760s offers a more precise estimate. In 1763 it was shown that a cow produced milk, butter and cheese for family use totalling £2 6s. 2d. in market prices. Cheese for sale worth £1 17s. 1½d. was produced, along with two yearlings and two suckling cows sold at 17s. 6d. and 3s. 10½d. Altogether a cow's produce was worth £5 4s. 8d. per year, although expenses for feed and management of £1 1s. 7d. had to be deducted.³⁹ This experiment was conducted by an agriculturist with a small herd of four cows. Interestingly he believed that 'a notable farmer's wife would have made £5 per cow', and was conscious of the difference between a dairy 'kept merely for convenience' and a farmer's dairy, where 'their wives are constantly at the elbow of the maid'.⁴⁰ Similar accounts of the profits from specialist cheese and butter dairies from the 1790s confirm that high levels of returns could be made, although these also underplay the constant care, labour and superintendence needed of the farmer's wife to make a success of these enterprises.⁴¹

Pigs were considered a profitable appendage to the dairy, and therefore came under the jurisdiction of the farmer's wife. There were regional differences in the number of hogs kept on farms. On his tour of northern England, published in 1770, Young found that on average ten cows maintained three hogs, whilst in the eastern counties he discovered that at least one pig per cow was kept.⁴² Pigs were seen as a beneficial addition to the farmyard because they could be fed on waste products from dairy, kitchen and barn. Ellis explains,

³⁵ Arthur Young, *Farmer's kalendar* (London, 1771, 1973 edn), p. 164. Both Young and Marshall thought an experienced dairymaid was capable of this role, but supervision should not be left to common servants.

³⁶ Marshall, *Gloucestershire*, I, p. 273.

³⁷ Hale, *Husbandry*, p. 555.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 557.

³⁹ 'An Answer to *Ruricola Glocesteris* in which is contained an estimate of the expenses and profit of a dairy of four cows by "Y"', *Museum Rusticum et Commerciale*, (6 vols, 1763–66), IV, pp. 274–287.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

⁴¹ Profits from Mr Aby's butter farm at Epping were

£8 6s. 0d. per cow, whilst a dairy of 20 cows in 1797 (mainly producing cheese) made a profit of £252 10s. 0d. or £5 13s. 5d. per cow. Both accounts are reported in R. W. Dickson, *Practical agriculture* (2 vols, London, 1807), II, pp. 528, 543.

⁴² Arthur Young, *Six month tour through the north of England* (4 vols, London, 1770), IV, p. 316; Arthur Young, *Farmer's tour through the east of England* (4 vols, London, 1771), I, p. 294. In late eighteenth-century Cheshire the number of pigs kept was very small as whey, butter-milk and fleetings from the dairy was given to servants and cottagers. Thomas Wedge, 'Butter and milk in Cheshire', *Annals of Agriculture*, 28 (1797), p. 17.

As there is one or more sows generally kept in a farm yard, I think it may be said the inspection and care of her belongs to our county housewife when she has pig'd ... as she makes wash from her kitchen, skim milk from her dairy, and grains from her brewings, she has here an opportunity for putting them to a profitable use by feeding her sow with them, and fattening her pigs with the greatest expedition.⁴³

As has already been mentioned, the meat products of pigs were an essential element of the farmhouse diet. Hogs were usually fattened on buckwheat or peas, ready for killing in the winter. As their flesh could be salted and pickled by the farmer's wife, it 'may be eat in the spring when other meat is at the dearest'.⁴⁴ Like dairy produce, pig flesh was also a marketable commodity and an income-source for farmers' wives: at the end of the eighteenth century estimates of the profits per cow made by maintaining hogs range from 18s. *od.* to 25s. *od.*⁴⁵

Writers in the eighteenth century were also keen to promote the advantages of bee keeping.⁴⁶ Whilst Bradley encouraged farmers to keep bees so that their wives could make mead from the honey, the author of *The Farmer's Wife* supposed that the management of bees fell 'more immediately within the province of the country housewife'.⁴⁷ The work involved in tending these insects required 'considerable attendance' on the part of women, 'in order to make them turn to the best account', and it was advised that beehives should be constructed near the farmhouse so 'that it may be convenient' for the wife 'to pay proper attention to them'.⁴⁸ Although it is difficult to estimate the profits attainable from bee-keeping, according to Hale, the produce of bees – wax and honey – were 'always marketable, and always bear a considerable price', as well as being useful to the family.⁴⁹

Despite the value pigs and bees could bring to the farmhouse economy, the animal which is most often connected with the work of the farmer's wife, and which has the most space devoted to its management in the eighteenth-century literature, is the domestic fowl. As Ellis put it, 'Poultry and their eggs come more immediately under the care and management of our country housewife, than any other outward part of the farmer's business'.⁵⁰ Instructions on poultry-keeping are copious and show that farmers' wives were expected to have an understanding of the construction of hen-houses, which breeds to purchase, how to encourage breeding and laying, feeding and setting, caring for hatched birds, fattening for market and identifying common diseases of birds. Hens were seen as the most undemanding fowls for farmers' wives to keep, 'feeding at the best upon the scatterings of the barn, with little assistance'. Hens were therefore a stock 'the poorest may keep and such as the richest need not to neglect', whereas turkeys were bred with difficulty, ranged in the open country, laid their eggs in hedges and fields and neglected their young.⁵¹ Geese though, with enough land and water, produced little trouble or expense, and were 'productive of three different kinds of profit, viz. that of their

⁴³ Ellis, *Country housewife's companion*, p. 124.

⁴⁴ Mortimer, *Husbandry*, p. 247.

⁴⁵ See Dickson, *Practical agriculture*, pp. 528, 543; Thomas Brown, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Derby* (London, 1794), p. 26.

⁴⁶ See, for example, William Ellis, *The modern husbandman, or, the practice of farming* (4 vols, London, 1744), IV, p. 178; Young, *Farmer's kalendar*, p. 170; Wil-

liam Hogg, *The new complete English farmer* (London, c. 1780), p. 86.

⁴⁷ Anon., *Farmer's wife*, preface.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁴⁹ Hale, *Husbandry*, p. 255.

⁵⁰ Ellis, *County housewife's companion*, p. 152.

⁵¹ Hale, *Husbandry*, p. 233.

feathers, their flesh and their grease'.⁵² Ducks, pigeons and doves were also recommended, but swans, peacocks, pheasants and partridges were seen as too 'troublesome and chargeable' for the farmer's wife to keep profitably, and were more suited to country gentlemen for amusement rather than gain.⁵³ Like other produce, eggs and poultry meat furnished the farmhouse kitchen and was sold at market. In 1756 Hale advised those farmers' wives who lived within easy distance of London to rear as many fowls as possible as there was 'a constant and good market throughout the whole year, for one kind or other ...', but those who resided in more isolated regions should only keep enough birds for family use and to sell to neighbours.⁵⁴ Although the remuneration generated through poultry rearing is not specified in these texts, that these earnings formed an important part of the farmer's wife's purse is axiomatic:

... many farmers think it their interest to let their wives have all the profit of their eggs and poultry, for raising money to buy what we call common or trivial necessities in the house ... which piece of encouragement engages our housewife and her maid-servants to take special care of feeding her poultry in due time, setting her hens early, and making capons at a proper age.⁵⁵

Other tasks performed by the farmer's wife feature less prominently in the sources, but this does not mean they were any less important. Hale includes instructions for carding, greasing and spinning wool, as the 'mistress of the house naturally undertakes the office of preparing the wool for her family clothing'.⁵⁶ Female servants were also expected to undertake 'carding, spinning and other housewifery business' after their usual duties in the dairy, farmhouse or fields were completed, under the watchful eye of the farmer's wife.⁵⁷ However, agricultural literature is clearly not all-inclusive in its exposition of the duties of the eighteenth-century farmer's wife. Although some texts devote many pages to food preparation, they have little to say about other everyday domestic duties: cleaning the farmhouse, washing the clothing and linen, nursing and minding the children. Instead, diaries can sometimes reveal the more varied enterprises undertaken by the wives of many small farmers. In 1733 for example, Catherine Walkden stacked hay and sheared oats alongside her husband in July and August and fetched the wheat flour from the local miller in December, as well as her usual duties in the home, dairy and at market.⁵⁸ Mary Hardy, who lived with her husband and three children on a 50-acre farm and brewery in Norfolk, picked fruit, set peas and beans, made cheese, directed parts of the brewing industry, surveyed the crops with her husband and washed, cooked and baked alongside her female servants.⁵⁹ The hiring and firing of these servants also fell to Mary. In January 1779 she 'Turned both the maids away for raking with fellows and other misde-meaners', whilst in May 1797 her servant Hannah Dagliss was dismissed for 'leaving the back house door unbard for the chimney sweep and then was saucy'.⁶⁰ Mary often fed the labourers in the farmhouse, including a Christmas dinner for all workers and their wives.⁶¹ She also

⁵² Anon., *Farmer's wife*, p. 19.

⁵³ Mortimer, *Husbandry*, p. 265; Hale, *Husbandry*, p. 245.

⁵⁴ Hale, *Husbandry*, p. 234.

⁵⁵ Ellis, *Country housewife's companion*, p. 152.

⁵⁶ Hale, *Husbandry*, p. 591.

⁵⁷ Thomas Wedge, *General view of the agriculture of the county palatine of Cheshire* (London, 1794), p. 60.

⁵⁸ Chipping Local History Society (trans.), *Walkden Diary*, pp. 186, 215, 356.

⁵⁹ Cozens-Hardy (ed.), 'Mary Hardy's diary', pp. 52, 15, 87, 78.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 95.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 26–7, 63–4, 91, 105–7, 109, 113–5, 121.

entertained friends and callers, took an active part in social activities, went on holiday and attended church. Mary Hardy was certainly not an isolated, ill-informed or idle farmer's wife.

The daily work-round of an eighteenth-century farmer's wife varied according to status, means and locality, but her activities – be they supervisory or manual – were seen as indispensable. On small farms, the farmer's wife undertook a wide range of jobs indoors, in the farmyard and fields, as well as at market, as illustrated by the examples of Catherine Walkden and Mary Hardy. On the larger, wealthier farmsteads, such as those Bradley writes about, wives were still required to possess knowledge of the dairy, poultry and pigs, and show culinary expertise in the farmhouse kitchen. However, during the 1780s and 1790s commentators perceived a conspicuous new trend, with farmers' wives becoming increasingly reluctant to take part in key productive tasks. This apparent desire on the part of women to disengage themselves from the farm business was most visible on large dairy and arable farms, where farm income was healthy enough to maintain a non-working wife.

II

By the turn of the nineteenth century, some areas of England traditionally associated with dairying began to abandon this venture in favour of more profitable enterprises. In Warwickshire farmers had given dairies up 'finding they can make more of their pastures by feeding cattle and sheep, than by keeping cows for making cheese and butter, and rearing young cattle'.⁶² Similar changes were underway in other counties, but they were more firmly linked to the growing reluctance of farmers' wives to perform their regular roles. On the large dairy farms of the south-west, the practice of letting dairies to specialist dairymen was much discussed by observers.⁶³ Although this was not a new phenomenon, late eighteenth-century writers viewed it as such, believing it was a novel solution to compensate for the withdrawal of farmers' wives from dairy work. By 1812 William Stevenson could write about Dorset:

The dairy and cheese-making processes are too servile employments for the wives of the large farmers, and indeed it would be absurd to suppose the wives or daughters of a man possessed of property to the amount of £10 or £15,000 would engage in the drudgery of the dairy. Some of the farmers let as many as a hundred dairy cows to three or four dairy men; and in the last century it is probable that the labour of such a dairy was performed by half a dozen farmers' wives who deemed it no drudgery, while they were permitted to consume a part of the produce.⁶⁴

In Middlesex dairying had made way for grazing and suckling calves, as the farmer's wife no longer had the 'inclination, industry, nor skill, sufficient for the management of a dairy'.⁶⁵ This state of affairs was blamed on 'the present mode of educating young women who are to be farmers' wives', an education that placed precedence on domestic and musical accomplishments. This entirely disqualified women for 'the labour and attention necessary to the well-managing

⁶² Adam Murray, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Warwick* (London, 1815), p. 134.

⁶³ See for example, William Marshall, *Rural economy of the west of England*, (2 vols, London, 1796), II, p. 150.

⁶⁴ William Stevenson, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Dorset* (London, 1812), p. 387.

⁶⁵ John Middleton, *View of the agriculture of Middlesex* (London, 1798), p. 327.

of a dairy' and instead of being fit to be a farmer's wife, 'miss dashes into the world a lady's maid'.⁶⁶ On the large-scale arable farms of southern and eastern England dairy production had also become 'troublesome to the mistress' and was discarded by many farmers in the late eighteenth century.⁶⁷ Female servants were engaged in increasing numbers to perform the jobs usually associated with the farmer's wife: dairymaid, laundrymaid, kitchenmaid and nursemaid. The increasing reluctance of farmers to hire and board yearly farm servants in the early nineteenth century was also connected to his wife, who no longer wished to share her living quarters and dining table with farm workers. Cobbett famously denounced this new style of living in the English farmhouse:

Every thing about this farm-house was formerly the scene of *plain manners* and *plentiful living*. Oak clothes-chests, oak bedsteads, oak chests of drawers, and oak tables to eat on, long, strong, and well supplied with joint stools. Some of the things were many hundreds of years old. But all appeared to be in a state of decay and nearly of *disuse*. There appeared to have been hardly any *families* in that house, where formerly there were, in all probability, from ten to fifteen men, boys, and maids: and, which was worst of all, there was a *parlour*!⁶⁸

By the turn of the nineteenth century then, the nature of farm labour was seen to have changed, with farmers' wives no longer a crucial component in the efficiency and profitability of the business. Rather than connecting this shift to wider agricultural and economic conditions, writers placed the responsibility firmly on the farmer's wife. But how widespread were these changes? Was the non-working, leisured lifestyle observed by Stevenson and Cobbett, the typical experience of the farmer's wife by the beginning of the nineteenth century?

III

The trend towards large farms covering several hundred acres or more, concentrating on arable production and employing a casualized labour force was most in evidence in eastern counties such as Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. This eroded the necessity of, and allowed the withdrawal of farmers' wives from their customary labour. Much of our evidence for the removal of farmers' wives from the farm economy comes from these counties. But other areas of large-scale arable farming such as East Yorkshire and Northumberland experienced different conditions. They continued to rely on farm servants, and although service survived in several forms, on many farms in northern England the farmer's wife continued to feed, house, supervise and manage both male and female servants.⁶⁹ The retreat of the farmer's wife on large, corn-growing farms was not uniform across England. Moreover, although the size of

⁶⁶ Middleton, *Agriculture of Middlesex*, p. 338; Richard Parkinson, *The experienced farmer* (2 vols, London, 1798), II, p. 225.

⁶⁷ Thomas Batchelor, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Bedfordshire* (London, 1808), p. 581. This led to complaints about the lack of butter and cheese in the markets, as large arable farms were no longer producing such items for sale. See The Old Fashioned Farmer, 'Some proofs why adding farm to farm is detrimental to

the nation in general', *Museum Rusticum et Commercial*, IV, p. 2; Nathaniel Kent, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Norfolk* (London, 1796), p. 132.

⁶⁸ Cobbett, *Rural rides*, pp. 226–7.

⁶⁹ Service persisted in other counties in the nineteenth century, in the south-east and south-west, as well as more northerly counties. See Alun Howkins, 'Peasants, servants and labourers: the marginal workforce in British agriculture, 1870–1914', *AgHR* 42 (1994), pp. 49–62.

the average farm in England increased between 1750 and 1850, the small farmer did not vanish. In fact at the end of the eighteenth century farms of 100 acres or less predominated in several regions including the north-west (Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire and Cheshire), the Midlands (Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Worcestershire and Rutland), the south-west (Cornwall), and they were not unusual in the North Riding, Hampshire, Devon, Kent and Sussex, and the Welsh borders. In 1830, nearly half of all English farmers employed little or no outside labour, and even in 1851, 45 per cent of farms were still tilled and managed by family labour.⁷⁰ The industrious farmer's wife remained vital on these farms well into the nineteenth century.

In 1840 the *Penny Magazine* discussed the wide range of activities still undertaken by the wives and daughters of farmers in the hill and valley districts of England. They carded and spun indoors and assisted in outdoor tasks such as haymaking, harvesting, loading dung, taking corn to the mill and driving carts to market. In addition they attended to 'sundry other matters of a similar masculine character, all of which, in those parts of the country where agriculture has made the greatest progress, are now considered as belonging to the male part of our population'.⁷¹ William Howitt noted the same point. Addressing the views of Cobbett, he reminded his readers that farmers came in all 'ranks and grades', and whilst the gentleman farmers and their families aped the lifestyle of the wealthy classes, the small farmer (who he classified as those farming 50 to 100 acres) continued 'to work hard himself; his children, if he have them, assist him, and his wife too, who also is a manager and a worker'.⁷² Thus, whilst commentators were observing the growth of a more segregated workforce on large arable farms in the south-east, they also highlighted the persistence of family dependency on small-scale farms. Farmers' wives continued to work in the farmhouse, the dairy, the farmyard and fields, producing goods for the household and also for the market, just as their forebears had done.⁷³ Henry Tremenheere's report on Westmorland and Cumberland in the 1860s suggests that farmhouse produce was in such demand that

It is not uncommon for a farmer's wife with her cartload of poultry, butter and eggs, to be stopped on her way to market by a middleman from Manchester or some other manufacturing town, and the whole contents purchased by the roadside.⁷⁴

In the eighteenth century poultry keeping was ideally suited to small-scale production for local markets. This continued to be the case, although as Tremenheere's quote implies, an expanding urban market for poultry meat and eggs increased demand. Thus the possibilities of farmers' wives raising money from the produce of poultry actually increased over the course of the nineteenth century. Efforts to regulate the industry in Britain and Ireland failed

⁷⁰ J. H. Porter, 'The development of rural society', in Mingay (ed.), *Agrarian history*, VI, pp. 853–4.

⁷¹ *The Penny Magazine*, 29 Feb. to 31 Mar. 1840, p. 122.

⁷² William Howitt, *The Rural Life of England* (London, 1844, 1971 edn), p. 104.

⁷³ This is confirmed by Michael Winstanley's research on small-scale farming in late nineteenth-century Lancashire, which reveals the enduring significance of the labour of farmers' wives in domestic duties,

household production for market and field work. Michael Winstanley, 'Industrialisation and the small farm: family and household economy in nineteenth-century Lancashire', *Past and Present* 152 (1996), pp. 157–195.

⁷⁴ BPP 1868–9, XIII, *Second Report on the employment of children, young persons and women in agriculture*, report by Mr Henry Tremenheere on Westmorland and Cumberland, p. 143.

and it remained female-controlled work on the farm.⁷⁵ The development of the transport network in England, especially the railway from the 1840s, meant produce could be easily conveyed over large distances. Thus by 1848, the 'regularity and speed with which poultry are now conveyed by means of the railroad' aided the transportation of produce from counties such as Devon to markets in London.⁷⁶ The demands of the metropolitan market could push up prices substantially: in 1851 it was estimated that fowls raised for the table would fetch between 1s. 2d. and 1s. 6d. in northern areas such as Northumberland, whereas around London the price for a fowl could be double or treble this.⁷⁷ Rearing birds for eggs could be even more profitable. In the early 1830s the profit from the eggs of an average layer was calculated at between 6s. 8d. and 7s. 3d. per fowl; by the early 1850s the income gained per fowl had risen to 9s. 10¼d. (despite eggs then selling at the 'very low' price of 11d. per score).⁷⁸ As a result, several mid-nineteenth-century commentators – such as Samuel Copeland – urged farmers to pay more attention to this female branch of productivity and not dismiss poultry keeping as a trifling or subsidiary aspect of the farm economy:

However insignificant the smaller denizens of the farm may appear in the eyes of an English farmer, who numbers his oxen by the hundred and his sheep by the thousand, they are far from being contemptible as an object of profitable calculation if properly managed, and on a scale consummate with the size of the farm ... there is every inducement for the British farmer to direct his attention to this branch of rural economy, and to give to the business of rearing and fattening fowls that place in the ordinary management of the farm, to which its importance entitles it.⁷⁹

On small dairy farms the labour of the farmer's wife continued to be indispensable in the nineteenth century. In turn-of-the-century Somerset, John Billingsley found that wives on small dairy farms (those having an income of £60 to £70 a year) undertook the whole management of the cows, which released their husbands for daily paid labour on neighbouring farms.⁸⁰ He welcomed 'the arduous domestic labour and incessant employment' which such farms required of 'the female part of the farmer's family', and was adamant that were he 'a gentleman of fortune, I would never let an estate to a farmer, whose family was too proud, or too indolent to undertake the management of the different departments thereof'.⁸¹ Several decades later, the dairy farms of the south-west continued to operate under a similar system. Alfred Austin visited the dairying regions of Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire in the early 1840s and found that where the farms were small, the continuous, fatiguing and laborious work of the dairy was

⁷⁵ Winstanley, 'Industrialisation and the small farm', p. 184. For the Irish perspective see Joanna Bourke, *Husbandry to housewifery: women, economic change and housework in Ireland, 1890–1914* (1993); Anne O'Dowd, 'Women in rural Ireland in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: how the daughters, wives and sisters of small farmers and landless labourers fared', *Rural Hist.* 5 (1994), pp. 171–183.

⁷⁶ Henry Tanner, 'The farming of Devonshire', *JRASE* 9 (1848), p. 483.

⁷⁷ William Trotter, 'Essay on the rearing and

management of poultry', *JRASE* 12 (1851), p. 169.

⁷⁸ Joseph Russell, *An improved system of agriculture* (Kenilworth, 1840), p. 283; Trotter, 'Rearing and management of poultry', p. 169.

⁷⁹ Samuel Copeland, *Agriculture ancient and modern* (2 vols, London, 1866), I, p. 433.

⁸⁰ John Billingsley, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Somerset* (third edn, London, 1798), p. 34.

⁸¹ Id., *General view of the agriculture in the country of Somerset* (first edn, London, 1794), pp. 112, 150.

performed not by servants, but by the farmer's wife.⁸² Fifty years after Billingsley's report, Thomas Dyke Acland toured the same marsh district of Somerset and found little had altered. Limitations on space and capital had impeded the implementation of technology into the small dairies and the work remained physically arduous:

It is true that men see the cows milked at a very early hour in the summer, and have some trouble with them in the winter, but the real hard labour falls on the women; and very active and industrious they are; but it is a sad sight to see a man standing by doing nothing, while his wife or daughter is turning many time in the day a weight of above half a hundredweight.⁸³

Whilst Valenze accepts that some small farms 'persisted in utilizing chiefly wives and daughters' in dairy work, the distinction she draws between these farms and large-scale dairying is firm. The latter, she claims, invested in new labour-saving machinery 'which warranted the employment of several dairymaids, while obviating the need for farmer's wife's traditional role'.⁸⁴ Yet many treatises continue to recommend that the farmer *and* his wife should carefully manage the daily operations on the large dairy farm in the nineteenth century.⁸⁵ On the Gloucestershire cheese farms of the 1860s for example, 'The farmer's wife superintends the dairy work; in fact, as one gentleman remarked, "A man without a wife has no business with a dairy"'.⁸⁶ Farmers' wives continued to direct, inspect, and supervise work on large dairies, as well as market the produce. Their expertise and experience were crucial: it was only on arable farms where dairying had been subsidiary and was then relinquished, that the farmer's wife was relieved of these roles. On his mid-century tour of the farming regions of England, James Caird found the dairies of northern and western Wiltshire to be 'exceedingly clean and well managed', which in large part was due to 'the industry and skill of the farmers' wives, to whom exclusively this important department is entrusted'. Similarly, after visiting the cheese-making farms of Cheshire, he considered the farmer's wife to be

the most important person in the establishment; the cheese, which is either made by her, or under her directions, forming the produce of two-thirds or three-fourths of the farm; the remaining fraction of which comprises the business of the farmer.⁸⁷

It was generally agreed that the profits acquired from a well-managed dairy were usually 'greater than what can be obtained by any other mode of husbandry', with cheese the most remunerative product of the dairy.⁸⁸ At the end of the eighteenth century, Marshall had calculated that the average cow produced three hundredweight of cheese a year, selling at 30s. per hundredweight.⁸⁹

⁸² BPP 1843, XII, *Reports of special assistant Poor Law Commissioners on the employment of women and children in agriculture*, report by Mr Alfred Austin on the counties of Wiltshire, Dorset, Devon and Somerset, p. 5.

⁸³ Thomas Dyke Acland, 'On the farming of Somerset', *JRASE* 11 (1850), p. 706.

⁸⁴ Valenze, 'Art of women', p. 166.

⁸⁵ See for example, Rev W. Gooch, *General view of the agriculture of Cambridge* (London, 1811), p. 268; Loudon, *Encyclopaedia*, pp. 1035–6; Rev. John M. Wilson (ed.), *The rural cyclopaedia* (4 vols, Edinburgh and London,

1847–9), II, p. 3; William Rothwell, *Report on the agriculture of the county of Lancaster* (London, 1850), p. 100.

⁸⁶ BPP 1867–8, XVII, *First report on the employment of children, young persons and women in agriculture*, evidence to Rev James Fraser's report on Norfolk, Essex, Sussex, Gloucestershire and parts of Suffolk, p. 123.

⁸⁷ James Caird, *English agriculture in 1850–51* (London, 1852, 1968 edn), pp. 78, 252–3.

⁸⁸ A Farmer, *Rural recreations, or modern farmer's calendar* (London, 1802), p. 65.

⁸⁹ Marshall, *Midland counties*, I, p. 361.

By the 1850s, the price for the same weight of cheese had risen to 50s. The popular proverb ran 'the pail pays the rent'.⁹⁰ However, the method of sale, which increasingly involved factors and middlemen as dairy size increased, was not necessarily advantageous for women. In Cheshire, for example, the verbal contracts made between factors and dairymen was criticised for depreciating the value of female labour:

The business of the dairy is, in general, admirably well attended to, by a laborious and careful set of women, who are the support, and ought to be the pride of the country: their husbands degrade themselves, are ungrateful, in undervaluing the produce of *their* toil and care, and but too often injure themselves and families, in compliance with the foolish custom ...⁹¹

Valenze claims that women's work in the dairy came to be increasingly criticised in treatises of the late eighteenth century, with their customary labour being associated with backwardness and ineptitude. As authors attempted to activate standard practices and procedures, they increasingly turned to the authority of men.⁹² There is evidence to reinforce this argument. John Morton's *Cyclopedia of Agriculture*, which was published in the mid-nineteenth century, makes no mention of women in its 24-page section on 'dairy management' and draws entirely on the expertise of men.⁹³ But changes in the industry were slowly implemented and the close association between women and dairy work persisted. Complaints that farmers' wives used non-standardised processes and skills in their dairies were still frequent in the 1850s and 1860s. One observer in Gloucestershire commented in 1850 that 'Almost every mistress of a dairy has some secret, peculiarity, or mystery, fancied or real, which is often studiously kept from her equally clever neighbour'.⁹⁴ A decade later, the remonstrance was familiar: 'In no branch of rural economy would theoretical knowledge be of more service than in the dairy, yet dairy practice is perhaps less enlightened by science or aided by scientific appliances than any other'.⁹⁵ The displacement of farmers' wives from the dairy, large and small, was far from complete by the mid-nineteenth century and the retreat into the parlour was simply not an option for many farmers' wives.

IV

The position of farmers' wives in England between 1700 and 1850 varied according to region, farm size, income and type. Contemporary commentators gave prominence to the retreat of farmers' wives on large dairy and arable farms at the turn of the nineteenth century, but the departure of the economically-active wife was partial. Even on the large, wealthy farms of East Anglia – where evidence for the non-working wife is most compelling – it is unlikely that women were ever totally divorced from the business of the farm. On the surface Elizabeth Cotton, who lived with her husband and six children on their 400-acre farm in Suffolk in the

⁹⁰ Acland, 'Farming of Somerset', p. 705.

⁹¹ Wedge, *General view of Cheshire*, p. 61.

⁹² Valenze, 'Art of women', p. 162.

⁹³ John C. Morton, *A cyclopedia of agriculture* (2 vols, London, 1855), I, pp. 603–26.

⁹⁴ John Bravender, 'Farming of Gloucestershire',

JRASE 11 (1850), p. 153.

⁹⁵ James Fulton, 'Essay on recent improvements in dairy management', *JRASE* 21 (1860), p. 73. Fussell argues that inventions in dairying made little impact until the second half of the nineteenth century. Fussell, *English dairy farmer*, p. 170.

1850s and 1860s, would seem a typical representation of the refined farmer's wife. She oversaw the renovation of the farmhouse, employed a dairymaid and housekeeper and engaged fully in the social activities of near-by Ipswich. Yet she still attended to business callers, opened her kitchen to labourers, was expected to take charge of the farm in her husband's absence, supervised the dairy and had to deal with the transgressions of her light-fingered maid.⁹⁶ Farmers' wives continued to take responsibility for the dairy, poultry, pigs, garden and kitchen, either performing the work herself or superintending the labour of others. Although her labour generated profit, the farmer's wife was not formally paid for her work. As a result it is largely hidden in the sources. Between 1851 and 1871 however, the census did recognise that wives who assisted their husbands in certain family enterprises (such as farming) but received no formal payment for that work, should be included in the occupational tables.⁹⁷ In 1881 they were permanently removed. Despite their invisibility in the official occupational statistics, the last quarter of the nineteenth century was a crucial period for the farmer's wife. Did the progression of large-scale commercial dairying eventually remove the farmer's wife from production? Does the same development in poultry rearing in the late nineteenth century imply that the market for farmhouse goods produced on a small scale also declined? Were farmers' wives therefore more likely to take paid jobs away from the farm to supplement income, becoming more disengaged from farm production? Or, as Mary Bouquet suggests for Devon, did farmers' wives turn their hand to alternative money-making activities on the farm when their traditional roles diminished?⁹⁸ These are important questions that await further research.

⁹⁶ Shelia Hardy, *The diary of a Suffolk farmer's wife, 1854–1869: a woman of her time* (1992), pp. 26, 58–9.

⁹⁷ In 1851 there were 164,420 farmers' and graziers' wives (aged 20 and over) recorded in the census; in 1861

the figure was 163,498, and in 1871 187,029.

⁹⁸ Mary Bouquet, *Family, servants and visitors: the farm household in nineteenth and twentieth-century Devon* (1985).

Urban common rights, enclosure and the market: Clitheroe Town Moors, 1764–1802

by H. R. French

Abstract

The social and agrarian impact of parliamentary enclosure is again in dispute. However, the effects of enclosure on urban agriculture and commons have yet to be examined. This detailed case study of the small borough of Clitheroe, Lancashire, examines the usage and the social profile of users between 1764 and 1779. It also depicts the local enclosure process, and argues that little redistribution of land or extinction of rights occurred. Access rights and stints had been subverted before enclosure by the creation of a 'market' in entitlements that reflected the distribution of property and resources in commercial agriculture beyond the commons. Urban sources provide unique detail to illustrate how fundamental change could occur in the management of commons *before* their abolition by enclosure.

Historians are once again debating the social and economic effects of enclosure. Studies by Shaw-Taylor and Chapman and Seeliger have questioned the existing historical consensus that enclosure of common lands produced immiseration among the labouring poor.¹ Examining the identity of commons' users in some detail, these two studies have suggested that by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, only a minority of labourers – approximately 15 per cent in Shaw-Taylor's study of 11 villages in central England – were exercising common rights.² Chapman and Seeliger have shown that in a number of instances the initiative for enclosure came from tenant farmers, and was occasionally opposed by landlords – a reversal of most previous historical assumptions.³ These studies have depicted eighteenth-century enclosure as the final, tidying-up stage after the extinction of small-scale 'peasant' proprietors, not a primary cause of their demise. As Shaw-Taylor has observed: 'Parliamentary enclosure did not, therefore, represent the last decisive stage in the development of agrarian capitalism. Capitalist farmers and proletarian labourers dominated English agriculture before parliamentary enclosure'.⁴ Clark and Clark have argued that because of this, enclosure had minimal effects on the bulk of the labouring population. Access to common grazing or wasteland was extremely restricted across England as a whole. 'In most parishes there would be too little common waste per family to

¹ L. Shaw-Taylor, 'Labourers, cows, common rights and parliamentary enclosure: the evidence of contemporary comment, c. 1760–1810', *Past and Present* 171 (2001), pp. 95–126; id., 'Parliamentary enclosure and the emergence of an English agricultural proletariat', *JECH* 61 (2001), pp. 640–62; J. Chapman and S. Seeliger, *Enclosure, environment and landscape in southern England* (2001); their line is supported by G. Clark and A. Clark, 'Com-

mon rights to land in England, 1475–1839', *JECH* 61 (2001), pp. 1009–36, although they dispute Chapman's claims that significant amounts of private, non-Parliamentary enclosure occurred.

² Shaw-Taylor, 'Agricultural proletariat', p. 654.

³ Chapman and Seeliger, *Enclosure, environment and landscape*, pp. 27, 52–3, 71–2, 93, 137.

⁴ Shaw-Taylor, 'Agricultural proletariat', p. 659.

allow the landless to keep cows'.⁵ Therefore, they too conclude that the landless had little to lose in the enclosure process.⁶

One form of common right has been excluded from existing debates – the urban common – and the rights of access linked to borough franchises. These rights existed within a significant number of towns (perhaps 160 out of c. 600 towns in eighteenth-century England), even if their total agrarian importance was, necessarily, limited.⁷ Access to urban commons provides an interesting variation on the themes debated by Neeson and Shaw-Taylor.⁸ Access rights to commons in villages and unincorporated towns were usually vested in manors, with formal entitlement to common being held by manorial tenants, sub-letting being based on this right. In corporate towns, rights of common were vested in the borough, and exercised by the enfranchised population, the burgesses, or their assigns. In both cases, access tended to become restricted over time. Population pressure, whether in the thirteenth, sixteenth or eighteenth centuries, provided an impetus to introduce stints, or to limit access altogether⁹ by making distinctions between residents and manorial tenants, or residents and burgesses, and vesting rights in the latter in both instances.¹⁰

The interesting question is whether access rights to urban commons were more or less extensive than those in rural settlements. This has important implications for the use and users of urban commons, and the degree to which they were affected by enclosure. As yet, there is little research to guide us.¹¹ Once again, the disparate nature of borough franchises makes it difficult to generalize. Rights of common could be vested in all the householders of a corporate town, whether free or unfree, as in Chester, Lincoln, Cambridge, Beccles, Sutton Coldfield, Lancaster, Arundel, Okehampton, Bodmin and Marlborough.¹² They could be linked to rights of freedom held by individuals, as in Nottingham, Leicester, Coventry, Warwick, Northampton, Huntingdon, Bath, Bedford, Marlborough, Malmesbury, Chippenham, Oxford, Tewkesbury, Gloucester, Stafford, Shrewsbury, Derby, Doncaster, Beverley, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Durham, Gateshead, Morpeth, Newcastle, York, Preston

⁵ Clark and Clark, 'Common rights', p. 1033.

⁶ In contrast to Clark and Clark, Chapman and Seeliger argue that poor labourers and cottagers were disadvantaged most (numerically and financially) by the enclosure of wastes and moors, and the extinction of squatters' rights. *Enclosure, environment and landscape*, p. 27.

⁷ See H. R. French, 'Urban agriculture, commons and commoners in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the case of Sudbury, Suffolk', *AgHR* 48 (2000), p. 173.

⁸ J. M. Neeson, *Commoners: common right, enclosure and social change in England, 1700–1820* (1993), pp. 55–81.

⁹ See, for example, the regulation of the town lands of Calne, Wilts., 1657, in R. C. Richardson and T. B. James (eds), *The Urban Experience: a sourcebook. English, Scottish and Welsh Towns, 1450–1700* (1983), pp. 54–5.

¹⁰ Restrictions were imposed in Northampton in 1556, Victoria County History (hereafter VCH) *Northamptonshire*, III, p. 22; in Marlborough burgesses only were

allowed to cultivate the open arable fields, but all inhabitants could depasture livestock after harvest, VCH *Wiltshire*, XII, p. 207; in Oxford, common rights belonged exclusively to freemen, but stinting was abandoned about 1680, VCH *Oxfordshire*, IV, p. 280; in Tewkesbury in the seventeenth century burgesses enjoyed exclusive access to one common field, and rights to depasture double the numbers of animals in the other fields compared to the freemen, VCH *Gloucestershire*, VIII, p. 138.

¹¹ I have suggested that in Sudbury, Suffolk, only about 33% of freemen actually exercised common rights. French, 'Urban agriculture', pp. 182–3.

¹² *Reports from the Commissioners on the Municipal Corporations in England and Wales* (1835) (hereafter *Reports on Municipal Corporations*), App. I, pp. 85 (Marlborough), 447 (Bodmin), 559 (Okehampton); II, pp. 673 (Arundel); III, pp. 1610 (Lancaster); IV, pp. 2034 (Sutton Coldfield), 2193 (Beccles), 2190 (Cambridge), 2358 (Lincoln) and 2627 (Chester).

and Wigan.¹³ By the eighteenth century such rights were often reserved for resident freemen or burgesses, as the number of non-residents increased.¹⁴ However, not every resident freeman enjoyed equal rights. Financial differentials could be introduced, as in Sudbury, Suffolk, to reserve access to the commons to the wealthier 'better sort' of freemen, or introduce extra entitlements for senior corporation members.¹⁵ In other instances, common rights were vested in burgage properties, rather than being held as personal rights. This occurred in Hertford, Basingstoke, York, Godmanchester, Congleton, as well as in Clitheroe, the subject of this research.¹⁶ Sub-letting of personal or property entitlements further complicated this distribution of common rights.¹⁷ Elsewhere, rights were often shared with other inhabitants, or commons divided between those over which all inhabitants had rights (often half-year grazing rights), and lands reserved to the burgesses alone. Such divisions occurred in Calne, Marlborough, Colchester, Beverley, Lichfield, Lincoln, Cambridge, Southampton, Basingstoke, and Christchurch.¹⁸

This study is a first attempt to examine the issues of access rights to urban commons and

¹³ J. D. Chambers, 'Population change in Nottingham, 1700–1800' in L. S. Presnell (ed.), *Studies in the Industrial Revolution* (1960), p. 99; W. G. Hoskins, 'An Elizabethan provincial town: Leicester', in id., *Provincial England. Essays in social and economic history* (1964), p. 89; VCH *Warwickshire*, VIII, p. 199 (Coventry); A. D. Dyer, *The city of Worcester in the sixteenth century* (1973), p. 135; VCH *Northamptonshire*, III, p. 22 (Northampton); *Reports on Municipal Corporations*, IV, pp. 2110 (Bedford), 2289 (Huntingdon); VCH *Wiltshire*, XII, p. 207 (Marlborough); *Reports on Municipal Corporations*, I, p. 78 (Malmesbury); II, p. 1248 (Chippenham); VCH *Oxfordshire*, IV, p. 280 (Oxford); VCH *Gloucestershire*, VIII, p. 138 (Tewkesbury); *Reports on Municipal Corporations*, III, pp. 1459 (Beverley), 1500 (Doncaster), 1850 (Derby), 2014 (Shrewsbury), 2028 (Stafford); Berwick-upon-Tweed, S. and B. Webb, *English Local Government: The Manor and the Borough* (5 vols., 1906–22), II, p. 518; Gateshead, *Reports on Municipal Corporations*, III, pp. 1526 (Gateshead), 1628 (Morpeth); Newcastle, E. M. Halcrow, 'The Town Moor of Newcastle Upon Tyne', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 4th ser., 31 (1953), pp. 149–64; VCH *The City of York*, p. 499; Bath, Durham, Gloucester, Marlborough, Preston and Wigan, evidence from British Parliamentary Papers (BPP), LV (1870), *Return of all boroughs and cities in the United Kingdom possessing common or other lands, in respect of which the freemen or other privileged inhabitants claim any exclusive right of property or use ...*, pp. 3–31.

¹⁴ This distinction in rights was drawn in Berwick-upon-Tweed, *Reports on Municipal Corporations*, App. III, pp. 1443, 1459 (Beverley), 1500 (Doncaster), 1515 (Durham), 1526 (Gateshead), 1647 (Newcastle-upon-Tyne), 1745 (York), 1993 (Nottingham); IV, p. 2110 (Bedford),

2539 (Stamford).

¹⁵ French, 'Urban Agriculture', p. 180. Senior corporation members enjoyed larger stints in Arundel, Tewkesbury and Oxford (until c. 1600). VCH *Sussex*, IV, p. 58; VCH *Gloucestershire*, VIII, p. 138; VCH *Oxfordshire*, IV, p. 280.

¹⁶ VCH *Hertfordshire*, III, p. 498; *Reports on Municipal Corporations*, II, p. 1106 (Basingstoke); III, p. 1745 (York); IV, pp. 2236 (Godmanchester), 2652 (Congleton).

¹⁷ Subletting of common rights by burgesses was probably endemic in towns even before the sixteenth century, being mentioned in Nottingham, Tewkesbury, Arundel and Calne, allowed in Doncaster and Chippenham but forbidden in Coventry. R. M. Butler, 'The common lands of the borough of Nottingham', *Proc. Thoroton Soc.*, 54 (1950), p. 55; Chambers, 'Population change', pp. 101–2; VCH *Gloucestershire*, VIII, p. 138; VCH *Sussex*, IV, p. 58; Richardson and James (eds.), *Urban Experience*, p. 55; *Reports on Municipal Corporations*, II, p. 1248 (Chippenham); III, p. 1500 (Doncaster); VCH *Warwickshire*, VIII, p. 199.

¹⁸ Richardson and James (eds.), *Urban Experience*, pp. 54–5 (Calne); *Reports on Municipal Corporations*, I, p. 85 (Marlborough); VCH *Essex*, XI, p. 255 (Colchester); VCH *East Riding*, VI, p. 214; VCH *Staffordshire*, XIV, pp. 110–4 (Lichfield); *Reports on Municipal Corporations*, IV, p. 2358 (Lincoln); *The Common Lands of Cambridgeshire* (Cambridge County Planning Department Survey Reports, 1956), pp. 16–17; A. Temple Patterson, *A History of Southampton 1700–1914* (3 vols, 1966–75), I, p. 11; L. Ellis Tavener, *The Common Lands of Hampshire* (1957), pp. 52–3, 55–8.

the effects of subletting and enclosure by exploring in detail the experience of the small borough of Clitheroe, Lancashire, in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Common field agriculture and enclosure in the pastoral north of England have not received the historical attention paid to them in the arable south.¹⁹ Yet, as Elliott has noted, across the north-west ‘small towns retained their common fields little disturbed by engrossing and enclosure until the eighteenth century’.²⁰ He distinguishes a series of small towns, possessed of commons; Penrith, Workington, Whitehaven and Wigton in Cumberland; Kendal and Kirkby Stephen in Westmorland; Dalton, Ulverston, Clitheroe and Prescott in Lancashire; and Stockport, Wilmslow, Macclesfield and Sandbach in Cheshire. These were all small settlements, with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants before the late eighteenth century. While they acted as market centres, and contained diverse small scale industries, they were still connected to and dependent upon the agrarian hinterland, and their lands and commons.

I

Clitheroe provides a useful case study in several respects. It was a tiny urban settlement, even by the standards of the under-urbanised north-west. In 1801 it contained only 1,370 inhabitants, in 283 households.²¹ That year an unsympathetic observer noted that it was ‘a mean town, with little or no trade ... altho’ the houses are in general indifferent, there are a few good ones, inhabited by persons of some prosperity ... agriculture seems to be but imperfectly understood in that country: the farms being chiefly grazing farms’.²² Yet, despite its diminutive size and lack of dynamism, it possessed all the institutions and functions of a borough; two MPs, a corporation, civil courts and petty sessions, a market and four fairs.²³ Clitheroe Castle was the administrative centre for the Honour of Clitheroe, formerly part of the Duchy of Lancaster. It was a local retail and distribution centre, and developed yarn spinning and lime burning through the eighteenth century.²⁴ These distinct urban functions, allied to its small population, make it a convenient settlement to study in detail.

In Clitheroe, the enclosure award of 1786 measured the commons at 335a 3r 16p (customary)

¹⁹ The most detailed case studies are: G. Rogers, ‘Custom and common right: waste land enclosure and social change in west Lancashire’, *AgHR* 41 (1993), pp. 137–54; J. F. Broadbent, ‘Dewsbury Inclosure, 1796–1806’, *Yorkshire Arch. J.* 69 (1997), pp. 209–26; G. Scurfield, ‘Seventeenth-century Sheffield and its environs’, *Yorkshire Arch. J.* 58 (1986), pp. 147–71 and the general survey by G. Elliott, ‘Field systems of northwest England’, in A. R. H. Baker and R. A. Butlin (eds.), *Studies of field systems in the British Isles* (1973), pp. 41–92.

²⁰ Elliott, ‘Field systems’, p. 54.

²¹ Lancashire RO, MBC 650.

²² Lincolnshire RO, Brownlow Estate (hereafter BNL), Box ‘Clitheroe (C.J.s)’, ‘Mr G’s observations on the estate of Lord R[ibblesdale] within this Borough, for

the purchase whereof Lord B[rownlow] is in treaty’, 19 June 1801.

²³ The four fairs were 7–9 December, 24–26 March, 2 August and early October. T. D. Whitaker, *An history of the original parish of Whalley and Honor of Clitheroe ...* (4th ed., 1876), p. 77.

²⁴ Two purpose-built yarn-spinning ‘manufactories’ were built in the town in the late 1780s, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Leeds (hereafter YAS), MD 335/81, Henry Waddington to Thomas Lister, 3 Mar. 1787 and below, p. 66. In 1778, it was reported that 500–1000 loads of lime per day were transported through the town. *The trial at large of Nicholas Wilkinson, Doctor Herd and Henry Worswick ... 3 April 1778* (6th edn, Lancaster, 1830), p. 23.

TABLE 1. Proportion of land in the Borough of Clitheroe with and without common rights, pre-1788 (in customary acres)

<i>Land type</i>	<i>acres</i>	<i>roods</i>	<i>perches</i>	<i>%</i>
Common land ^a	335	3	16	24
Corporation land	49	2	34	4
Crown land	24	0	0	2
Lands with common rights	568	2	0	41
Lands without common rights	400	3	13	29
TOTAL ^b	1378	2	23	100

Sources: Lincs. RO, BNL, box 'Est. BNL Subs (BQ23)', List of Freehold Estates paying no borough rent, n.d. with 'Peter Rents payable out of lands within Clithero to the lords and lady of the Wapentake of Blackburn', [Copyhold rents]; correlated with Lancs. RO, DDHCl Honour of Clitheroe Map 18 (Map of the Borough of Clitheroe, 1781).

Notes: ^a This figure is given in Lancs. RO, DP 440 (Acc. 4026), Clitheroe Commons Allotment Book, 1786. However, the initial award, Lancs. RO, MBC 1 Clitheroe Enclosure Award 1786, contradicts this by giving a total figure of 290 acres.

^b Total is broadly in line with other surveys: 1,318a 2r 32p in Lancs. RO, DDHCl Clitheroe Survey 1781 (8 acreages missing), 1,322a in Lancs RO, DDX 1464/1 Survey of Township of Clitheroe, 1797.

or 427a (statute), 24 per cent of the land area in the borough (Table 1).²⁵ The commons, or 'town moors' were located in three distinct areas around the town. The largest moor was High Moor (121a 1r 21p customary) to the south of the town on rising ground bordering the townships of Great Mitton and Pendleton Hall.²⁶ The next in size was Low Moor (120a) on lands sloping down towards the River Ribble (which formed the county boundary with Yorkshire and the northern extent of the borough). The third moor, Little Moor (13a 2r 27p) lay between Low and High Moors, to the south-west of the town. On the north-east side of the settlement was another small common, Salthill Moor (24a), which surrounded six burgage plots lying on the road to Settle. In addition, Clitheroe possessed a number of wayside greens, characteristic of urban pasture commons, forming trackways connecting Low and Salthill Moors, Little and High Moors, and comprising 24 acres in total.

These commons may once have been larger. Low Moor, Little Moor and Salthill Moor were all adjacent to copyhold land, which was not abundant in the borough, and which was denied rights of common. Low Moor surrounded a 32-acre copyhold on three sides, and was adjacent to Bawdlands, a copyhold farm of 18½ acres. Little Moor was next to 14 acres of copyhold which lay between it and the western boundary of the borough. The small central Salthill Moor was next to (and the same width) as the Crown land called Salthills which was in turn adjacent to the largest unit of land owned by the borough (also called Salthills).²⁷ Three large contiguous

²⁵ Lancs. RO, MBC1, Clitheroe enclosure award, 28 Nov. 1788. George Lang, land surveyor of Leyland testified in 1784 that customary measure in Clitheroe was 7 yards to the perch, while statute units were 5½ yards to the perch (a ratio of 1.27:1), Lincs. RO, BNL, box 'Curzon & Lister BQ 23' (Chancery suit, Assheton Curzon & Penn Assheton Curzon v. Thomas Lister 15 Mar. 1784). In practice in eighteenth-century Clitheroe sources customary acreages were translated into statute in a variety of ratios.

For the sake of clarity and consistency, customary acreages will be cited hereafter.

²⁶ Acreages calculated from Lancs. RO, MBC 1.

²⁷ The crown's holding was the subject of a number of court cases after the Interregnum to determine whether it was crown land or the demesne of a messuage called The Alleys. See, for instance, PRO, E 134/22 Chas. 2/Mich. 26, 22 & 23/Chas. 2/Hil. 17.

copyhold farms (Horrocksford, Riding Hey and Hardhill) fanned out eastwards from the Salthill lands amounting to 289 acres of rough grazing and lime pits. They dwarfed all other holdings in the borough.²⁸ While there is no documentary evidence, we may conjecture that Low Moor and Little Moor had suffered encroachments or alienations, while Salthill Moor may have been broken up at an earlier date between crown, corporation and commoners.²⁹

In the period discussed in this paper, the use of the Clitheroe commons is recorded in a series of commons marking books.³⁰ These provide information for nine separate years between 1764 and 1779. There are 1,133 entries, which include details of the property for which right of common was being exercised, the extent of the right and the number of horses and ‘beasts’ allowed for each property. The books also record whether any rights were assigned to third parties without real property entitlements, and (if rights were divided), how many animals were assigned and to whom. In six of the years they also record the number of geese turned out on the moors.³¹ No other animals were allowed to graze the moors. Sheep had been prohibited from the commons in 1642, and were again ejected in 1696.³²

The information from the marking books has been entered into a database, together with all available information about the ownership and tenancy of the 127 properties within the borough entitled to exercise common rights during the period 1764–1802, to help identify those exercising pasture rights, even where their names are omitted by the marking books.³³ By these means, it is possible to identify ownership, tenancy and hiring of pasture rights, the numbers of animals involved, and to compile some information about the social profile of the commons’ users. Obviously, this data is incomplete, since we have information about only nine out of sixteen years, but its chronological distribution allows a representative sample to be made of commons’ use and users.

The marking books provide a full record of the actual extent of commons use. In no year examined were fewer than 125 of the 127 entitled burgages entered in the books. Between 2 and 9 per cent of burgages entered in the books each year were not recorded as exercising or assigning pasture rights.³⁴ A further 5 to 12 per cent of burgages entered each year had fractions

²⁸ Lancs. RO, DDHCL, map 18 (Clitheroe Survey 1781). Although Horrocksford possessed no common rights, the seventeenth-century owners, the Andertons of Lostock, were charged with providing a bull for the commons. This appears to have been in return for lands granted to them out of the commons. W. Self Weeks, *Clitheroe in the seventeenth century* (1927), p. 35.

²⁹ This must have been before the sixteenth century, however, because from at least the 1542 Horrocksford was leased by the Talbot family to Giles Parker of Eddisford. A charter of 1307 mentioned the ‘manor of Salthill’. VCH *Lancashire*, VI, pp. 364–5, 366.

³⁰ Lancs. RO, MBC 27–33 (covering the years 1764, 1766, 1769, 1770, 1773, 1775, 1776 and 1777), and DDX 28/9 (1779).

³¹ In 1766, 1770, 1773, 1776 and 1777.

³² Self Weeks, *Clitheroe*, pp. 25, 27 citing courts of inquiry of 1642 and 1696.

³³ Ownership and tenancy on these properties has

been established by identifying ownership of the 78 ‘free borough houses’ in Lancs. RO, DDHCL, box 108, ‘General state of the Borough of Clitheroe, 1782, corrected and enlarged by the same hand, 1785’, a listing of the ownership history of the 102 burgages in the borough; the remaining 49 properties have been identified on Lancs. RO, DDX 1464/1, survey and valuation of Clitheroe, 1797 (which gives owner and tenant), and correlated with overseers’ assessments for 1785 and 1789, Lancs. RO, MBC 634, 730 and DDHCL, box 120, survey of joint Clitheroe estate of Thomas Lister and Assheton Curzon, 1783.

³⁴ In 1764 eleven out of 126 burgages entered in the Marking Book had no numbers of horses or beasts recorded for them, or any note of rights assigned to third parties. This may simply be due to defective recording. There are no more than 5 burgages where no animal numbers or assignments were recorded in 1770, 1773 and 1779.

TABLE 2. Number of commons users in property ownership categories, 1764–1779

	1764	1766	1769	1770	1773	1775	1776	1777	1779	mean
Owners of property with commons access rights	33	31	34	33	32	33	32	32	31	32.3
Owners of property exercising rights of common in person	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	1	2.4
Tenants of property with access rights	52	58	58	55	56	54	58	57	60	56.4
Tenants of property exercising access rights in person	18	22	21	26	22	14	19	18	17	19.6
Persons leasing access rights for property to which s/he is <i>not</i> also a tenant or owner	64	48	45	45	39	58	60	58	55	52.4
Total number of persons exercising rights of common	85	73	69	73	63	75	82	78	73	74.6

Source: Lancs. RO, commons marking books, MBC 27–33, DDX 28/9.

of their rights assigned to third parties based on the subletting of an acreage, rather than the assignment of animals directly.³⁵ These have been excluded from the study, in order to focus on actual animals assigned, rather than a minority of theoretical rights. In each year, therefore, the figures are based on the rights exercised by between 85 and 89 per cent of burgages.³⁶

Of these 127 properties, 76 were described as ‘free borough houses’, possessing both rights of common and the parliamentary franchise in the borough. A further two ‘borough lands’ were vested with common and voting rights.³⁷ The remaining 49 properties were mainly parcels of land, whose owners or occupiers had rights of common only. In total, 568.5 (customary) acres of land, or 41 per cent of the land area within the borough, possessed access rights to the town moors. Table 1 shows the acreage and proportions of land in the borough with and without common rights.

Each of the 76 free borough houses was entitled to one ‘gate’ on the moors. The remaining 49 properties were entitled to one ‘gate’ in proportion to every 4 (customary) acres.³⁸ Between 1764 and 1779 a ‘gate’ was only one horse and one cow, and borough jury verdicts from a century earlier show the same stinting custom.³⁹ Accumulation of rights had occurred among users. Although 127 properties possessed commons’ rights at this time, an average of only 74 people exercised these rights annually (as shown in Table 2).

In the period under discussion, those using a cow gate paid the corporation 12s. *od.* per

³⁵ The properties where these acreage assignments took place were among those 49 unenfranchised plots, where common rights were based on one horsegate and one beastgate for every four acres.

³⁶ Only in 1773 and 1779 did the proportion of burgages in these two excluded groups reach 15 per cent. The lowest proportion was 11 per cent, in 1769.

³⁷ Lancs. RO, DDHCl, box 108, ‘General state ... 1782’, fo. 1.

³⁸ Self Weeks, *Clitheroe*, p. 24.

³⁹ Lancs. RO, MBC 364, Clitheroe borough court of inquiry verdict, 9 Feb. 1665; this was repeated in another verdict on 16 Apr. 1680, MBC 366.

annum; a horse gate 8s. 0d.⁴⁰ In 1784 the land surveyor James Standen estimated that such grazing rights on the unimproved commons were actually worth £1 16s. 0d. per annum.⁴¹ Burgages with one 'horsegate' and one 'beastgate' between 1764 and 1779 (between 42 and 51 per cent of all properties from year to year)⁴² may therefore have gained access to this land at only 56 per cent of its market value.⁴³ As will be shown more fully below, the contemporary perception was that these common lands were not being employed to their full agricultural and financial potential. Standen also estimated that on any division of the commons, each full 'gate' or entitlement would be equivalent to 3a 1r 38p (statute).

The commons were usually stocked with animals from the first or second week of May until early March. The interval between March and May allowed the spring grass to grow, and enabled landowners or tenants to repair boundary hedges, ditches and walls (at the borough's expense after 1688).⁴⁴ During this hiatus the town held a two-day fair on 24–25 March, which allowed stock to be sold and replenished.⁴⁵ When stocked, the commons were managed by the 'four men' or pinders (one for each of the main moors?) chosen by the court of inquiry each March, with a pinfold in High Moor.

Table 2 also demonstrates that by the third quarter of the eighteenth century, ownership and exercise of rights of common were almost completely separate. In each year, only two or three owners of land (normally William Leigh, George Eastham and Richard Eddlestone sen.) actually exercised rights of common on properties they possessed. Absentees owned most other entitled properties in this period, and conveyed their common rights to tenants of these properties or those who merely leased rights of common. This reflected the gradual accumulation of enfranchised properties and rights by two gentry families (the Listers of nearby Gisburn Park and their relatives, the Curzons of Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire) after 1722.⁴⁶ By 1764, the two families owned (individually and jointly) 56 out of the 127 properties (44 per cent). By 1779 they owned

⁴⁰ Pricing stints of cows above those of horses contrasted to the differentials in pricing in most boroughs. By 1835 horses cost more to depasture per head than cows in a number of towns; *Reports on Municipal Corporations*, II, pp. 1106 (Basingstoke), 1248 (Chippenham); III, pp. 1745 (York), 1972 (Northampton), 2001 (Nottigham), 2034 (Sutton Coldfield); IV, pp. 2230 (Dunwich), 2289 (Huntingdon).

⁴¹ Lincs. RO, BNL, 'BNL Subs (BQ23)' (Chancery suit, Assheton & Penn Assheton Curzon v. Thomas Lister), deposition of James Standen, Poulton, Lancs., land surveyor, 15 Mar. 1784. Standen believed his estimates were accurate at the time he gave evidence, but would only remain so for a further 5–10 years if the lands remained unenclosed.

⁴² Between 1764 and 1779 the distribution of entitlements was as follows. Between 11% and 15% of properties were recorded as exercising no entitlement in any of the years; between 7% and 16% exercised less than one horse and one beastgate; between 41% and 51% exercised one horse and one beastgate; between 22% and 32% used more than one horse and one beastgate. Lancs. RO, MBC

27–33 and DDX 28/9.

⁴³ French, 'Urban agriculture', p. 180. In Sudbury, Suffolk, commoners gained access to the commons after paying less than one-third of the market value of the lands, although gross over-stocking seriously diminished the actual value of these lands.

⁴⁴ Self Weeks, *Clitheroe*, pp. 25–8.

⁴⁵ *Trials at Large*, p. 3. The fair on the 24 March was known as the 'Feast-Fair', the next, the 'Head-Fair', where cattle were bought and sold.

⁴⁶ The Listers of Gisburn Park lived within five miles of Clitheroe, and had long exerted influence in the borough as minor gentry. The Curzons were based at Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire, and their lead mines gave them greater wealth and prominence than the Listers. In 1716 Thomas Lister (1688–1745) and Nathaniel Curzon (1676?–1758) married the daughters and co-heirs of Sir Ralph Assheton of Whalley, acquiring Assheton's Clitheroe burgages, and forming an electoral alliance that continued until broken by Thomas Lister (1752–1826, cr. Lord Ribblesdale, 1797) in 1780. R. Sedgwick (ed.), *The House of Commons, 1715–1754* (2 vols, 1970), II, pp. 219, 599.

66, or 52 per cent. By 1785, on the eve of enclosure, they owned 95, or 75 per cent.⁴⁷ All these properties, and their rights of common, were in the hands of tenants and lessees.

In fact, by 1785 these 127 properties were owned by only 24 people, and occupied by 79 tenants.⁴⁸ That year, only two out of 24 landowners can be identified as principal ratepayers for these properties.⁴⁹ Sixty-eight of the tenants can be found on the overseers' assessment, rated at a median of 1s. 11¼d. (the median for all 98 ratepayers was 2s. 0d.). This implies that just before enclosure almost all these lands were in the hands of tenants, and that many of their rights were exercised by third parties who were not themselves occupiers of the soil.

The prevalence of tenancy affects the reliability of the data used in this study. While the number of property owners and lessees can be established securely from the 1781 Borough Survey and the marking books, there are no complete records of tenancy, particularly for the smaller estates in the borough. This means that the numbers of tenants cited in all subsequent analyses are *minima*. A mean of 56 tenants per year have been identified in the marking books, as indicated in Table 2, but the evidence from 1785 suggests that there may have been as many as twenty more. This suggests that some of the people cited below as leasing rights of common without real property entitlements, may in fact have been tenants as well.

II

Table 3 shows the gross totals for animals depastured during the nine years covered by the marking books. In general, the moors supported between 260 and 280 animals per annum in the period.⁵⁰ Cattle always outnumbered horses, usually in the ratio 2.5:1. This differs from the use of other town commons, such as Sudbury (where horses outnumbered cattle by between 1.1:1 and 2.6:1 between 1710 and 1728),⁵¹ and in Beverley and Northampton, but not on the 'strays' of (larger, more urban) York in the nineteenth century.⁵² This imbalance suggests that in Clitheroe the town moors were integrated closely into the surrounding *agrarian* pastoral

⁴⁷ In 1764, the Lister family owned 17 properties outright, the Curzons 3, and the two families had joint tenure of 36. In 1779, the Listers owned 19, the Curzons 3, and 44 were held jointly. By 1786, after rapid accumulation of burgages because of electoral rivalry between the two families, and the subsequent division of their joint estate, the Listers owned 58 properties, the Curzons 31, and there were still 6 owned jointly, mainly under a lease of Whalley Glebe.

⁴⁸ Calculated by cross-referencing commonable lands in the 1779 marking book (Lancs. RO, DDX 28/9) with 1785 overseers' assessment (MBC 634) to create a listing of tenants for these properties in 1785, with their poor rate assessments. Owners identified from Lincs. RO, BNL, Box 'Clitheroe Est. BNL (Lister & Curzon etc.)' 'Names of Persons interested in Commons and Wastes' (immediately prior to enclosure agreement, 1786).

⁴⁹ The two were John Parker, an attorney, shortly to invest in one of the first cotton spinning mills in the town, and Colonel Rigby, an army officer who had

married the daughter of Richard Sclater, Assheton Curzon's estate steward. Sir Lewis Namier and J. Brooke (eds.), *The House of Commons 1754-1790* (3 vols, 1964), II, p. 250; Lancs. RO, DDX 54/104.

⁵⁰ The mean number of horses and cattle depastured per year between 1764 and 1779 was 254, depastured on commons and wastes totalling 427 statute acres, allowing 0.6 animals per acre, or 1.68 acres per animal. This stocking rate may have been too dense to be sustained for the whole of the period for which the commons were open.

⁵¹ Sudbury ratios calculated from Table 2 in French, 'Urban agriculture', p. 186.

⁵² VCH *East Riding*, VI, p. 215; in Northampton there were 280 horses and 103 cows depastured in 1693, and 233 horses and 221 cows in 1698, VCH *Northamptonshire*, III, p. 23; in York in 1846 (after enclosure of larger outlying pasture commons), 484 cows and 201 horses and mares were depastured, VCH *The City of York*, p. 505.

TABLE 3. Total number of animals depastured on commons, with number of people exercising rights, 1764–79

	1764	1766	1769	1770	1773	1775	1776	1777	1779	mean
<i>Horses only</i>										
No. All Horses	22	27	22	25	18	12	30	20	14	21.1
% All Animals	8	11	8	9	7	4	12	7	6	8.0
No. Horse Owners	18	19	16	19	12	11	18	14	13	15.6
<i>Cattle only</i>										
No. Cattle only	75	92	96	108	55	102	136	105	87	95.1
% All animals	28	38	34	41	21	38	52	37	34	35.9
No. Cattle owners	36	29	27	31	22	35	42	34	30	31.8
<i>Horses + Cattle</i>										
No. Horses	55	48	54	47	61	64	49	56	59	54.8
No. Cattle	112	78	110	84	130	90	45	102	93	93.8
% All Animals	63	51	58	50	72	57	36	56	60	55.9
No Horse and cattle owners	31	25	26	23	29	29	22	30	30	27.2
<i>TOTALS</i>										
Total number horses	77	75	76	72	79	76	79	76	73	75.9
Total number horses	187	170	206	192	185	192	181	207	180	188.9
Total number animals	264	245	282	264	264	268	260	283	253	264.8
Total number people	85	73	69	73	63	75	82	78	73	74.6
Ratio Horses:Cattle	2.4	2.3	2.7	2.7	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.7	2.5	2.5

Source: Lancs. RO, commons marking books, MBC 27–33, DDX 28/9.

economy, and did not function as dedicated grazing for urban traction animals. Given the borough's very small population, and weak urban functions, it is unsurprising that the rural economy extended into the town itself, or that demand for grazing for traction animals was limited.

Table 3 also indicates that while between thirty to forty per cent of owners depastured both animals in each year, their holdings comprised more than half the total number of animals on the moors. Most commons users turned out both horses and cows. Only about ten per cent of users specialised in horses, with almost all having single animals. A further one-third of users depastured only cows. Only in 1776 did horse or cow specialists outnumber those who owned both types of animal, apparently because the latter group depastured many fewer cattle that year. The fluctuations in the different ownership categories (horses only, cattle only, horses and cattle) suggest two possibilities. The first is that the stock of animals held by commons' users varied considerably from year to year. In a pastoral economy, with annual stock rearing and spring sales, this would appear likely. The second is that the commons were used to supplement existing grazing rights on lands rented from private or institutional landlords. Fluctuations in the ownership categories in the marking books may capture different parts of the user's stock 'portfolio' in different years.

TABLE 4. Percentage distribution of use, horses and cattle, on Clitheroe commons, 1764–79

	1764	1766	1769	1770	1773	1775	1776	1777	1779	mean
Horses										
1	74	64	66	72	66	71	58	64	70	67.1
2–3	16	27	24	14	19	15	28	27	21	21.2
3–6	10	9	5	14	13	7	12	7	7	9.2
7–10	0	0	5	0	2	7	2	2	2	2.2
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
No of owners	49	44	42	42	41	40	40	44	43	42.8
Cattle										
1	46	44	30	44	43	42	44	36	48	41.9
2–3	34	31	36	27	31	33	31	37	23	31.6
4–6	12	15	21	15	14	16	17	13	18	15.7
7–10	4	4	7	6	4	5	3	9	7	5.4
11–15	0	2	0	2	2	3	5	5	2	2.3
≥16	3	4	6	6	6	1	0	0	2	3.1
	99	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100.0
No of owners	67	54	53	54	51	64	64	64	60	59.0

Source: Lancs. RO, commons marking books, MBC 27–33, DDX 28/9.

In the years surveyed, individual commons' users depastured a median of one horse per annum, and a median of two cows, reflecting the basic stint for most free borough houses. In general one-third of the commons' users depastured two-thirds of the horses and cattle on the moors each year. Those who turned out higher than average numbers of horses and cows comprised roughly a quarter of the total commons' users, but generally supplied almost half of the animals on the commons. This accumulation was achieved not by commons' users exceeding their stints, but by individuals amassing leases of the rights associated with individual properties, or fractions of them. As will be shown below, this is central to understanding the economy of the Clitheroe Town Moors.

Table 4 shows the percentage distribution of animal holdings among commons' users in the period. Roughly two-thirds of those depasturing horses on the moors depastured only one animal, while under half those depasturing cows did so. This confirms the findings of Table 3, showing that horse ownership among commons' users appears to have been a minority trait, and that very few users commoned more than one horse.⁵³ Cows were commoned in greater abundance, with 40 to 50 per cent of those depasturing cows turning out between two and six per annum. Approximately ten per cent of commons' users depastured more than seven cows

⁵³ Extrapolating from Table 4, only about 30 per cent of horse owners depastured more than one horse. A mean of 43 people per year depastured horses in these nine years, so only approximately 14 people per year depastured more than one horse.

each year. Since no individual property possessed rights to depasture more than seven animals (one horse and six cows), this was a clear sign of the accumulation of rights by a minority of commons' users.

The town moors also supported large gaggles of geese.⁵⁴ Records of geese rights survive in the marking books for 1766 and 1770–77. In these years a mean of 177 geese were depastured on the commons, being allotted (like the other livestock) in 'gates' – one 'goose gate' generally equalling eight geese.⁵⁵ Twenty-nine different individuals turned out geese on the commons in this period, the median number doing so each year being twelve. The median number of geese depastured by users during these six years was 14. Poultry rights were substituted for part of the 'beastgates' accorded to particular properties, but only one of those exercising poultry rights was a specialist who did not also exercise livestock rights. These figures show poultry farming was conducted on a commercial scale by approximately 16 per cent of commons' users each year.⁵⁶

III

While use of the commons was highly varied, it was not wholly equitable. The most intensive users of the commons were a relatively small group of people, who had accumulated rights and depastured large numbers of animals per annum. In the period 1764–79, 206 individuals are recorded in the marking books.⁵⁷ Table 2 divided commons' users into three categories – those who exercised rights of common by virtue of owning entitled properties; those who had common rights by renting these properties; and those who hired rights of common, without any tenure of an entitled property. As the table indicated, the number of property owners who exercised rights of common in person was very small, generally only two or three in each year.⁵⁸ This group (of 16 persons in total) has been amalgamated with those who rented properties endowed with common rights,⁵⁹ to create a single group of commons users by real property tenure. The other group is the lessees, commons users without (known) real property entitlements.

Table 5 analyses the use made of the commons by the two categories of property holders. It

⁵⁴ Dining on geese featured in the civic ceremonies of the borough in this period. See F. R. Raines (ed.), *Miscellanies, being a selection from the poems and correspondence of the Rev. Thomas Wilson BD* (Chetham Society, old ser., 45, 1857), pp. 24, 44–48. Wilson's Poem XIX was entitled 'The Goose', in which he noted 'And hence, too, in boroughs together they choose/A bailiff, or mayor, with a Michaelmas Goose', p. 44. In his correspondence, Wilson used the image of fat geese as a metaphor for the candidates for bailiffs in the borough, introduction, pp. xxviii–xxix.

⁵⁵ Geese gates had been larger in the seventeenth century. Lancs. RO, MBC 364, court of enquiry verdict, 1665 states that 16 geese constituted a gate that year; MBC 366, court of inquiry verdict, 1680, held that 12 geese constituted a gate, costing 1d.

⁵⁶ A mean of 12 commons' users out of a yearly mean of 75 exercised geese rights.

⁵⁷ These 206 people were comprised of 183 persons

who were tenants to property carrying entitlements and who hired such rights from others, plus 23 who exercised common rights only by virtue of their property entitlements during the years 1764–79.

⁵⁸ Ownership was established for free borough houses by cross-referencing with borough rentals, see n. 33 above, and Lancs. RO, DDHCl, box 108, 'General state ... 1782'. For other lands, properties were identified on DDHCl, map 18, Clitheroe Survey 1781 and DDX 1464/1, survey and valuation of Clitheroe, 1797.

⁵⁹ These tenants have been identified in a number of ways. For the 78 free borough houses, tenants can be identified by cross-referencing with Lincs. RO, BNL, box 1 Clitheroe Borough rentals 1760, 1761, 1764, 1767, 1770 & 1771, with BNL, box 'Clitheroe (C.J.'s)' Borough rental 1778, and Lancs. RO, MBC 5, Borough rental 1776. For other commonable lands the marking books provide the only clues.

TABLE 5. Percentage distribution of animals on Clitheroe commons and median numbers of animals owned per person, by property ownership categories, 1764–79

	<i>Owners or tenant of property exercising rights in person</i>		<i>Lessees (persons leasing access rights for property for which s/he is not also a tenant or owner)</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Horses				
1	8	13	84	46
2–3	24	41	49	27
4–6	16	27	26	14
7–10	4	6	11	6
≥10	8	13	13	7
Total	60	100	183	100
Median number of horses per person	3		2	
Cattle				
1	9	15	59	32
2–3	8	14	50	28
4–6	12	20	24	13
7–10	6	10	22	12
11–15	6	10	13	7
≥16	19	31	15	8
Total	60	100	183	100
Median number of cattle per person	7		3	

Source: Lancs. RO, commons marking books, MBC 27–33, DDX 28/9.

illustrates that those exercising common rights by real property entitlements tended to depasture larger median numbers of animals, particularly cattle, than those who lacked property. They were also more regular users of these rights, being entered in the marking books on a median of eight occasions, compared to the lessees' three entries per person over nine years. These trends imply that those holding property rights were also involved in the agrarian economy to a greater extent than those who hired common rights. This point is amplified by a breakdown of the cumulative patterns of use of the commons by these two groups. Unsurprisingly, the table suggests that individuals exercising commons rights by property entitlement had more consistent patterns of use than did lessees of these rights. While three-quarters of lessees depastured fewer than three horses in nine years, only half the tenants and owners did so. The trend was more pronounced in the use of cattle. Half the lessees depastured fewer than three cows, whereas 71 per cent of the property-entitled group depastured more than four cows in total during the sample years. In some years, such as 1766, 1770 and 1773 the latter group depastured a disproportionate number of cattle – more than 40 per cent of all the cattle on the commons, when they comprised between 33 and 38 per cent of users.

This was achieved by the accumulation of rights by a few individuals, such as James Whittaker,

TABLE 6. Median parish poor rate assessments (in shillings) of persons in property ownership categories, 1764–1779, 1785 and 1789

	<i>n</i>	1785		1789	
		<i>n</i>	(s.)	<i>n</i>	(s.)
Owner or tenant of property exercising rights of common in person	59	31	2.2	25	3.3
Lessees (persons leasing access rights to which s/he is not also a tenant or owner)	147	30	1.4	25	0.9
All commons users	206	61	1.8	50	2.2
All commons users and entitlement holders <i>not</i> exercising rights in person	302	84	2	75	3.1
All ratepayers	201	97	2	104	2.9

Source: Lancs. RO, commons marking books, MBC 27–33, DDX 28/9; MBC 634 (overseers' rate, 20 Aug. 1785), 730 (overseers' rate, Jan. 1789).

John Robinson and Nicholas Wilkinson, who turned out 15, 16 and 26 cows respectively on the commons in 1766. Whittaker had no property entitlements, and hired the rights of 11 different properties, which were owned by seven different people and in the hands of eight different tenants. Robinson rented one property, entitling him to one horse and one cow. He leased the rights of this property to two other people, and hired the rights for his 16 cows from seven properties, owned by seven people, and held by three tenants. Wilkinson was the only one of the three to make personal use of the common rights of a property that he rented, for one horse and two cows. However, he hired rights for 4 horses and 26 cattle from 16 different properties, owned by 11 different people and occupied by 11 separate tenants. For these three, and the five or so per cent of users who depastured more than ten head of cattle per annum, accumulation of common rights was a necessary prerequisite to pastoral farming on a commercial scale in the borough.

Table 5 also confirms what was seen in Tables 3 and 4, that horses were depastured in smaller quantities than cattle, presumably because individual commons' users owned fewer of them. A majority in both groups owned fewer than three horses per head. By comparison, in the more industrial town of Sudbury, commons' users depastured an average of 3.1 horses per person, and horses comprised the majority of animals on the commons.⁶⁰ This emphasizes again that the town moors of Clitheroe were used primarily as an agrarian resource (for pastoral agriculture), rather than as an adjunct to urban transport requirements.

Table 6 supports this picture of economic polarisation among commons users. It correlates the two categories of commons user to the two most proximate overseers' rates.⁶¹ Neither of these is wholly satisfactory for this purpose because they were made, respectively, six and ten years after the last marking book in the series. This reduces the number of users who can be identified, particularly among the apparently less static group of lessees. Despite the relatively

⁶⁰ French, 'Urban agriculture', Table 5, p. 190.

⁶¹ Lancs. RO, MBC 634 (overseers' rate, 20 Aug. 1785), MBC 730 (overseers' rate, Jan. 1789).

TABLE 7. Clitheroe commons users by occupational categories, 1764–1779

	Owners and tenants exercising rights in person		Persons leasing access rights for property to which s/he is not also a tenant or owner	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Labouring	3	5.1	11	7.5
Agricultural	4	6.8	6	4.1
Woodworks	1	1.7	3	2.0
Textiles	1	1.7	6	4.1
Leatherworkers	6	10.2	7	4.8
Food Producers	3	5.1	7	4.8
Metalworkers	2	3.4	4	2.7
Medical	1	1.7	3	2.0
Services	4	6.8	5	3.4
Clothing	2	3.4	5	3.4
Misc. Crafts	4	6.8	6	4.1
Gents	0	0.0	2	1.4
Clerics	2	3.4	0	0.0
Unidentified	26	44.1	82	55.8
Total	59	100.0	147	100.0

Key to occupational categories:

Agriculture = yeoman, husbandman, farmer; Woodworkers = carpenter, joiner, turner; Textiles = cotton spinner, cotton rover, cotton manufacturer, weaver; Leatherworkers = shoemaker, cordwainer, clogger, tallow chandler, skinner; Food producers = butcher, innkeeper, miller, grocer; Metalworkers = blacksmith, whitesmith; Medical = physician, surgeon, apothecary; Service = attorney, sergeant-at-law, estate steward, army officer, schoolmaster; Clothing = tailor, mercer, hatter; Misc crafts – limeburner, potter, servant, plasterer.

Sources: Lancs. RO, MBC 671 (Clitheroe militia return, 23 Dec. 1763); W. F. Irvine (ed.), *An index to the wills and inventories now preserved in the probate registry at Chester from AD 1761 to 1789* (2 vols, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire 37–8, 1898–9); id. *An index to the wills ... at Chester from 1781 to 1790* (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 44, 1902); id. *An index of wills ... at Chester from 1790–1800* (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 45, 1902); R. Stewart-Brown (ed.), *Wills and administrations ... at Chester for the years 1801–1810* (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 62–3, 1911–12); Lancs. RO DDX 28/259 (Clitheroe militia return, 12 Nov. 1802).

small sample sizes a pattern emerges, with those possessed of real property entitlements assessed at slightly higher median poor rates than those who hired these rights, or the parish as a whole. Presumably, this difference reflected the additional value of these real property entitlements, and (perhaps) the deeper, more extensive economic roots of the owners and tenants in the borough. More significantly, lessees appear to have been assessed for poor rates somewhat lower than the median for the parish as whole, suggesting that they were not (or were not perceived to be) as wealthy as the bulk of ratepayers. Although population turnover weakens any arguments about the exact social profile of those who hired their rights of common, they may have been less likely to have paid rates, and to have paid less when they did so, than those entitled through real property tenure.

Analysis of the surviving occupational evidence for those depasturing animals, shown in

TABLE 8. Mean and median numbers of horses and cattle pastured by occupational groups, Clitheroe commons, 1764–79

	<i>n</i>	<i>Horses</i>		<i>Cattle</i>		<i>Number of entries per person in marking books</i>	
		<i>mean</i>	<i>median</i>	<i>mean</i>	<i>median</i>	<i>mean</i>	<i>median</i>
Labouring	14	5.7	1.5	20.9	3	12.8	3
Agricultural	10	11.2	3.5	12.1	14	13.2	7
Woodworkes	4	7.7	8	10.8	8.5	13.3	8.5
Textiles	7	4.8	1	7.3	6.5	5.6	3
Leatherworkers	13	3.2	3	7.6	9	7.8	6
Food Producers	10	7.3	2.5	7.2	4	9.9	4.5
Metalworkers	6	3.2	3	7	5	7.7	7.5
Medical	4	2.0	1	3	3	3	2
Services	9	4.9	3	33.9	12	25.1	13
Clothing	7	2.2	2	6	1	2.9	2
Misc. Crafts	10	4.8	4	6.6	4	7.9	7
Gents ^a	2						
Clerics ^a	2						
All users	206	4.6	2	9.9	4	7.9	4

Key to occupations as Table 7.

Note: ^a Numbers too small to be meaningful.

Table 7, blurs this picture of polarisation. Occupational evidence exists for just under half of all commons' users,⁶² and results from these data can only be indicative, not conclusive. However, certain trends are evident. The proportion of labourers among the lessees was 50 per cent greater than amongst the property-entitlement group. There were also more textile producers, food producers (particularly – and obviously – butchers) and clothing workers (particularly tailors). These were generally low status trades, although textile producers (handloom weavers) were relatively prosperous in late eighteenth-century Lancashire. Those with property entitlements included higher proportions of agricultural occupations, leather processors, services (particularly legal professionals) and the miscellaneous (mainly construction) crafts. However, labourers, and most other crafts were also well represented among tenants exercising rights in person. The occupational differences between commoners possessed of real property entitlements, and those without, were marginal. The rating evidence suggests that differences were ones of wealth, or scale, rather than between economic sectors.

The small occupational samples make it difficult to analyse the extent of the use of the moors by these groups. Table 8 examines the mean and median numbers of animals depastured by these occupations over the nine years of the study. The median figures are subject to less distortion than the means. None of the occupations examined were very heavy users of the commons, with

⁶² Ninety-eight out of 206 commons users (48 per cent).

only woodworkers and the service sector featuring regularly in the marking books. Not surprisingly, the most intensive users of the commons, particularly for cattle, were the agricultural occupations. The four woodworkers in the sample also used the commons frequently, both for horses and cattle, and were quite heavily involved in assignments of commons' rights, while the leather working trades and the service or professional trades concentrated on cattle, accumulating rights in order to do so. Across the nine years examined, the bulk of the occupational groups using the commons – textile, leather and metal workers, food producers and the miscellaneous crafts – turned out relatively small numbers of horses and cows (with a bias towards the latter). Significantly, perhaps, labourers appear to have depastured fewer animals than the median for all users. Their use averages out as only one horse per labourer every six years, and one cow every three years. This pattern of use was similar to the (rarely wealthy) clothing trades – tailors, mercers and hatters – and the non-agrarian medical professions.

While Tables 5–8 are not, in themselves, conclusive, they point to some degree of polarisation in the use of the commons. Those who used the commons by virtue of real property entitlements depastured the largest numbers of animals, and accumulated the greatest number of rights to allow them to do so. Significantly, however, they hired many of these additional rights, instead of expanding the number of properties they leased. Like other commons' users, they engaged in frenetic exchanges of all these access rights to meet their pasture requirements. They also possessed a similar wealth profile to most ratepayers in the town, and engaged in the (limited) variety of trades practised in this small market centre. Those who hired their rights of common without any real property entitlement depastured far fewer cattle (in particular) than did the property holders. They also seem to have been assessed at lower rates for poor relief, rates that were at, or below, the average for the parish as a whole. Some of them may not have been regarded as prosperous enough to contribute to the relief of the poor. These appear to have been differences of wealth, rather than of occupation. There was a similar distribution of occupations among tenants and lessees, with labourers being represented in both groups, but only in the same proportions that Shaw-Taylor has identified in central England.

Users of the commons represented a broad swathe of the ratepaying and (relatively) prosperous labouring householders of the borough. At their top extent, they included a handful of minor property owners – unusual for their residence in the borough and their direct use of their commons rights. They encompassed a band of tenants, mostly tradesmen and agriculturalists, who often combined the direct exercise of their leasehold common rights with rights hired from other tenants. Below them extended a long tail of those who hired their rights in a particular year, some of whom might (in the two decades of the study) occasionally rent a property with commons rights as well. This group were also practitioners of trades and crafts, small farmers, and day labourers. Many were still recorded on the overseers' rates half a decade or a decade after the last marking book, but some (an unknown proportion) may have been more likely to receive than to pay poor rates. This fragmentary evidence, and the overlaps in wealth and status, makes it difficult to impose sharp distinctions between different types of commons user – particularly between tenants and lessees. It is better to visualize users as ranged along an extended, but largely uninterrupted, spectrum of property rights and access to resources. Undoubtedly this included perhaps 20 per cent who were landless labourers, as well as craftsmen of modest (and wholly non-landed) means. However, the cost of a 'beastgate', as

well as of the stock itself, must have excluded those on the margins of economic independence, or those becoming immersed in ‘shallow poverty’.⁶³

Differences based on the property entitlements of commons users become even more difficult to sustain when we examine the actual patterns of use by a particular individual, chosen at random from the database. Clement Proctor, a nail maker, used the commons between 1764 and 1777, depasturing a total of seven horses and four cows in the years for which the marking books survive.⁶⁴ In order to do this, however, he exchanged all the entitlements of the three properties to which he was tenant – Almonds, Croasdale Fields and Taylors – rather than exercising them in person. Over these years, he conveyed the rights of Almonds to seven different individuals; those of Croasdale Fields to one person; and those of Taylors to three different people. Meanwhile, he hired the entitlements of five other properties, in the hands of five other tenants, and owned by three individuals. In sum, Proctor assigned 14 full entitlements from the three properties to which he was tenant, and needed one full entitlement and 9 half entitlements from five other properties to meet his pasture requirements.

In 1764, for example, he depastured three cows and two horses. He hired one cow (half the entitlement) for Dale’s (late Holcroft’s) burgage, from the tenant Henry Hayhurst, and one cow (the full entitlement) from his Croasdale Fields – both owned by Lister and Curzon jointly. He also hired the full rights (one horse, one cow) of Longfield’s burgage (owned by Thomas Lister), from the tenant Nicholas Bailey who did not depasture cattle that year. At the same time he assigned his rights for Almonds to Hannibal Swales, who received three other horses and two cows from assignments from three other properties that year, but who was not a tenant to any of them. Meanwhile, Henry Hayhurst leased all the rights for the one property to which he was tenant, and hired rights to depasture one horse from another tenant of Lister and Curzon, Thomas Brown.

These transfer arrangements appear unnecessarily complicated, but their existence may reveal the crucial operating principles on which the pastoral economy of the Clitheroe Town Moors was based. Proctor could have depastured the same number of animals using his own entitlement, without exchanging rights with any other people. However, such an exchange was necessary in order to establish a market in commons’ rights. To create ‘liquidity’ in rights, people like Clement Proctor needed to offer some or all of their own rights, and trade with others to meet their own requirements. Such a market was necessary because of the tiny proportion of owners, and relatively low numbers of tenants exercising their rights of common in person.

While we lack complete records of tenancy on these 127 properties, it is possible to make some extrapolations. Evidence of tenancy exists for a mean of 56 per cent of these properties over the nine years of the sample. In general, tenants exercised their commons’ rights in person on about one in three of these properties.⁶⁵ If this ratio applied to the remaining properties,

⁶³ The distinction between occasional or ‘shallow’ and chronic or ‘deep’ poverty is made by P. Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (1986), p. 39. I have encountered no evidence for cow hire or the leasing of dairies in Clitheroe sources in this period.

⁶⁴ Occupation derived from W. F. Irvine (ed.), *An Index to the wills and inventories now preserved in the*

Probate Registry at Chester from AD 1790 to 1800 (Lancashire and Cheshire Rec. Soc., 45, 1902).

⁶⁵ In 1764, for example, evidence about tenants’ identity exists for 65/127 properties, or 51%. Of these 65 properties, on only 21 (or 32%) did tenants exercise their rights of common in person.

then each year approximately 89 out of the 127 properties would lack tenants willing or able to depasture animals. Clearly, therefore, the town moors were not functioning according to the assumptions inherent in the customs that governed them. Most burgage tenants, in particular, did not require access to the commons, presumably because they did not engage directly in animal husbandry. Rights were assigned to those who could use them, rather than to those who possessed formal property entitlements to them.

While this explains the prevalence of lessees of rights among users of the commons, it does not explain the complexity of Clement Proctor's behaviour. Contemporaries agreed that the actual value of commons' rights was greater than the fees for 'beastgates', providing a margin to be exploited by the user. No evidence exists that tenants exploited this margin when they traded rights. Even so, Proctor's behaviour might be explained by inferring that he sublet the grazing rights to which he was entitled as a tenant for a higher price than the cost of the rights that he hired from the other tenants. The fact that one-in-three tenants seem to have exercised a portion of their real property entitlements directly suggests that the 'market' in commons rights operated as single trades between individuals, rather than through collective reapportionment. If it had been the latter, we might have expected to see the pooling of all formal entitlements, followed by a general reassignment.

Presumably this 'market' occurred when the commons were closed (between March and early May). We might expect prices to have risen as the day of opening approached, and individuals competed to accommodate all their stock in time. The four Pinders recorded these complicated transfers in the margin of the marking books so that they knew by what entitlement individuals exercised rights of common. This hidden market in commons' rights was the economic mechanism by which rights that were tied to properties could be detached and linked to people, without the properties themselves changing hands – either through sale or lease.⁶⁶ It reconciled the fluctuating annual pasture requirements of commons' users with fixed (customary) property entitlements, an almost wholly inflexible land market, and with a majority of leasehold tenants who had no cattle to depasture.

This was an effective, if *ad hoc*, system of management, accommodating those who could afford livestock even if it circumvented stinting arrangements, breaking the link between rights and property tenure, and ignoring earlier seventeenth-century strictures against assignments to non-tenants. In practice, it offered access to the Town Moors to any inhabitant with the money to pay for it. The social profile of these users seems to have been broadly similar to that of the bulk of rate paying householders in the borough. The policy of relatively open access may have reflected a low or medium pressure agrarian regime, as a function of the borough's small total population. Only about one-third of the 250 households in the town at this time used the commons each year.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Another example of actual practice belying theories about tenure and agrarian history, albeit in a radically different environment, occurs in S. Hipkin, 'Tenant farming and short-term leasing on Romney Marsh, 1587–1705', *EcHR* 53 (2000), pp. 646–76.

⁶⁷ Lancs. RO, MBC 650 (draft of 1801 census) gives 283 households in the borough. There were probably no more than 250 households there before 1779. See also Self Weeks, *Clitheroe*, p. 5.

IV

This was the situation that existed before the Enclosure Act of 1786 and the process on the ground that extended into 1788. Agreement to enclose was swift and largely uncontentious, and although the reasons behind enclosure are unclear, there is little evidence that enclosure was provoked because pressure on the commons had increased or that they had become impossible to manage (although the surveyor James Standen's comments noticed earlier imply overgrazing). Enclosure seems to have been contemplated for several years before the 1786 Act. In his March 1784 deposition, Standen had remarked that the commons were 'so circumstanced as to be very proper for inclosure and division and that the said inclosure and division would be in a very great degree advantageous to the owners of the tenements having rights of common thereon ... on account of the goodness of the land or soil of the said commons ...'.⁶⁸ Two other land surveyors, George Lang and Matthew Oddie, echoed this opinion. All agreed that enclosure would increase the rental value of the lands, with Standen estimating the increase (excluding enclosure costs) at about 44 per cent per annum. These expectations had been evident a year earlier, when the joint estate of Lister and Curzon was surveyed by Standen. He noted that by the terms of the lease of a free borough house, Robert Haworth was to be allowed £1 4s. *od.* per annum in lieu of his common rights (worth £1) should an enclosure take place.⁶⁹

In fact, the financial motives behind enclosure were less obvious than they first appear. Enclosure stemmed from the electoral dispute that had flared up between the Listers and the Curzons in the summer of 1780. Their dominant ownership of the enfranchised properties in the town had allowed the two families to nominate one each of the borough's two MPs. The Listers owned more burgages individually than did the Curzons, but had always previously co-operated in selecting candidates.⁷⁰ In 1780, nursing various personal grudges, Thomas Lister vetoed nomination of burgesses to vote for these jointly owned properties and used his own burgages to out-vote the Curzons.⁷¹ He repeated the manoeuvre in 1782. The rivalry between the families created a sudden, dramatic seller's market in burgages as the two families bought up as many voting rights as they could.⁷² In return, the Curzons claimed voting rights for some

⁶⁸ Lincs. RO, BNL, box 'BNL Subs (BQ 23)', deposition of James Standen, 15 Mar. 1784.

⁶⁹ Lancs. RO, DDHCL, box 120, Survey of the joint estate of Thomas Lister and Assheton Curzon in Clitheroe, 1783.

⁷⁰ *An answer to the apology for the conduct of Thomas Lister esq.: respecting the Borough of Clitheroe* (c. 1781), pp. 47–8.

⁷¹ Lancs. RO, DDHCL, box 108, 'General state ... 1782', fo. 14. 'Owing to some ill treatment Mr. Lister had received from Mr. Curzon [his uncle and guardian] soon after he came of age [1773]; having reasons also for suspicion and dissatisfaction from the conduct of Sclater, Mr. Curzon's agent, and withal born and possessed with the idea that Mr. Curzon had enjoyed a seat for this borough entirely thro' the favor of his family'. This last

opinion was apparently shared by Lister's father and uncle who sat for Clitheroe 1761–73. Lincs. RO, BNL, box 1, 'Mr. Whetiker's Observations' about 1780 Election; YAS, MD 335/23, Nathaniel Lister to Nicholas Winckley, 1 Jan. 1764.

⁷² Between July and Sept. 1780, Richard Eddleston (Lister's election agent in Clitheroe) purchased 8½ burgages for Lister (and c. 90 acres of land), and sold him 4 of his own, for a total sum of £24,490. Eddleston admitted that he sold three of his burgages with an annual rental value of £4 10s. *od.* to Lister for £600 (a rate of 107 years' purchase!). Lincs. RO, BNL, box 'Subs (BQ 23)', deposition of Richard Eddleston, sen., gent., 15 Mar. 1784. In the period 1726–75, the two families had spent only £9,013 5s. *od.* purchasing 54 burgages. *id.*, deposition of John Addison, Inner Temple, London, gent.

of their properties which possessed rights of common (like 78 of the burgages), but for which there was little prior evidence of enfranchisement.⁷³

The dispute took five years to resolve. Resolution required agreement to stop buying burgages, a division of the families' joint estate,⁷⁴ and an undertaking that 'both parties shall consent to and concur in a division of the Commons and wastes in Clitheroe by Act of Parliament or otherwise as shall be deemed necessary'.⁷⁵ Presumably, this last action was to prevent any repetition of the Curzons' efforts to expand the franchise by claiming voting rights for commonable properties.⁷⁶

These disputes had also left the two families heavily in debt. In the mid-1780s, Lister's advisor, Rev. Thomas Collins, calculated that Lister was in debt to the tune of £48,000 on an annual income of £5–6000.⁷⁷ In April 1786, Lister wrote urgently to his steward indicating his desire to sell his Clitheroe estate. 'Don't mention a word to anyone that I have any intention to sell the Clitheroe estate till the commons are divided [as] it may injure the allotment I may get[,] but upon the whole I think it will be getting rid of a great many incumbrances'.⁷⁸ In fact, Lister did not sell this estate until 1802, but financial pressures may have made the anticipated return from the enclosure appear to be a small, but welcome financial benefit. Meanwhile, between 1760 and 1777 the Curzons had spent £42,000 on the building of Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire. In 1779 they had sold their London estate, with an annual rental value of £1,100.⁷⁹ The purchase of 28 burgages at highly inflated prices can only have added to their financial burdens at this time.⁸⁰

The dominance of these two families within the borough ensured little opposition to the enclosure. A public meeting in August 1785 resolved unanimously that enclosure would 'be greatly advantageous to the proprietors and beneficial to the publick'.⁸¹ An Act was to be sought in the next session of Parliament – presumably by Thomas Lister, one of the borough's two MPs. The corporation was to have one-twentieth of the final allotment, and would contribute £100 towards the expence of the Act and enclosure (implying an anticipated total cost of £2,000). Three enclosure commissioners were chosen, to represent Lister, Curzon, and all other inter-

⁷³ Ibid., 'Second part of the brief for Thomas Lister and John Parker esqs. sitting members against the petitioner Assheton Curzon esq. and the petition of Alexander Rigby and others in the interest of Mr. Curzon claiming freehold estates there and to vote in respect thereof'.

⁷⁴ In 1785 Lister sold 25 burgages to Curzon for £10,000. Lancs. RO, DDHCl, box 108, 'General state ... 1782', fo. 121v.

⁷⁵ Lancs. RO, DDFr 5/63 (Book of agreements respecting the Borough of Clitheroe, 1785–1824), pp. 1–6.

⁷⁶ Lancs. RO, DDHCl, box 108, 'General state ... 1782', fos. 115–18, suggests Curzon appealed to parliament to vest election rights in all the freeholders in the borough.

⁷⁷ YAS, MD 335/81, Rev. Thomas Collins to Thomas Lister, n. d. Collins calculated that if Lister sold two properties valued at £7,000, his gross income would be

£5,450 per annum. In 1781 Nathaniel Lister warned his nephew that Assheton Curzon was claiming that Lister was £60,000 in debt! MD335/23, Nathaniel Lister to Thomas Lister, 4 May 1781.

⁷⁸ YAS, MD 335/81, Thomas Lister to David Kaye, 4 Apr. 1786.

⁷⁹ Namier and Brooke (eds.), *House of Commons, 1754–1790*, II, pp. 287–8.

⁸⁰ In addition to the 28 burgages, between 1780–82 Curzon purchased at least 90 acres of land in the borough. Lincs. RO, BNL, box 1, Richard Eddleston jun. to Rev. Thomas Collins, 2 Nov. 1780.

⁸¹ YAS, MD 335/81, 'Meeting of the Corporation and other persons having interests in the moors and wastes within the borough', 30 Aug. 1785. There is no record of the names of those who attended this meeting, but there were only 24 individual and institutional owners who possessed common rights.

ested parties respectively. In fact, the decision to enclose may not have been wholly unanimous. A pre-enclosure survey of ownership rights in 1785 indicates that seven out of twenty four owners of commonable properties had not yet given formal consent to the enclosure.⁸²

The allotment process was more contentious than the agreement to enclose. Allotments to individuals were made by calculating the annual monetary value of the number of beastgates owned by each proprietor, then awarding a share of the common land of equivalent annual rental value.⁸³ Lister's Clitheroe attorney and advisor, Richard Eddleston sen., manoeuvred to ensure his client secured the best deal from the allotment process, or at least kept pace with the Curzons. He foresaw two points at which Lister's interest might be damaged. In the valuation of common land equivalent to the number of beastgates, he warned that 'four to five hundred pounds may easily be lost or gained in point of valuing such parts of the common'.⁸⁴

The second point of danger came early the following year, when the actual allotments were staked out. On 31 January 1787 Eddleston expressed his frustration to Lister. 'Yesterday, I privately viewed your allotments ... with which I am greatly dissatisfied, thinking you much injured ... for Mr. Curzon hath *more* and *better* land allotted than you have, and *twice as good* in point of situation'.⁸⁵ Eddleston argued that Lister's allotment on Little Moor, was obstructed by a grant to Lord Petre. On Salthill Moor he lamented that Lister's allotment was 'the worst part of it'. The High Moor allotment was 'tolerable good land', but without a supply of water in summer. Eddleston advised an exchange with the well-watered land allotted to the corporation, asking uncharitably 'what matters it, whether the borough allotment makes £5 or £10 a year to be idly spent[?]'.⁸⁶

Eddleston reported lobbying the third commissioner for an exchange with some of Curzon's allotments, because these were situated closer to the town, and would have a higher rental value. Enclosure had altered land use, and so values. Lister's existing estate was concentrated close to the town, and had benefited previously in rental value by having open access to common land.⁸⁶ Eddleston feared that after enclosure, Lister's existing properties would be worth less because his biggest contiguous allotments were now at a distance on Low and High Moors – unless common land of higher intrinsic value could be obtained.

Such an exchange was made, and Lister's allotment was the only one that increased markedly in worth between the valuation of the beastgates, and the award of lands of equivalent annual value. His total claim, based on the valuation of 125 beastgates was 2012.05s. (or £100 12s 0d.). His final award consisted of 60 plots of land, valued at £159 4s. 0d., or 158 per cent of the beastgate valuation.⁸⁷ The mean variation between the two valuations for the other 23 proprietors was only 3.8 per cent. Between the two, Lister gained 50 acres, while Curzon, Lord Petre and

⁸² Lincs. RO, BNL, box 'Clitheroe Est. BNL (Lister v. Curzon)', 'Names of persons interested in commons and wastes', n.d. These seven included John Aspinall (an infant), the Governors of Clitheroe Grammar School, Thomas Baron, Mr. Robinson, John Oddie, James Hall and Richard Parkinson. Between them they owned only 16% of the land possessed of common rights: 93.5a and one burgage out of 568.5a (customary) of commonable land and 78 burgages.

⁸³ Lancs. RO, DP 440 (Acc. 4026), Clitheroe Commons

allotment book, 1786. Fifteen out of twenty-four proprietors had their 'beastgates' valued at 16.05s. each. The remaining 9 had their's valued at 15.77s.

⁸⁴ YAS, MD 335/81, Richard Eddleston sen. to Rev. Thomas Collins, 2 June 1786.

⁸⁵ Ibid., Richard Eddleston sen. to Thomas Lister, 31 Jan. 1787 (emphasis as in original).

⁸⁶ Ibid., Richard Eddleston sen. to Thomas Lister, 28 May 1786 (emphasis as in original).

⁸⁷ Lancs. RO, DP 440 (Acc. 4026).

Whalley Glebe lost 23 acres.⁸⁸ Lister's gain can be explained in two ways. Richard Eddleston may have been correct, and Lister could have received compensation in the final allotment for an inaccurate valuation of his existing entitlements. Alternatively, Eddleston's criticism of the allotment, haggling for different valuations, and swapping portions of land may have added £59 per annum, and 50 acres, to the value of Lister's award. Clearly, a great deal of scheming occurred. Henry Waddington wrote to Lister, complaining about the activities of his 'Clitheroe brethren', concluding that 'in my life I never saw such partial dealings as these'.⁸⁹

The moors were allotted and staked out by April 1787, but after all the haggling it was now too late in the season to plant quickset hedges.⁹⁰ Eddleston rented out Lister's common lands in the pre-enclosure way, by letting beast gates out to individuals. Eddleston also estimated that delay to drainage work and other 'improvements' until the following year would reduce expense by one-third, particularly labour costs. Waddington advised that enclosure costs should be passed onto tenants, particularly for small plots near their existing holdings, for which they might receive compensation in the form of seven-year leases, at below market rents.⁹¹

V

The enclosure exemplified the dominance over the borough of Thomas Lister and Assheton Curzon. Between them, they received 69 per cent of the final enclosed acreage, 228 out of 335 acres. Twenty-two other landowners received the remaining 105 acres, none having more than 20 acres, and 15 gaining less than 5 acres. Lister and Curzon were also allotted the largest contiguous blocks – Lister was given most of Low Moor and Curzon was awarded the majority of High Moor. The other significant awards (but all below 10 acres) were to the heirs of John Aspinall, to Thomas Weld, to his fellow Catholic absentee Lord Petre, to Colonel Rigby and to Thomas Baron. Most other allotments comprised tiny parcels of 'back commons', as the network of wayside greens and broad track-ways between the town and the River Ribble were carved up, and narrower, more clearly defined highways were created. In the 1786 Enclosure Award 19 out of 24 allotments (79 per cent) were of less than 10 acres, with 15 (63 per cent) being under 5 acres. There were only two awards of more than twenty acres. This matches James Standen's pre-enclosure estimate of the land area equivalent to the pasture rights of the standard entitlement of one 'horsegate' and one 'cowgate'. In fact, the size of most individual parcels was of one acre or less. Most of these fragments were simply amalgamated into the holdings on which they bordered, fenced in at the expense of the owners or tenants.

Enclosure had little obvious effect on ownership. Since almost all the land in the borough had been leased before the Act (most of it by absentee landlords possessed of much larger estates elsewhere), enclosure did not force land sales or provoke further accumulation. A decade after the enclosure, in 1797, ownership and tenancy were subject to a thorough survey.

⁸⁸ Lancs. RO, MBC 1 (Clitheroe Enclosure Award 1786) gives the commons a total acreage of 288a customary (plus 2a of quarries and a well); DP 440 (Acc. 4026) (Clitheroe Commons allotment book, 1786) gives a total acreage of 335a customary. Since the final allotments were based on the latter document, this seems the more reliable figure.

⁸⁹ YAS, MD 335/81, Henry Waddington to Thomas Lister, 27 Jan. 1787.

⁹⁰ Ibid., Richard Eddleston sen. to Thomas Lister, 1 Apr. 1787.

⁹¹ Ibid., Henry Waddington to Thomas Lister, 18 Feb. 1787.

TABLE 9. Percentage distribution of ownership, 1781 and 1797 surveys, with distribution of tenancy, 1797

<i>Customary acres</i>	<i>1781</i>		<i>1797</i>			
	<i>owners</i>		<i>owners</i>		<i>tenants</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<0.5	1	3	2	8	1	2
≥0.5–<0.9	0	0	1	4	0	0
≥1.0–<4.9	6	17	4	15	19	29
≥5.0–<9.9	2	6	3	12	14	22
≥10.0–<19.9	12	34	7	27	15	23
≥20.0–<49.9	9	26	4	15	10	15
≥50.0–<99.9	4	11	3	12	4	6
≥100–<149.9	0	0	0	0	0	0
≥150	1	3	2	8	2	3
Total	35	100	26	101	65	100

Sources: Lancs. RO, DDHCl, map 18 (map of Clitheroe, 1781); DDX 1464/1 (survey of Clitheroe, 1797).

Table 9 depicts the categories of ownership and tenancy. In 1797, there were 26 owners of land and 65 tenants within the borough (exclusive of borough houses), with six individuals being both owners and tenants. This represented some consolidation of ownership since 1781, but most of this was in the frenetic electoral disputes between Lister and Curzon between 1781 and 1786, not because of the subsequent enclosure. The only other significant transfer was in 1789 when John Parker purchased Lady Stourton's estate (22.75a) from her executors.⁹²

The effects of enclosure on tenants and sub-tenants are much more difficult to determine because in this respect we cannot compare 1797 with 1781.⁹³ Enclosure did not, fundamentally, alter the basis of tenancy in the borough. It may have depleted the income of tenants who leased their rights of common to other people, but this might have been offset by a general increase in farm size and a regime of moderate rents. Since tenants farmed almost all lands there, allotments of commons were simply added to their existing holdings. Landlords may have limited the accompanying increases in rent, in order to pass on the capital costs of fencing and drainage to their tenants. However, on the sale of Lister's estate in 1801, the purchaser's surveyor also noted that the enfranchised tenants had secured 'long leases at very inferior rents' for 'themselves and their friends' during the elections of 1780 and 1782.⁹⁴ The following year a survey suggested that total rents there were 39 per cent below estimated market levels.⁹⁵

⁹² Lancs. RO, DDHCl, box 108, 'General state ... 1782', fos 8, 12, 38r–v, 89.

⁹³ No schedule survives to accompany Lancs. RO, DDHCl, Map 18 (1781 survey), but the map gives the owner's name and the field acreage.

⁹⁴ Lincs. RO, BNL, box 'Clitheroe (C.J.s)', 'Mr. G's observations on the estate of Lord Ribblesdale', 19 June 1801.

⁹⁵ Lancs. RO, DDFr 5/29, 'Particular of estates belonging to Lord Ribblesdale in Clitheroe', n. d. [1802?]. The total 'present value' of rents was £750, the estimated value £1219. However, in England generally rents were 26 per cent higher in 1800 compared to 1780. B. A. Holderness, 'Prices, productivity, and output', in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, VI, 1750–1850 (1989), p. 125.

TABLE 10. Percentage distribution of occupational groups of tenants, persons in agricultural employment and persons in trade or manufacturing, Clitheroe, 1801 census.

<i>Occupations in 1801</i>	<i>Tenants (in 1797)</i>		<i>Non tenants in 1797 employed in agriculture in 1801</i>		<i>Non-tenants in 1797 employed in trade in 1801</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Labouring	2	4	33	66	15	16
Agricultural	8	16	8	16	2	2
Woodworkers	4	8	2	4	5	5
Textiles	4	8	4	8	20	21
Leatherworkers	5	10	0	0	14	15
Food Producers	6	12	1	2	11	12
Metalworkers	2	4	0	0	12	13
Medical	2	4	0	0	0	0
Services	4	8	0	0	2	2
Clothing	1	2	1	2	8	8
Misc. Crafts	6	12	1	2	6	6
Gents	3	6	0	0	0	0
Clerics	2	4	0	0	0	0
Total	49	98	50	100	95	100

Key to occupations as Table 7.

Sources: Lancs. RO, MBC 650 (draft census return, 10–12 Mar. 1801); DDX 1464/1 (survey and valuation of Clitheroe township, 1797).

Tenants on the two largest estates in the borough may not, therefore, have been deterred by the burdens of enclosing and ‘improving’ allotments consisting of several parcels of an acre or less. New allotments can be identified on forty individual tenancies (out of 137 holdings) on the 1797 Survey, and the mean ratio of new land to old was only 1:7.2 acres, the median 1:4.6 acres, or 13 to 22 per cent increases in holding sizes. The biggest allotments were added to the larger farms, or turned into farms in their own right. Curzon let his allotment on High Moor as two farms of 52 and 26 acres respectively.⁹⁶ Lister incorporated his 54-acre allotment on Low Moor into a neighbouring farm, creating a holding of 83 acres. He also arranged a disparate collection of commons’ allotments totalling 26 acres around the core of a 14-acre allotment on High Moor. These large new farms may have encouraged the arrival of some more highly capitalised tenants.

The effects of enclosure are much less clear on that group of approximately fifty commons’ users who depended on the annual assignment of access rights by owners or tenants in 1797. Table 10 illustrates the occupational profile of tenants and non-tenants, Table 11 of all those listed in the 1802 Militia Return in the borough. In relation to agriculture, two trends are apparent. The first is the preponderance of crafts among the tenants to lands in 1797. The

⁹⁶ Lancs. RO, DDX 1464/1, Survey and valuation of the township of Clitheroe by Thomas Whyman, 1797.

TABLE 11. Clitheroe: occupations of adult males in the 1802 Militia Return

	<i>N</i>	(%)
Labouring	63	24
Agricultural	21	8
Woodworkes	15	6
Textiles	52	19
Leatherworkers	23	8
Food Producers	18	7
Metalworkers	16	6
Medical	2	1
Services	7	3
Clothing	21	8
Misc. Crafts	19	7
Gents	5	2
Clerics	3	1
Total	265	100

Key to occupations as Table 7.

Source: Lancs. RO, DX 28/259.

occupations of those who were tenants followed the general distribution of occupations in the town. The generally less remunerative categories of labourers, textile workers and the clothing trades were significantly under-represented among the tenants. However, food producers, medical practitioners, service/professionals, other crafts, gentlemen and clerics were significantly over-represented. Both features imply that tenants were, on average, wealthier than the bulk of the town's male householders.

The second notable trend is the dominance of labourers among the household heads of 'families employed in agriculture' in the 1801 Census. Two-thirds of those in this category had a household head described as a labourer, whereas only 24 per cent of all adult males eligible for military service in 1802 were described in this way.⁹⁷ This specialisation is not surprising, given the extent to which agriculture in the town in this period conformed to the standard model of 'agrarian capitalism' – rentier owners, farming by tenants, workforce of labourers. However, it does imply that commons' users who hired their rights without real property entitlements were drawn largely from this group of labourers, even if only a relatively small proportion of them could actually afford animals, and commons' charges.

Tables 10 and 11 also illustrate two further points about agriculture in the borough at this time. A wide variety of trades rented some land, but the manpower required to conduct agriculture came primarily from a group of specialists, mostly agricultural labourers, who comprised 32 per cent of the occupations in the town in 1802. Little direct evidence exists about

⁹⁷ The Clitheroe militia return of 12 Nov. 1802 was a listing of all adult males in the Borough, from whom those liable to serve could be drawn in line with the provisions of 49 Geo. III, c. 90. See P. Glennie, *Distinguishing men's trades: occupational sources and debates for pre-census England* (Historical Geography Research Series 25, 1990), p. 49.

the effects of enclosure in the borough. However, it may, marginally, have diminished the involvement of the non-agrarian occupations in agriculture, by restricting pasture rights to tenants. Tradesmen with a horse or a cow may not have been able to justify renting sufficient land to pasture them throughout the year. Enclosure may also have reduced the ability of some labourers to keep their own animals by sub-contracting commons' rights, possibly from their employers. Of course, post-enclosure they could strike similar bargains with employers, but tenants may not have tolerated overstocking on land now under their direct control.

The numbers of people employed in trade or manufactures in 1801 also illustrates that approximately two-thirds of householders in Clitheroe had little or no direct involvement in, or obvious income from, agriculture. Enclosure may have had no impact upon them. The story might have been different had enclosure occurred earlier in the century. Reviewing the occupations of 290 fathers recorded in the parish baptism register between 1722–42, most occupational categories occur in similar proportions to 1802, plus or minus a maximum of three per cent.⁹⁸ Three significant differences occur. The proportion of labourers was five per cent higher in 1802. Those bearing agricultural occupations (yeomen and husbandmen) fell from 26 per cent of the sample of fathers, to 8 per cent in 1802. Textile workers rose from 4 per cent of fathers to 20 per cent of occupations in 1802. The decline in agriculture may have been the result in the decline in the number of small tenants and owner-occupiers, and a resultant shift in occupational title from 'husbandman' to 'labourer'. Agricultural involvement continued, but dependence on wages may have increased. The increase in textile workers probably reflects an absolute shift in the economy of the town and the region through the period.

This shift was symbolized by the fate of lands adjacent to the Town Moors. In March 1787 Henry Waddington wrote to Thomas Lister advising him not to dispose of portions of his newly acquired commons' allotment. 'Don't part hastily[,] I rather incline to think that Mr. Peell hath some view of [building a] Cotton Works which a little time will shew. Mr. John Parker is begun building one on Mr. Weld's lands and wants to purchase a meadow close of you by which means he will have a much greater power of water upon his wheel'.⁹⁹ By 1789 these two cotton-spinning 'manufactories', Primrose Mill and Eddisford Mill, had been built to take advantage of this waterpower.¹⁰⁰ Other small workshops and 'manufactories' were also being built. By 1795, these developments had created an archival anachronism. That year, the borough 'Call Book', the municipal equivalent of the manorial (and Medieval) 'view of frankpledge', recorded the 32 waged employees of the two mills – the very essence of the 'Industrial Revolution'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Lancs. RO, PR 1859/00 (Clitheroe Baptism Register 1722–41). Father's occupations have simply been summed per instance recorded, not totalled by individual.

⁹⁹ YAS, MD 335/81, Henry Waddington to Thomas Lister, 3 Mar. 1787.

¹⁰⁰ Lancs. RO, MBC 730 (Clitheroe overseers' poor rate, Jan. 1789). Thomas Wilson wrote to a correspondent in Liverpool in 1791 noting that Eddisford Mill had recently burned to the ground, 'the loss is said to amount to £15,000, £5,000 of which was insured in London'. Raines,

'Rev. Thomas Wilson', p. 146.

¹⁰¹ Lancs. RO, DDX 28/123, Clitheroe court leet call book, 30 Apr. 1795. Despite this activity, Lord Brownlow's surveyor thought Clitheroe lacked any manufacturing trade, but noted that 'its situation, amidst the flourishing and commercial towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire, admits the hope of its becoming ... a place of more consequence'. Lincs. RO, BNL, box 'Clitheroe (CJ's)', 'Mr. G's Observations ...', 19 June 1801.

VI

Clitheroe was an unusual urban community, and its common lands had an idiosyncratic history. However, the Clitheroe Town Moors provide some significant lessons for the study of common lands and the impact of enclosure. Above all, the detailed analysis of the commons marking books demonstrates how the practise of commons' management might belie the principles on which such rights were distributed. Access to the Town Moors existed as a straightforward property right. Those who were owners of, or tenants to, lands and burgages possessing access rights to common lands could depasture their livestock. In theory, those who did not possess such rights, were not entitled to do so, and were forbidden from hiring such entitlements. Yet, the marking books reveal that this prohibited activity was exactly what occurred in practise.

Within an apparently inflexible system of 'customary' entitlements, market forces were allowed to operate. A large majority of the property entitlements were transferred into this market, and 'beastgates' were traded among tenants, and any other inhabitants of the borough who could afford to turn out their animals on the commons. This market in rights allowed accumulation to occur, without the need to buy or rent the properties bearing entitlements. It also ensured that those with more land and livestock dominated the commons at the expense of those with less land and fewer beasts. As a result, two-thirds of the animals on the commons were depastured by one-third of the users, many of whom were the larger tenants.

Even before enclosure, therefore, the commons reflected the largely commercial, 'capitalist' structure of agriculture within the borough. Most landowners were non-resident 'rentier' gentlemen, who did not use their common rights personally. Tenants cultivated almost all the land in the town, and so were heavily represented in the rates and on the commons. Labourers were the largest single occupational group within the borough, but the trade in commons' rights and the potential premiums charged may have restricted their exercise of such rights, or merely compounded their inability to afford livestock. The management of the commons conferred maximum advantage to those possessed of the largest number of unused rights, and favoured those with the largest number of animals. The system was geared to accommodating demands that exceeded entitlements, but possibly at a price.

Similarly, the reasons for enclosure were at odds with some of the views expressed at the time. A number of contemporary observers in and around the borough advocated the benefits of enclosure, asserting that land quality, and rental values would be 'improved' by vesting the land in individuals, who could then undertake drainage or soil improvement on their own initiatives. In fact, enclosure occurred more as part of the resolution of a political-property feud between the borough's two dominant landowners, than from any overtly agrarian imperative.

Enclosure had a paradoxical effect on entitlements to pasture in the borough. Before enclosure, rights to a common resource that should have been fixed to properties had traded freely. After enclosure, the division of this common resource re-attached pasture rights to properties. Enclosure had no significant consequences on land ownership in the borough, especially in comparison to the rapid accumulation provoked by 1780 election dispute. It created several new tenanted farms, and increased the acreage of most other holdings by roughly one-fifth. Tenants probably bore most of the costs of the physical enclosure of the Town Moors, but these may not have been prohibitive, and rents may not always have

been at market levels. The effects on non-tenants are much more difficult to determine. Up to 65 non-tenants per annum had depastured animals on the commons before enclosure. They were mostly craftsmen and labourers, but comprised a relatively small percentage of their occupational groups. It is conceivable that some of the labourers who predominated in agricultural employment in 1801 may have hired grazing rights from their employers. However, enclosure may have diminished or extinguished the second income stream available to these occupations from livestock husbandry.

Enclosure merely confirmed and extended the existing differentials in power between land-owners, tenants and the landless in Clitheroe. It worked on the economic margins, making most farms a little bigger and ensuring most labourers were increasingly dependent on wage labour. The coincidental expansion of the textile and lime burning industries in the decade after enclosure may have helped to maintain labouring incomes, at the cost of economic independence lost with the extinction of agrarian by-employments.

The use of Clitheroe's commons illustrates how 'customary' agriculture and its management systems could conceal arrangements that accommodated the market, and agrarian capitalism. As Shaw-Taylor and Seeliger and Chapman have found elsewhere, if enclosure itself appears to have had a limited effect on local economies and societies, that may be because it often came at the end of a long process of change rather than at the beginning. Its effects on marginal users were often limited, because the logic of scale and the market had combined over several centuries to deprive labourers and craftsmen of their ability to afford livestock, whatever their customary rights to depasture them in common.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Since this article was written, a document has been found in the Earl Howe estate archive in the Buckinghamshire Record Office (AR 94/80/1350). This is undated, but it is in a seventeenth- rather than eighteenth-century hand. Entitled 'Reasons wherefore it is desired that the out-pastures belonging to Clitheroe should be inclosed and divided', it gives eight justifications for enclosure, which differ completely from the cursory resolutions of 30 August 1785.

The document complains that 'those that have the greatest right get the least shares; and those that have least right or none at all, get the most'. Particularly in the management of wood rights and lime burning, 'great and many factions and contentions doe arise'. The burden of management placed on the non-resident landowners, the 'out-burgesses' was also a grievance. They sought enclosure to produce 'very good arable land, meadow or pasture ... enriching ... the Burrow', and more particularly 'the out-burgesses that have the most considerable estates ... whose tenants are put to the greatest service, that hereby would ... have the greatest benefit and profit'. In short, 'this division and inclosure is the rather desired, because ... it can be injurious to none that have any right therein ... [when] done by mutual consent and agreement'.

Clearly, the document signalled an earlier attempt by the larger landowners, and tenants, to exclude those who leased commons' rights, or who made unauthorised use of these resources. Despite the complex management system, evidently use was contested, and disputes arose between property holders and lessees. The process of agrarian capitalism, of the accumulation of rights, and the emergence of absentee landlords, was rendering this shared resource increasingly anomalous long before the 1780s.

The structure of landownership and land occupation in the Romney Marsh region, 1646–1834

by Stephen Hipkin

Abstract

This article offers a contribution to the long-running debate about the causes and chronology of the emergence of large-scale commercial tenant farming in England. Remarkably comprehensive evidence covering 44,000 acres in Romney Marsh (Kent) discloses a consolidation of landownership and the increasing dominance of large tenant farms during the century after the Restoration, but also demonstrates conclusively that these trends were unconnected, and that they were reversed during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when there was a notable revival of owner-occupation on the marsh. It is argued that tenant initiative and shifts in the level of consumer demand were the forces driving developments throughout the long-eighteenth century.

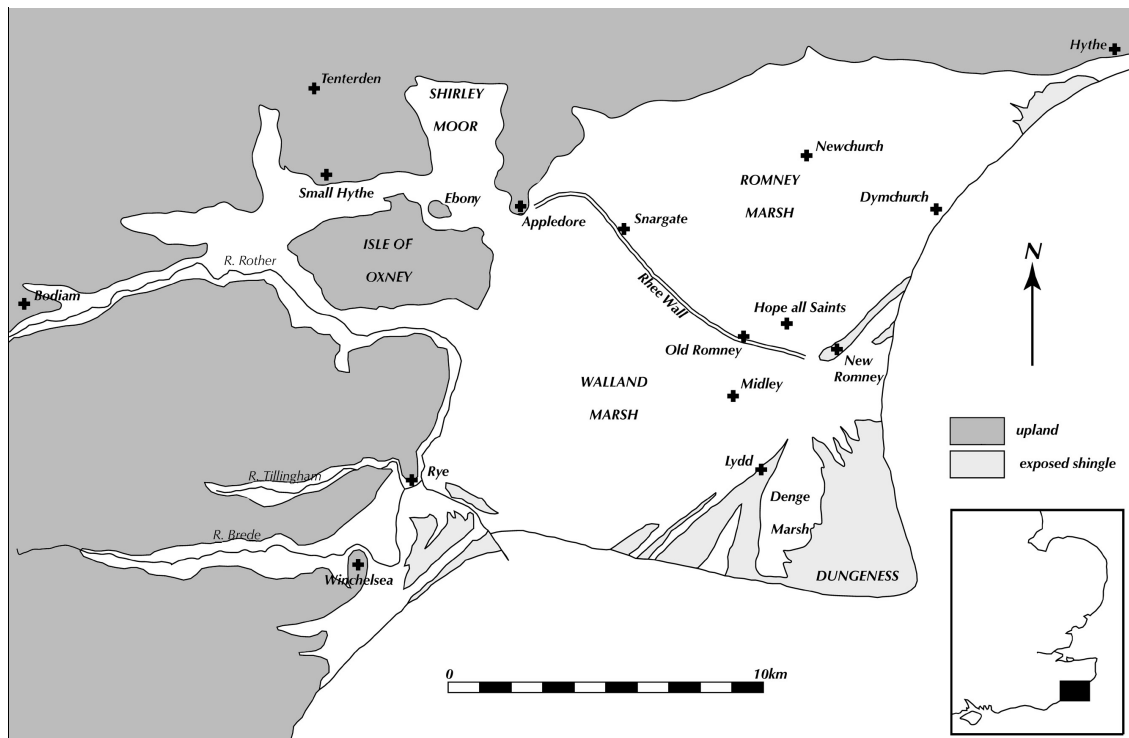
On 18 May 1769, almost a year after his departure as deputy clerk of the Level of Romney Marsh, Thomas Maylam finally completed his general survey of ‘the proprietors and tenants’ within the jurisdiction of the drainage authority ‘as they stood charged at Lady Day 1768’. The survey to which, that day, Maylam added an explanatory preface, was the fruit of almost a decade’s labour, occasioned by the need to provide a new set of reference materials for sewers’ commission bureaucrats to replace that resulting from the previous general survey, which had been completed more than a century earlier, in May 1654. Like its mid-seventeenth century predecessor, the survey had involved the commissioning of a completely new set of maps covering the 17 waterings (administrative sub-divisions for purposes of levying sewerage rates) within the 24,000 acres under the jurisdiction of the Level. Every field was measured and the results, together with the ownership of every parcel of land, were detailed on the maps, which all survive as testimony to the skills of the local surveyor and cartographer, Thomas Hogben. Maylam’s task had been to produce a comprehensive manuscript schedule which not only reproduced all the information contained on Hogben’s maps and linked it with that contained on the maps they replaced, but also took into account changes of landownership post-dating Hogben’s work, and supplied the name of the occupier of every field in March 1768.¹

The purposes of the general survey, Maylam explained, were to ensure that land occupiers were ‘duly and equitably scotted and charged’ towards the maintenance of sewers and sea-defences, and to provide an authoritative point of reference ‘which may at one view inform the enquirer of the particulars of any parcel of land, and how it stands charged, without the trouble of overlooking or inspecting the maps’.² Contemporaries may have thanked him, and historians

¹ East Kent Archive Centre, Whitfield (hereafter EKAC), S/Rm/FSz 10, /FS 6; S/Rm/P/1/2–8, /2/1–5, /4/1–6,

/5/1–4, /6/1–5; S/Rm/SM 7.

² EKAC, S/Rm/FSz 10, unfoliated, preface.



MAP 1. Romney Marsh Region.

certainly should, for Maylam's survey enables the structure of landownership across the Level in 1768 to be recovered and compared with that in 1654, the pattern of land occupation in 1768 to be analyzed, and the incidence of owner-occupation to be determined. But Maylam's survey is just one source, albeit the best, within the richly revealing archives generated by the tax-collecting bureaucracies of the three commissions of sewers exercising authority in the Romney Marsh region.

Previous publications have discussed the nature of the local taxation evidence in some detail, and employed the earliest surviving tax schedules (scot books) to analyze late-sixteenth and seventeenth-century trends in land occupation within the Level of Romney Marsh, which, as Map 1 shows, embraced the northern half of the region.³ In this paper, scot-book data spanning the two centuries preceding the tithe surveys are examined, and the geographical scope of analysis is broadened to include the near 20,000 acres under the jurisdiction of sewers' commissions for Denge Marsh and Walland Marsh. The data allow trends within each part of the region to be compared, but, more important, such is the pattern of surviving evidence that it is also possible to analyze land occupation across the whole of the Romney Marsh region –

³ S. Hipkin, 'The structure of land occupation on the Level of Romney Marsh during the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries', in J. Eddison, M. Gardiner, and A. Long (eds), *Romney Marsh: environmental change and human occupation in a coastal lowland* (1998), pp. 147–63; id., 'Tenant farming and short-term leasing on Romney Marsh, 1587–1705', *ECHR* 53 (2000), pp. 646–76.

more than 4 per cent of the land in Kent – in seven years spanning 1699–1834. It is also possible to configure the structure of landownership, as well as of land occupation, across the whole region in 1768 and 1834, while the survival of information on landownership and land occupation on the Level in 1654, in Denge Marsh in 1646, and in Denge Marsh and Walland Marsh in 1686, enable study of the changing structure of landownership and of the incidence of owner-occupation – albeit on smaller canvases – to be extended back well into the seventeenth century.

The scot books produced by the three commissions of sewers offer an opportunity, rare in the context of English agrarian history, to examine, on a regional scale, long-term changes in the structure of landownership and land occupation, and in the balance between owner-occupation and leasehold tenancy. Among much else, they provide answers to a number of questions that have long exercised historians. When and to what extent was the small landowner expropriated? When and to what extent did large tenant farms develop, and was their emergence dependent upon the consolidation of landownership in the hands of sponsoring proprietors? Finally, did the proportion of land in the hands of larger occupiers increase throughout the long-eighteenth century?

To anticipate what follows, it will be argued that there were two distinct phases in the development of the agrarian economy of the Romney Marsh region between 1620 and 1820, and that the principal agents of structural transformation were tenant initiative and shifts in the level of consumer demand. The earlier phase, which lasted until the mid-eighteenth century and was characterized by stasis/deflation in the pastoral economy, witnessed consolidation of landownership, the squeezing of the small proprietor, a low and falling incidence of owner-occupation and the increasing domination of the marsh landscape by large tenant farms. But if this all seems like grist to the mill for historians in the grand tradition that has followed Marx in seeing the post-Restoration century as a critical period of transition that smoothed the way for agrarian capitalism, it should be added that the growth of large tenant farms on the marsh took place *entirely* independently of the consolidation of landownership in the region.⁴ The sponsors of large tenant farms were low and fluctuating agricultural prices and weakening competition for holdings, not rentiers. Forces squeezing the small proprietor (depressed rents), and the small producer (low product prices), paved the way for the relatively cheap accumulation of holdings in the hands of the limited pool of tenants who were able and willing to invest in economies of scale. The later phase (c. 1760–1820), by contrast, was characterized by growing consumer demand for the produce of the marsh, which in turn stimulated stronger competition for tenancies and a marked revival of owner-occupation across the region. Improved rents eased the pressures on surviving smaller proprietors and – since rentiers sought to maximize their income and smaller units could be let at a premium – larger tenant farmers found their extensive holdings more difficult to defend. The resulting redistribution of land was sufficient to effect a noticeable reduction in mean acreage per occupier across the region between 1768 and 1800. This reversal of the previous trend towards the consolidation of land in the hands of fewer farmers is not what we might be led to expect from the conclusions in

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 646–50; J. V. Beckett, ‘The pattern of landownership in England and Wales, 1660–1888’, *EcHR* 37 (1984), pp. 2–4; *id.*, ‘The decline of the small landowner in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England: some regional considerations’, *AgHR* 30 (1982), pp. 97–100; G. E. Mingay, *Enclosure and the small farmer in the age of the industrial revolution* (1968), pp. 28–9.

studies of estates in Staffordshire, Shropshire, Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and the south Midlands, all of which postulate increases in farm size throughout the eighteenth century.⁵ But nor is it *necessarily* evidence of a contrasting trend, for it is important to stress that 'mean acreage per occupier' is not a synonym for 'mean farm size'.

Romney Marsh was richly fertile, and, prior to the Black Death, had also been one of the most densely populated areas of Kent, with much land devoted to arable production. But the late medieval period had brought a profound agrarian and demographic transformation, and, by Elizabethan times, Romney Marsh was not only largely given over to pasture, but was also one of the most thinly inhabited regions of southern England.⁶ That it remained so throughout the early modern period was due in no small measure to the prevalence of malaria, which, 'either acting alone or in conjunction with other factors, was the one distinctive disease that differentiated the mortal marshland environments from other areas of south-east England'.⁷ The unhealthiness of the marsh deterred many clergymen and landlords from living on it, and, throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, more than one-third of marsh farmers lived in upland parishes. Of these, an uncertain but clearly significant proportion not only lived on the uplands, but farmed there as well, running their marsh and upland holdings in conjunction so as to exploit the fertile marsh while protecting vulnerable stock from its exposed winter climate by moving lambs up-country between September and April.⁸ For such dual-region farmers, the evidence in the scot books reveals the size of just one facet of their enterprises.⁹

Research in progress may, in time, produce a clearer picture of long-term trends in the number of dual and multi-regional farming enterprises in which holdings on Romney Marsh were one component.¹⁰ However, it will not be an easy matter to uncover the full extent of such farming, not least since it is becoming clear that there were many marsh-dwelling farmers like Daniel Langdon, one of the largest tenant farmers on the Level during the early eighteenth century, who owned or formally leased little if any upland pasture, but who depended on the

⁵ J. R. Wordie, 'Social change on the Leveson-Gower estates, 1714–1832', *EcHR* 27 (1974), pp. 593–609; R. C. Allen, *Enclosure and the yeoman: the agricultural development of the south Midlands, 1450–1850* (1992), pp. 73–5, 78–85; G. E. Mingay, 'The size of farms in the eighteenth century', *EcHR* 14 (1962), pp. 480–3.

⁶ M. Gardiner, 'Settlement change on Denge and Walland Marshes, 1400–1550', in Eddison, Gardiner, and Long (eds), *Romney Marsh*, pp. 129–45.

⁷ M. J. Dobson, 'Death and disease in the Romney Marsh area in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries', in Eddison, Gardiner, and Long (eds), *Romney Marsh*, p. 179.

⁸ There were also extensive institutional links between the marsh and its upland hinterland. Aldington, for example, was one of many manors receiving quit rents from freeholds on marshland and upland alike, while the Level of Romney Marsh contained detached portions of a number of upland parishes. Hipkin, 'Land occupation', p. 154; M. Teichman Derville, *The Level and the Liberty of*

Romney Marsh (1936).

⁹ Mingay was conscious of similar problems with respect to estate surveys for Nottinghamshire villages, noting that 'owing to the great difficulty of ascertaining whether individual farmers owned or rented additional acreages in neighbouring villages, it is impossible to be certain that the figures obtained from surveys really represent the true extent of all the tenants' lands'. By contrast, Wordie concluded that 'the danger of any Leveson-Gower tenant owning' (or renting) 'additional land just outside the boundaries of the estate is a very remote one indeed', and that, 'there is good reason to believe that the farm sizes specified in' the estate surveys are 'entirely accurate, down to the last acres, rood and perch'. Mingay, 'Size of farms', p. 480, n. 4; Wordie, 'Social change', pp. 593–4 and n. 5.

¹⁰ A. Davison, 'The agrarian economy of Romney Marsh and surrounding regions, 1680–1830', (forthcoming PhD thesis, Canterbury Christ Church University College).

willingness of those farming away from the marsh to agist livestock on their land during winter.¹¹ Agistment ought properly to be understood as a particularly flexible species of sublease, and the resources released to purchasers viewed as contributing to the size of their farms, whether cyclically or occasionally. But even where detectable, the contribution of agistment to effective farm size is very difficult to estimate. It could therefore be argued that even if there were data for the upland hinterland of the marsh equivalent to that contained in the scot books examined here, there would still remain formidable obstacles in the way of any accurate measurement of *functional* farm size.

I

How reliable are the data? The unique value of the taxation evidence for the Romney Marsh region derives from the fact that local scots fell on whoever *occupied* the land, that is to say, whoever was farming it, whether he or she were its owner, its formal tenant, or a subtenant. It is, of course, impossible to be absolutely certain of the accuracy of any written source, but scots were frequently levied – in some years as often as weekly – and marsh bureaucrats had developed mechanisms designed to keep pace with changes on the ground. Although only those for the Level of Romney Marsh have survived, the clerks of each commission kept working notebooks, known as ‘calendar scot books’, which were organized alphabetically by occupiers’ surname, and in which were recorded all the parcels held at any one time by each occupier within the commission’s jurisdiction. Changes of land occupation were noted and dated in the calendars (most occurred at Michaelmas), and were then incorporated in the formal taxation schedules (the main series of scot books) that were, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, updated and completely re-written on an annual basis.¹² The ability of officials to collect scots on the land depended on their keeping abreast of changes of occupier, and wherever it has been possible to make direct comparisons, information in the scot books is consistent with that contained in private estate accounts. There is, therefore, reason to be confident of the accuracy of data for occupiers.

Information on landownership, on the other hand, may be regarded with a degree of circumspection, if only because its accuracy was of less consequence to marsh administrators concerned to collect taxes from land occupiers. Indeed, although systematic information on landownership was gathered for the general surveys of the Level of Romney Marsh in 1654 and 1768, and for inclusion in a new series of scot books commencing in 1834, eighteenth-century scot books for the Level provide information only on taxpayers. Scot books for Denge Marsh and Walland Marsh, on the other hand, identify landowners as well as occupiers in many years during the eighteenth century, but the information on owners may not always have been entirely up to date. Thomas Maylam implicitly accepted the possibility that errors may have escaped detection in the final version of the 1768 survey of the Level. ‘I have’, he wrote in the preface,

¹¹ For further discussion of these points see S. Hipkin, ‘The worlds of Daniel Langdon: public office and private enterprise in the Romney Marsh region in the early-eighteenth century’, and A. Davison, ‘A “particularly convenient and useful” arrangement: the symbiotic agrarian economy

of Romney Marsh and the surrounding region in the eighteenth century’, in A. Long, S. Hipkin, and H. Clarke (eds), *Romney Marsh: coastal and landscape change through the ages* (2002), pp. 181, 196–201.

¹² EKAC, S/Rm/FSc 1–9.

in general copied after the surveyor for the proprietors names, not doubting but, as it was his business to insert them properly and truly, he had, as far as consisted with his knowledge and the inquiries, done it. Such alterations therefrom as have since occurred to my knowledge I have made, and likewise corrected such of his mistakes as I have met with in the maps.

The most likely occasion for error was where owners were confused with tenants who had contracted long leases with the intention of subletting the land. Thus a note appended in the private estate accounts of Sir Edward Knatchbull of Mersham in 1760 explains that

the several parcels of marshland occupied by John Waddell at the rent of £67 10s. ... are leasehold from the archbishop of Canterbury by lease of 21 years commencing 25 December 1754, and must be renewed at the end of every seven years upon a fine to be paid to the archbishop. The annual rent payable to the archbishop is £8.

The only land in the occupation of John Waddell identified in Maylam's 1768 survey is 89 acres ascribed to Knatchbull's ownership, so it is likely that the formal tenant had been mistaken for the owner.¹³ On the other hand, many arrangements similar to that by which Knatchbull was subleasing land to Waddell *were* detected in Maylam's survey, so if it is sensible to allow some margin for this and cognate errors, and for others resulting from a degree of administrative inertia, there are no grounds for assuming that the data on landownership contained in the surveys and scot books are generally wide of the mark.

II

As Tables 1 and 2 show, there was a significant reduction in the number of private owners on the marsh between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries. Within the Level, the number of private owners fell by over 17 per cent between 1654 and 1768, and on Walland Marsh and Denge Marsh a 13 per cent reduction occurred between 1686 and 1768. The drop in the number of private owners with less than 50 acres was particularly marked, and, as more land came into the hands of fewer owners, so mean acreage per private owner rose, from 50 acres to 60.5 acres on the Level, and from 70.6 acres to 88.4 acres on Walland and Denge Marshes. By 1768, as Table 3 shows, across the whole region there were 39,889 acres in the hands of 520 private landowners, but two-thirds of this land was in the hands of the 89 owners possessing more than 100 acres, and more than half was held by the 46 owning more than 200 acres. Heading the list were three prominent Kentish gentry – Sir Edward Knatchbull (1920 acres), Sir Edward Dering (1501 acres), and Sir John Honeywood (1180.5 acres) – who together owned more than one-tenth of the land in the region. But if these men were exceptional in the scale of their investment in marshland, their motives were both typical and traditional.

Landowners on the marsh had long been, for the most part, rentiers. On Denge Marsh just 13.7 per cent of the 2527.5 acres scotted in 1646 was owner-occupied, and only 14.6 per cent of the 23,443 acres taxed on the Level of Romney Marsh in 1654 was farmed by its owners.¹⁴ But the predominance of rentiers intensified as the number of private owners contracted during the century after the Restoration. By 1686, only 9.9 per cent of the land taxed on Walland Marsh

¹³ EKAC, S/Rm/FSz 10, preface; Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone (hereafter CKS), U951 C 67 (unfoliated).

¹⁴ EKAC, S/D/FS 1; Hipkin, 'Tenant farming', p. 658.

TABLE 1. Landownership on the Level of Romney Marsh, 1654–1834

	1654				1768				1834			
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%
Private owners												
<10 acres	97	21.7	445.5	2.0	79	21.4	334.0	1.5	90	23.6	358.5	1.6
10–<20	91	20.3	1294.5	5.8	59	15.9	886.5	4.0	64	16.8	950.5	4.1
20–<50	136	30.4	4238.0	18.9	117	31.6	3673.5	16.4	103	27.0	3378.0	14.7
50–<100	75	16.7	5396.5	24.1	65	17.6	4385.5	19.6	65	17.0	4460.5	19.4
100–<200	31	6.9	4007.0	17.9	28	7.6	4005.0	17.9	37	9.7	5113.5	22.2
200–<500	14	3.1	3950.0	17.6	17	4.6	5006.0	22.4	18	4.7	4869.0	21.2
> 500 acres	4	0.9	3083.0	13.8	5	1.4	4097.5	18.3	5	1.3	3880.0	16.9
TOTAL	448	100.0	22414.5	100.1	370	100.1	22388.0	100.1	382	100.1	23010.0	100.1
<20 acres	188	42.0	1740.0	7.8	138	37.3	1220.5	5.5	154	40.3	1309.0	5.7
20–<100	211	47.1	9634.5	43.0	182	49.2	8059.0	36.0	168	44.0	7838.5	34.1
>100 acres	49	10.9	11040.0	49.3	50	13.5	13108.5	58.6	60	15.7	13862.5	60.2
Mean acreage per private owner			50.0				60.5				60.2	
Corporately owned land			1028.5				1586.0				979.0	
Total taxed acreage			23443.0				23974.0				23989.0	
Owner-occupied land			3413.0	14.6			1832.5	7.6			4906.5	20.5

Sources: EKAC, S/Rm/FS 6, 173; /FSc 1, 2; /FSz 10.

and Denge Marsh was owner-occupied, and by 1768 the proportion had fallen to 8.3 per cent. On the Level of Romney Marsh just 7.6 per cent of the land in 1768 was owner-occupied, and across the whole marsh less than one acre in twelve was farmed by its owner. Ninety-six per cent of the land belonging to the 46 largest private owners in the region in 1768 was in the hands of tenant farmers, and only eight of the largest owners had any direct interest in farming on the marsh.

However, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed a reversal of both these trends. By 1834, there had been a modest recovery – to 547 – in the number of private owners in the region, though since this was accompanied by a reduction in the amount of corporately-owned land, the period saw little alteration in mean acreage per private owner. More striking is the increase in the amount of owner-occupied land, which had risen to 19.8 per cent of the 44,076.5 acres taxed, a significantly higher proportion than at any earlier date for which calculations can be made. Proprietors drawn from the ranks of long-established Kentish gentry – the Knatchbulls, Derings, Honeywoods and their like – remained pure rentiers, but the ranks of the largest owners in the region now included a number of practising farmers such as Samuel Finn, who occupied 390.75 of the 919 acres he owned, and John Holman who owned all of the 397.5 acres he farmed. Altogether, 12 of the 44 proprietors of more than 200 acres in 1834 were directly farming a total 3012.5 acres (14.3 per cent of the land on larger estates), while 26.3 per cent of

TABLE 2. Landownership in Walland and Denge Marshes, 1686–1834

	1654				1768				1834			
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%
<i>Private owners</i>												
<10 acres	55	24.1	248.0	1.5	28	14.1	104.75	0.6	54	24.4	221.5	1.1
10–<20	30	13.2	425.5	2.6	26	13.1	364.5	2.1	23	10.4	318.5	1.6
20–<50	64	28.1	1996.0	12.4	50	25.3	1648.0	9.4	64	29.0	2115.25	10.7
50–<100	39	17.1	2803.75	17.4	50	25.3	3708.0	21.2	27	12.2	1995.75	10.1
100–<200	22	9.6	3018.0	18.7	20	10.1	2603.0	14.9	28	12.7	3920.0	19.9
200–<500	12	5.3	3102.0	19.3	20	10.1	5754.75	32.9	20	9.1	6448.75	32.7
> 500 acres	6	2.6	4509.5	28.0	4	2.0	3318.0	19.0	5	2.3	4695.0	23.8
TOTAL	228	100.0	16102.75	99.9	198	100.0	17501.0	100.1	221	100.1	19714.75	99.9
<20 acres	85	17.5	673.5	4.2	54	27.3	469.25	2.7	77	34.8	540.0	2.7
20–<100	103	45.2	4799.75	29.8	100	50.5	5356.0	30.6	91	41.2	4111.0	20.9
>100 acres	40	37.3	10629.5	66.0	44	22.2	11675.75	66.7	53	24.0	15063.75	76.4
Mean acreage per private owner			70.6				88.4				89.2	
Corporately owned land			1320.75				1900.5				372.75	
Ownership unknown			30.0				0.0				0.0	
Total taxed acreage			17435.5				19401.5				20087.5	
Owner-occupied land			1734.25	9.9			1613.75	8.3			3807.75	19.0

Sources: EKAC, S/W/FSz 2; /FS 5A, 6B, 7A, 8, 39; S/D/FS 2, 6, 7.

the land belonging to smaller owners was owner-occupied. That farming on Romney Marsh had become a more attractive proposition during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is further suggested by the evidence for patterns of land occupation to which we now turn.

Tables 4–6 show long-term trends in the pattern of land occupation in areas under the jurisdiction of sewers' commissions for the Level of Romney Marsh, Denge Marsh and Walland Marsh. As is evident, the most significant changes occurred before the eighteenth century. On the Level, larger farmers (those occupying more than 200 acres), doubled their share of the land during the seventeenth century, and the more limited data for Denge Marsh and Walland Marsh also indicate rising proportions of land in the hands of larger occupiers. For the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there are variations in detail, but a broadly similar pattern of development is evident in each part of the region. However, since tenant farmers on Romney Marsh were, in the words of one invaluable late-eighteenth-century observer, accustomed 'to hire their land of different owners in any parcels, and at any distance, neither the compactness of their business, nor the distance being any object to them', it follows that the broadest possible canvas is likely to offer the most reliable guide to long-term changes on the marsh.¹⁵

¹⁵ D. Jones, 'Sheep on Romney Marsh in the eighteenth century', a letter sent in 1786 and transcribed by D. Skilbeck, *Wye College Occasional Publications* 7 (1956), p. 6.

TABLE 3. Landownership in the Romney Marsh Region, 1768 and 1834

	1768				1834			
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>acres</i>	%
Private owners								
<10 acres	97	18.7	389.25	1.0	131	24.0	518.0	1.2
10–<19.5	79	15.2	1182.5	3.0	80	14.6	1163.25	2.7
20–<49.5	156	30.0	5001.0	12.5	141	25.8	4585.75	10.7
50–<99.5	99	19.0	6842.0	17.2	81	14.8	5648.5	13.2
100–<200	43	8.3	6012.5	15.1	70	12.8	9740.5	22.8
200–<500	35	6.7	10555.25	26.5	32	5.9	9429.25	22.1
> 500 acres	11	2.1	9906.5	24.8	12	2.2	11639.5	27.2
TOTAL	520	100.0	39889.0	100.0	547	100.1	42724.75	99.9
<20 acres	176	33.9	1571.75	3.9	211	38.6	1681.25	3.9
20–<99.5	255	49.0	11843.0	29.7	222	40.6	10234.25	24.0
>100 acres	89	17.1	26474.25	66.4	114	20.8	30809.25	72.1
Mean acreage per private owner			76.7				78.1	
Corporately owned land			3486.5				1351.75	
Total taxed acreage			43375.5				44076.5	
Owner-occupied land			3446.25	8.0			8714.25	19.8

Sources: 1768: EKAC, S/Rm/FSz 10, S/W/FS 5A, 6B, 7A, 8, S/D/FS 6; 1834, EKAC, S/Rm/FS 173, S/W/FS 39, S/D/FS 7.

Table 7 shows the structure of land occupation in the seven years spanning 1699–1834 for which it is possible to integrate comprehensive data covering Denge Marsh, Walland Marsh and the Level of Romney Marsh. Like the evidence for landownership, they suggest that the period may be divided into two distinct, if somewhat overlapping phases. Already prominent by 1700, between the late seventeenth and the mid-eighteenth centuries larger tenant farmers further increased their share of the land, and by 1746 they occupied 60 per cent of the region.¹⁶ Meanwhile, the number occupying 20–100 acres fell from 210 in 1699 to 178 in 1746 and to 165 by 1768, by which time their share of the land had dropped to below 20 per cent. The decline in the number occupying less than 20 acres was even more marked. In 1699 there were 186 smallholders on the marsh, and by 1746 just 106 remained. However, since the average holding

¹⁶ Evidence of the size of leasehold farms advertised ‘to let’ in the *Kentish Post* between 1729 and 1764 led Baker to conclude that ‘proportionately the greatest changes in farm size in Kent took place during the 1730s and 1740s’. By 1760–4, ‘more than two-thirds of the advertised farms in Kent were 100 acres or more in size’, and they averaged 140 acres. However, since such units may have been added to existing enterprises, the advertisements are an insecure basis on which to reach conclusions about farm size. Those farming more than 100 acres within the Romney Marsh region in 1768 held, on average 267.5 acres, but they were, overwhelmingly, compound holdings. D. A. Baker, *Agricultural prices, production, and marketing, with special reference to the hop industry: north-east Kent, 1680–1760* (1985), pp. 132–9.

TABLE 4. Size of holdings in the Level of Romney Marsh, 1587–1834

a) percentage distribution by acreage

	<i>0–<20</i>	<i>20–<100</i>	<i>100–<200</i>	<i>≥200</i>	<i>Total acreage</i>
1587	7.2	45.6	23.8	23.4	22,943.0
c. 1608–12	10.1	46.9	21.3	21.6	23,136.0
1650	6.9	32.1	24.4	36.7	23,414.0
1654	7.5	34.6	24.5	33.4	23,443.0
1699	5.0	30.9	19.8	44.2	23,420.0
1705	4.9	31.5	22.8	40.7	23,182.0
1746	3.0	24.7	19.6	52.7	23,460.0
1768	3.5	29.5	16.7	50.3	23,974.0
1775	3.0	31.5	21.2	44.3	23,894.0
1790	3.0	31.7	26.7	38.6	23,915.5
1800	3.0	32.5	27.2	37.3	23,928.5
1820	3.7	34.5	31.1	30.7	23,915.5
1834	3.6	34.3	27.2	33.7	23,989.0 ^a

^a includes 295 acres of unknown occupation.

b) percentage of occupiers by acreage

	<i>0–<20</i>	<i>20–<100</i>	<i>100–<200</i>	<i>≥200</i>	<i>Total occupiers</i>
1587	37.3	50.6	8.9	3.2	472
c. 1608–12	45.2	44.9	7.0	2.9	557
1650	43.0	41.2	10.1	5.7	405
1654	44.5	41.3	9.2	4.9	445
1699	38.9	44.0	9.4	7.7	350
1705	37.1	45.1	10.6	7.2	359
1746	30.0	45.0	11.4	13.5	282
1768	33.5	46.5	9.4	10.6	310
1775	32.2	46.0	11.6	10.3	311
1790	29.5	46.4	14.3	9.8	315
1800	29.3	47.5	14.0	9.3	335
1820	31.8	46.7	14.6	6.9	362
1834	33.0	47.9	12.9	6.3	349

among this group was below eight acres, the impact of their retreat from the marsh on the overall structure of land occupation in the region was slight. As we have seen, over the same period the number of private owners – and particularly of smaller proprietors – also fell significantly, and owner-occupation on the marsh declined to less than one acre in every twelve.

c) mean acreage per occupier holding ≥ 20 acres

1587	71.9
c. 1608–12	68.2
1650	94.4
1654	87.8
1699	103.9
1705	97.5
1746	115.6
1768	112.3
1775	109.8
1790	104.5
1800	97.9
1820	93.3
1834	97.5

Sources: EKAC, S/Rm/FS 3, 5, 6, 10, 13, 18, 56, 123, 173, /FSz 10, /FSz 1, 2.

TABLE 5. Size of holdings in Denge Marsh, 1646–1834

a) percentage distribution by acreage

	0–<20	20–<100	100–<200	≥ 200	Total acreage
1646	7.4	43.8	12.9	35.9	2619.25
1677	5.1	32.4	32.2	30.4	2752.0
1688	5.2	33.3	23.2	38.3	2823.0
1698	6.5	30.6	19.7	43.2	2921.0
1708	6.0	36.0	13.2	44.9	2912.0
1718	6.1	31.6	20.1	42.2	2912.0
1723	4.5	33.6	19.3	42.6	2912.0
1736	4.0	41.0	4.8	50.2	2912.0
1746	4.3	41.0	5.2	49.5	2912.0
1768	2.5	35.3	15.9	46.3	2912.0
1800	4.2	29.0	17.5	49.3	2912.0
1834	6.1	22.5	16.6	54.8	2910.5

During the 1760s and 1770s these trends gradually reversed, and, in addition to the marked increase in the amount of owner-occupied land already noted, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed a fall in the proportion of land in the hands of larger tenant farmers, from the 60 per cent reached in 1746 to 53 per cent by 1800, and to 51 per cent in 1834. Meanwhile, the number of, and the proportion of land held by 20–100-acre occupiers recovered

b) percentage of occupiers by acreage

	<i>0-<20</i>	<i>20-<100</i>	<i>100-<200</i>	<i>≥200</i>	<i>Total occupiers</i>
1646	40	49.1	5.5	5.5	55
1677	38.8	44.9	10.2	6.1	49
1688	39.6	42.0	10.4	8.3	48
1698	45.8	37.5	8.3	8.3	48
1708	42.9	42.9	6.1	8.2	49
1718	40.4	42.6	8.0	8.0	47
1723	35.7	45.2	8.0	8.0	42
1736	34.2	53.7	2.4	9.8	41
1746	34.1	54.6	2.3	9.1	44
1768	25.6	53.8	10.3	10.3	39
1800	32.5	47.5	10.0	10.0	40
1834	46.5	34.9	7.0	11.6	43

c) mean acreage per occupier holding ≥20 acres

1646	75.5
1677	87.1
1688	92.2
1698	105.0
1708	97.8
1718	97.7
1723	103.0
1736	103.6
1746	96.1
1768	97.9
1800	103.3
1834	118.8

Sources: EKAC, S/D/FS 1-7.

to late-seventeenth-century levels, while farmers of 100-200 acres increased their presence on the marsh. During the early-nineteenth century there was also a notable revival in the number of smallholders, though not to any significant extent in the proportion of land they occupied on the marsh.

The most striking finding to emerge from this analysis is that large tenant farmers occupying more than 200 acres held a smaller proportion of the land on the marsh in 1834 (51 per cent) than they had in 1699 (57 per cent). But the clearest measure of significant trends within the region is, perhaps, provided by the mean acreage statistics for occupiers holding more than 20 acres on the marsh, that is, for those whom we might reasonably suppose to have been farming

TABLE 6. Size of holdings in Walland Marsh and Denge Marsh combined, 1686–1834

a) percentage distribution by acreage

<i>Date</i>	<i>0–<20</i>	<i>20–<100</i>	<i>100–<200</i>	<i>≥200</i>	<i>Total acreage</i>
1686	3.7	23.0	27.0	45.1	17,453.5
1699	3.2	23.4	23.5	49.9	19,525.75
1705	3.0	23.3	24.6	49.1	19,590.0
1746	1.4	22.8	22.7	53.1	19,419.5
1768	1.2	18.7	23.4	56.7	19,401.5
1775	1.2	19.4	22.7	56.7	19,401.5
1800	1.8	19.0	24.1	55.1	19,400.0
1834	2.2	21.8	15.7	60.1	20,087.5

b) percentage of occupiers by acreage

<i>Date</i>	<i>0–<20</i>	<i>20–<100</i>	<i>100–<200</i>	<i>≥200</i>	<i>Total occupiers</i>
1686	35.8	38.5	16.1	9.6	218
1699	34.9	39.3	14.0	11.8	229
1705	35.7	38.8	14.1	11.5	227
1746	23.7	44.1	17.7	14.5	186
1768	22.0	40.2	20.1	17.7	164
1775	22.8	41.3	18.6	17.4	167
1800	26.8	38.8	19.1	15.3	183
1834	33.0	41.8	11.2	14.1	206

c) mean acreage per occupier holding ≥20 acres.

1686	118.5
1699	126.8
1705	130.1
1746	134.9
1768	149.7
1775	148.7
1800	144.3
1834	142.2

Sources: EKAC, S/W/FS 1A, 2, 5A, 6, 6A, 6B, 7, 7A, 8, 9, 39, /FSz2, /D/FS 2, 3, 5, 6, 7.

according to a commercial agenda. As Table 7 shows, mean acreage rose from 127 in 1699, to a peak of 146 in 1768, and then fell back to 130 by the close of the eighteenth century. The ‘progressive and widespread increases in farm sizes’ that, according to one recent text book, accompanied ‘pressures of increased commercialism’ in England throughout the eighteenth

TABLE 7. Size of holdings in the Romney Marsh Region, 1699–1834.

a) percentage distribution by acreage

	<i>0–<20</i>	<i>20–<100</i>	<i>100–<200</i>	<i>≥200</i>	<i>Total acreage</i>
1699	3.4	23.3	16.1	57.2	42,945.75
1705	3.5	23.2	19.2	54.1	42,772.0
1746	1.6	20.3	18.3	59.8	42,879.5
1768	2.0	19.7	19.7	58.6	43,375.5
1775	1.9	22.0	21.0	55.1	43,295.5
1800	2.0	22.2	22.9	52.9	43,324.5
1834	2.7	24.4	21.1	51.1	44,076.5

b) percentage of occupiers by acreage

	<i>0–<20</i>	<i>20–<100</i>	<i>100–<200</i>	<i>≥200</i>	<i>Total occupiers</i>
1699	36.3	40.9	9.9	12.9	513
1705	36.7	39.7	11.4	12.2	507
1746	25.6	43.0	14.0	17.4	414
1768	29.0	40.2	15.1	15.8	411
1775	28.6	41.4	14.9	15.1	423
1800	27.1	42.2	16.2	14.4	450
1834	33.3	42.8	13.1	10.8	498

c) mean acreage per occupier holding ≥20 acres.

1699	126.8
1705	128.6
1746	136.9
1768	145.6
1775	140.7
1800	129.5
1834	128.3

Sources: EKAC, S/Rm/FS 6, 10, 13, 56, 173; /FSz 10; /W/FS 1A, 2, 4, 5A, 6, 6A, 6B, 7, 7A, 8, 9, 39; /D/FS 3, 5, 6, 7.

century were, *within* the Romney Marsh region, confined to the period before 1770.¹⁷ However, as signalled earlier, one very important caveat attends all the results set out in Table 7. Many marsh holdings were run in conjunction with upland holdings, and the scot-book evidence only tells us about what was happening *within* the marsh region.

¹⁷ M. Overton, *Agricultural revolution in England: the transformation of the agrarian economy, 1500–1850* (1996), p. 173. For more cautious textbook comment stressing that ‘the tendency towards an increase in farm size is one more easily asserted than measured’, and that ‘practice varied from estate to estate’ see J. Rule, *The vital century: England’s developing economy, 1714–1815* (1992), pp. 63–4.

III

Writing in 1976, Kain extolled the virtues of the ‘unique record of land occupiers provided by the tithe surveys’. Clearly, as evidence for land occupation *within* the Romney Marsh region, the tithe surveys are neither unique nor the best available source, but they do offer an invaluable opportunity to assess the role of marsh holdings in a wider context. Drawing on evidence for 22 parishes in the Romney Marsh region, Kain analyzed 232 holdings of more than ten acres, and was able to show that, *circa* 1840, 55.8 per cent of this land was occupied by 125 farmers holding land elsewhere in the county of Kent, and that it was larger upland farmers – those with more than 500 acres – who ‘took most advantage of holding land in both upland and marsh regions’. As Kain noted, ‘it is likely that some of the fragmented holdings were run as quite separate farms’, but most were probably not.¹⁸ Although it is not possible to provide reliable estimates of the size or number of such dual-region farming enterprises at earlier dates, there is no doubting their significance. There is, moreover, evidence within the archive of the Level of Romney Marsh that suggests that the extent to which upland farmers invested in tenancies on the marsh varied considerably during the long-eighteenth century, and did so in accordance with the distinct phases already identified with respect to patterns of landownership and occupation within the region.

Scot books compiled in 1699 and 1705 contain information about the domicile of the great majority of those farming on the Level of Romney Marsh. This information, extensively tabulated in a previous article, is summarized here within Table 8.¹⁹ Also summarized in Table 8, and set out in detail in Table 9, are the results of an analysis of available data for the domicile of occupiers on the Level in 1768 and 1834. Data for 1768 are drawn from Maylam’s survey, and from contemporary calendar scot books, within which, by the mid-eighteenth century, it had become routine practice for the clerk to record details of occupiers’ places of residence. Information for 1834 is likewise derived from entries in calendar scot books, which have been correlated with the names of the occupiers on the Level listed in the local tax schedules for that year. It must be stressed that the results set out in the tables are at best suggestive, since the fact that a farmer lived on the marsh in no way precludes the possibility that he or she also held land on the uplands. Nor, equally, should it be assumed that *all* occupiers on the Level who lived away from the marsh also farmed on the uplands, though it seems reasonable to suppose that most did.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, slightly fewer than one in three occupiers on the Level resided on the marsh, and one-quarter lived in parishes on rising ground at its edge. As might be expected, those living on the marsh or marsh-edge included a large proportion of the Level’s smallest occupiers. In 1699 and 1705, two-thirds of occupiers of known residence holding fewer than 20 acres were marsh or marsh-edge dwellers. But, as Table 8 shows, at the turn of the seventeenth century, 45 per cent of all occupiers lived in upland parishes, and together they held 53 per cent of the land on the Level. During the first half of the eighteenth

¹⁸ R. J. P. Kain, ‘Tithe surveys and the study of land occupation’, *Local Historian* 12 (1976), pp. 88–92; id., ‘The land of Kent in the middle of the nineteenth

century’ (PhD thesis, University of London, 1973), pp. 310–16.

¹⁹ Hipkin, ‘Tenant farming’, pp. 664–5.

TABLE 8. Place of residence of land occupiers in the Level of Romney Marsh, 1699–1834
(percentage distribution by occupier and acreage)

	<i>Marsh and marsh edge parishes</i>		<i>Upland parishes</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>acres (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>acres (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>acres (%)</i>
1699						
<20 acres	21.4	2.6	12.2	1.6	33.6	4.2
20–<100	23.3	15.4	25.2	16.0	48.5	31.4
100–<200	5.7	11.7	3.4	6.4	9.1	18.1
≥200 acres	3.4	17.3	5.3	28.8	8.7	46.1
Total	53.8	47.0	46.1	52.8	99.9	99.8
1705						
<20 acres	22.3	2.7	10.4	1.5	32.7	4.2
20–<100	24.2	14.9	24.2	15.4	48.4	30.3
100–<200	5.9	12.3	4.8	9.3	10.7	21.6
≥200 acres	3.4	16.8	4.8	27.1	8.2	43.9
Total	55.8	46.7	44.2	53.3	100.0	100.0
1768						
<20 acres	24.7	2.3	6.5	1.0	31.2	3.3
20–<100	25.4	15.9	22.3	13.5	47.7	29.4
100–<200	5.4	9.4	4.5	7.5	9.9	16.9
≥200 acres	6.9	31.9	4.1	18.4	11.0	50.3
Total	62.4	59.5	37.4	40.4	99.8	99.9
1834						
<20 acres	25.6	2.6	6.9	1.0	32.5	3.6
20–<100	25.0	18.5	23.8	16.5	48.8	35.0
100–<200	6.0	12.8	6.0	13.0	12.0	25.8
≥200 acres	3.6	17.7	3.0	17.9	6.6	35.6
Total	60.2	51.6	39.7	48.4	99.9	100.0

Sources: EKAC, S/Rm/FS 6, 173, /FSz 10,/Fsc 6, 7, 9.

century, when the overall number of occupiers on the Level fell significantly, those domiciled on the uplands withdrew in disproportionately large measure. The proportion of land on the Level in the hands of upland dwellers fell even more sharply, the decline in the amount of land in the hands of larger occupiers living off the marsh being particularly notable. By contrast, between 1705 and 1768 the number of known marsh residents occupying more than 200 acres rose from nine to 20, and the proportion of the Level in their hands virtually doubled. Hence, in 1768, those whom we might reasonably assume to have been, in the main, larger specialist marsh graziers, occupied one-third of the Level. However, this situation did not last, and by 1834 there had been a modest recovery in the proportion of upland dwellers among those

TABLE 9. Place of residence of land occupiers in the Level of Romney Marsh, 1768 and 1834

	<i>Whole-marsh parishes</i>		<i>Marsh-edge parishes</i>		<i>Contiguous upland parishes</i>		<i>Within 10 miles</i>		<i>Beyond 10 miles</i>		<i>Residence unstated</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>acres</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>acres</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>acres</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>acres</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>acres</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>acres</i>
1768												
Unknown		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		11.0
<10 acres	28	111.5	18	64.0	3	14.0	3	18.5	0	0	11	38.0
10–<20	16	230.5	10	135.0	5	75.0	8	115.5	0	0	2	35.0
20–<50	26	848.0	15	476.0	19	648.0	15	477.0	6	213.5	4	135.5
50–<100	20	1447.5	13	946.0	8	598.5	16	1144.5	1	85.0	1	51.5
100–<200	9	1230.0	7	985.0	5	662.5	5	655.0	3	463.0	0	0
≥200 acres	12	4477.5	8	3008.5	5	1929.5	5	1624.0	2	767.5	1	252.5
TOTAL	111	8345.0	71	5614.5	45	3927.5	52	4034.5	12	1529.0	19+	523.5
mean acreage per tenant		75.2		79.1		87.3		77.6		127.4		
1834												
Unknown		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		295.0
<10 acres	35	134.0	26	107.5	3	12.0	7	38.0	1	9.5	5	12.0
10–<20	15	220.0	9	136.0	4	53.5	4	55.0	4	63.0	2	29.0
20–<50	22	711.5	22	742.5	9	273.5	25	809.5	16	556.5	2	49.0
50–<100	22	1535.5	17	1215.5	7	548.5	12	836.5	10	719.0	3	225.0
100–<200	14	2091.0	6	817.0	6	924.0	10	1419.0	4	614.5	5	651.5
≥200 acres	11	3735.5	1	289.5	6	2166.5	4	1893.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	119	8427.5	81	3308.0	35	3978.0	62	5051.5	35	1962.5	17+	1261.5
mean acreage per tenant		70.8		40.8		113.7		81.5		56.1		

Notes: Whole-marsh parishes are defined as Brenzett, Brookland, Burmarsh, Dymchurch, Hope, Ivychurch, Lydd, New Romney, Newchurch, Old Romney, Snargate, Snaive, St Marys; marsh-edge parishes: Aldington, Appledore, Bilsington, Bonnington, Ebony, Kennardington, Lympne, Orlestone, Ruckinge, Warehorne, West Hythe; contiguous upland parishes: Hythe, Kingsnorth, Mersham, Saltwood, Sellinge, Smeeth, Stanford, Woodchurch, Tenterden; and parishes within 10 miles: Ashford, Barham, Biddenden, Braborne, Brooke, Cheriton, Crundale, Elham, Folkestone, Great Chart, High Halden, Hinxhill, Kennington, Lyminge, Newington, Pluckley, Postling, Sevington, Swingfield, Westwell, Willesborough, Wye.

Sources: 1768, EKAC, S/Rm/FSZ 10, /FSC 6, 7; 1834, S/Rm/FS 173, /FSc 9.

farming on the marsh, and a much more substantial increase in the proportion of land they occupied on the Level, which rose from 40 to 48 per cent. This revival of upland investment in tenancies on the marsh provides the key to explaining why commercial farm sizes *within* the Romney Marsh region did not continue to increase during the later-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

IV

The developments described above were shaped not only by shifts in the level of demand for the produce of the marsh, but also, crucially, by certain characteristics of the economic culture of severalty that prevailed in Kentish rural society. The same combination of influences had contrived to produce the precocious mid-seventeenth century context against which subsequent developments within the region must be measured. In 1654, 85 per cent of the land on the Level of Romney Marsh was in the hands of tenant farmers, a high proportion of the deals struck between owners and tenants were for short-term leases or tenancies-at-will, rentiers were as apt to be small freeholders as county gentry, and larger tenant farms were already a prominent component of the agrarian economy of the region. Apart from the small freeholder as landlord, these are traits usually associated with English rural economies of a much later era. But the absence of customary, tenurial and organizational constraints had brought them to the marsh at an early date.²⁰

If there were data for the turn of the sixteenth century equivalent to those for the Level in the early 1650s they would probably confirm other indications that short leases and tenancies-at-will were common and ancient currency on the marsh, and that in the late Elizabethan period, as in the 1650s, landlords came in all sizes. There was probably a higher incidence of owner-occupation among small freeholders on the marsh in the late-sixteenth than in the mid-seventeenth century, since improved wool and meat prices were offering encouragement to direct farming at the close of the Elizabethan period. But the choice would not always have been self-evident, and the small Kentish freeholder was no more wedded to the notion of owner-occupation or bust than was the landed gentleman. In the best of times there were many petty rentiers who took an income and deployed their own labour elsewhere, or were tenants on more conveniently located land. And competition for tenancies certainly made the rentier option attractive. In 1608, Richard Norton recalled that when he first rented land in Ivychurch, some 40 years earlier, he had given only 7s. 6d. per acre, but now the marshland was let at 20s. 0d. per acre. By the beginning of the 1620s, 23s. 0d. per acre was not uncommon, and the best pasture might command up to 30s. 0d. per acre. But the early 1620s also saw a slump in wool prices that inaugurated a prolonged and marked deterioration in the economic climate for wool-growers. Many smaller farmers suffered and withdrew, erstwhile direct farmers (probably) took the rentier option in greater numbers, and they found their tenants, increasingly, among those able and willing to take on more land in order to raise output to compensate for lower margins, and/or shift the emphasis to meat production. Tenants with the necessary capital were the more willing to expand their acreage as competition for land abated and the upward movement of rent at first decelerated and then, by mid-century, ceased altogether. During the second quarter of the seventeenth century these tenants built up and sustained larger farms – often comprising many parcels of land dispersed across the region – through a succession of market-sensitive leasehold deals made with a variety of freeholders, large and small.²¹

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 647–9, 655–9.

²¹ Hipkin, 'Land occupation', pp. 150–2, 160–1; *id.*, 'Tenant farming', pp. 661, 666–7, 669–71. One of the most important consequences of the fragmentation of

freeholds caused by gavelkind was that 'Kent was a county of mostly small landowners', but 'not a county of owner-occupiers'. C. W. Chalklin, *Seventeenth-century Kent* (1978), p. 58.

That the vast majority of large tenant farms across the region continued to be assembled and sustained in this manner throughout the next two centuries is immediately obvious from the many hundreds of pages of crowded entries in the calendar scot books. From these entries the land-occupation biographies of countless tenants on the Level may be reconstructed. The farming enterprise of Daniel Langdon provides a typical example. Langdon had spent his youth in New Romney, but by 1699 he had migrated the short-distance to St Mary-in-the-Marsh. Langdon did not own any land in the region, but he was already a wealthy man, occupying a total of 270 acres comprising 11 parcels ranging in size from three to 41.5 acres, scattered over six waterings on the Level, and held by leases agreed with six different owners. But Langdon's farm did not long retain this configuration. At Michaelmas 1703 he vacated two parcels of seven and nine and one-half acres in Great Sedbrook, and at Michaelmas 1704 he gave up a three-acre parcel in Sheaty. Meanwhile he took out leases on three parcels of 7.5, 11.0 and 127.5 acres in Jefferstone watering (though from three different owners), and a further seven-acre parcel in Sheaty. By the following year he had vacated his 41.5-acre parcel in Sheaty, but this still left him occupying 362 acres in 1705, and a much reconfigured as well as larger farm, dispersed across five waterings. In 1705, as in 1699, Langdon had ongoing leasehold agreements with six landowners, but contracts with only three of them had spanned the whole period. Thereafter, the size and distribution of his holdings oscillated as existing tenancies came to an end and new leases were taken out, but right up to his death, in January 1751, the total acreage of his leaseholdings at any one time remained well above 200 acres. It was not necessary for Daniel's eldest son to await a deathbed inheritance before following in his father's footsteps, for in 1722, at the age of 21, Robert Langdon began his own career as a commercial tenant farmer, leasing 79 acres in Jefferstone and Sheaty that his father had previously occupied. By 1732, Robert had built up his tenant farm to 167 acres, comprising seven parcels dotted across Jefferstone, Paternosterford and Sheaty waterings, which he leased from three different owners. By 1739, 'Mr Robert Langdon' had retraced his father's footsteps and joined the ranks of the gentleman-grazier inhabitants who dominated the town of New Romney.²²

Data for 1768 provide a snapshot of the configuration of holdings across the region. Of the 13 tenant farmers occupying more than 500 acres, none were contracted solely with one owner, seven simultaneously held leases from more than six different owners, and Henry Nickoll's 624-acre farm comprised 10.5 acres of owner-occupied land, and 613.5 acres leased from no less than 14 different owners, in parcels ranging in size from half an acre to 143 acres. The half-acre Nickoll leased from Stephen Goldfinch was Goldfinch's sole proprietary interest on the marsh; a *very* petty rentier. In 1834 the picture across the region was much the same.²³

Far from sponsoring the development of large tenant farms in the belief that they would offer higher rent returns over the medium to long-term, proprietors on the marsh were accustomed to seeking the best *immediately* available deal for their land, and so to dealing (and

²² EKAC, S/Rm/FS 6; /FSc 4, p. 221; /FSc 5, pp. 182, 186; /FSc 6, p. 349; Hipkin, 'Daniel Langdon', pp. 174–83.

²³ EKAC, S/Rm/FSz 10, /FS 173; /W/FS 5A, 6B, 7A, 8, 39; /D/FS 6, 7.

haggling) with a variety of tenants at any one time.²⁴ One of Henry Nickoll's many landlords in 1768 was George Carter, the owner of 409.5 acres scattered across 11 waterings in the region. Besides the 53.5 acres he leased to Nickoll, Carter had eight other tenants to whom he leased between one acre and 98 acres. And Carter also owner-occupied 20.5 acres in 1768. Among the largest owners on the Level in May 1654, Sir Edward Hales's 884 acres were in the hands of 11 tenants, Sir John Fagge's 713.5 acres were leased to 10, Sir William Sidley's 551.5 acres to nine, John Austen's 457.5 acres to six, and the 372 acres belonging to Edward Honeywood were also distributed among half a dozen tenant farmers. Of the 11 largest private owners in the region in 1768, three each had four tenants, one had six, one had eight, one had ten, David Papillon's 604.5 acres were occupied by a dozen tenants, John Mascall's 690.5 acres were farmed by 13, Sir John Honeywood's 1180 acres were distributed among 17 tenants, and Sir Edward Dering had leasehold agreements with 18 tenants occupying the 1501 acres that he owned on the marsh. The Duchess of Marlboro was exceptional in having only two tenants on her 738 acres on Walland Marsh. Larger institutional proprietors such as All Souls College or the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church Canterbury sometimes opted for convenience and let in large blocks to tenants who sublet all or part of their holding (data for 1768, for instance, indicate that 57 per cent of the Dean and Chapters' land was sublet), and private owners living far from the marsh sometimes did the same. But neither of Marlboro's tenants was subletting. Thomas Denne, who leased 550 acres from her, also farmed 226 acres leased from two other owners, plus 22 acres of glebe and 161 acres that he owner-occupied, all of which combined to make Denne the second biggest farmer on the marsh. Marlboro's other tenant, Thomas Shoesmith, farmed, in total, 504 acres, including 56 acres which he owner-occupied.²⁵

The units in which land might be offered on the leasehold or freehold markets were often very small, and are identified in Thomas Maylam's 1768 survey as 'pieces', which comprised closes bounded by ditches or post and rail fences. For example, 146 'pieces' of land are specified within the 1029.5 acres covered by Abbatriidge watering (on average, seven acres per piece), and 300 'pieces' are specified within the 3514 acres of Brenzett watering (on average, 11.7 acres per piece). These 'pieces' were let or sold singly or in multiples, though, as scrutiny of the survey maps shows, albeit any number of 'pieces' might be let together, often they did not lie together. The 146 'pieces' Maylam identified in Abbatriidge watering were held by 27 farmers in configurations ranging from the one 'piece' measuring one acre let to John Scoones by Sir Edward Knatchbull, to the 19 pieces comprising, in total, 256.5 acres, let to William Munk senior by Francis Despencer. In 1768, the 300 'pieces' in Brenzett happened to be dispersed among 74 farmers.²⁶ But within any given watering the number of tenants, and the configuration of 'pieces'

²⁴ Thus, on 9 June 1740 we find Sir Wyndam Knatchbull recording that he had 'promised to give Luckhurst an answer' whether or not he would renew his five-year lease on one parcel of 150 acres (Luckhurst was offering just £180 per annum for the renewal, a £20 per annum reduction on the agreed annual rent for his existing lease, and he also wanted 'a new washing tun' thrown in). Three days later he noted that 'Farnell and Barnell' had offered £185 per annum, and 'I promised them, if no one offered more ... to let them have it'. On 18 June

Knatchbull noted that Luckhurst 'came again and offered £180 for the land, without a new tun. Refused him, but promised to let him have the refusal if no more was offered; he in the meantime to be at liberty to provide for himself elsewhere'. The following day Knatchbull finally 'agreed with Jer. Reed to hire him the above mentioned land at £190 per annum ...'. CKS, U951 E12. I owe this reference to Anne Davison.

²⁵ EKAC, S/Rm/FSz 10; /W/FS 5A, 6B, 7A, 8; /D/FS 6.

²⁶ EKAC, S/Rm/FSz 10.

in which land was let to them, was constantly changing. Indeed, the hallmark of the method by which land on the marsh was made available to tenants was its flexibility and ready adaptability to changing market conditions. Like bits of lego, individual ‘pieces’ of marsh pasture might form one relatively insignificant part of a large tenant-constructed assemblage one year, and the major or even the only component of something much smaller the next.

V

The practice of offering size-adjustable units of land on short leases or tenancies at will enabled landlords to maximize rents when there was plenty of competition for tenancies on the marsh, but it also exposed proprietors to chillier winds when tenants found profits harder to come by. How chilly was the post-Restoration climate? The 1660–1750 period was characterized by falling grain prices and very poor returns for wool, which, producers in Romney Marsh and elsewhere regularly (though to no avail) protested, were a consequence of the continuing export ban. Wool prices fell by almost 33 per cent between 1640–79 and 1710–49. On the other hand, low grain prices released money for the purchase of meat and dairy products. Hence the ‘price of livestock moved upwards in almost direct proportion to the fall in grain prices throughout the period 1640–1749 ... and while the prices of animal products in general declined they did so rather less markedly than the prices of grain’. This has led recent scholars to seek to modify the perception ‘well established in the literature that in the period 1660–1750 agriculture suffered a long-term decline in prosperity’. With respect to the early eighteenth century, Beckett and others have emphasized that experience varied in different regions, and, in particular, that whilst there was an ‘agricultural depression’ in some (arable) regions during the 1730s and 1740s, ‘demand for meat and dairy products ... was sufficient to protect the pastoral regions against agricultural depression, and to ensure for them a measure of prosperity’. In turn, in some of these regions, rents were perceptibly rising after 1690.²⁷ The evidence for Romney Marsh, however, suggests that while some larger tenant farmers may have enjoyed a ‘measure of prosperity’ during the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, this was partly the product of weak competition for tenancies in the region.

Low prices certainly made conditions difficult for smaller wool-growers in the Romney Marsh region throughout the later-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. That the resulting decline in their demand for tenancies was not, prior to the 1690s, balanced by increasing demand from larger tenant farmers is indicated by the evidence of rents, which fell by as much as 40 per cent on some parts of the marsh between the 1650s and 1670s. During the 1680s, proprietors on Denge Marsh had to assume responsibility for scot payments in order to retain tenants. A temporary improvement in wool prices brought some stabilization of rents during the 1690s, but at levels no better – and perhaps generally somewhat lower – than those obtained in the mid-Jacobean period.²⁸ For the early decades of the eighteenth century, payments authorized

²⁷ P. J. Bowden, *The wool trade in Tudor and Stuart England* (1962), pp. 185–217; *Id.*, ‘Agricultural prices, wages, farm profits, and rents’, in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Agrarian History of England and Wales V* (ii) (1984), pp. 1–2, M. E. Turner, J. V. Beckett, and B. Afton, *Agricultural rent*

in England, 1690–1914 (1997), pp. 226–32; G. E. Mingay, ‘The agricultural depression 1730–1750’, *EcHR* 8 (1956), pp. 323–38; J. V. Beckett, ‘Regional variation and the agricultural depression, 1730–50’, *EcHR* 35 (1982), p. 50.

²⁸ Hipkin, ‘Tenant farming’, pp. 670–1.

by the Lathe of Romney Marsh to compensate owners of land excavated to provide earth to repair Dymchurch wall offer reasonable indications of what were probably regarded as average commercial rents on the marsh. Without exception, between 1700 and 1720, the Lathe offered compensation at rates of between 20s. *od.* and 24s. *od.* per acre.²⁹ Among the packages approved were two (in 1704 and 1705) for land belonging to Peter Godfrey and occupied by Daniel Langdon, on both occasions 23s. *od.* per acre was granted. Two decades later, at Michaelmas 1723, Langdon recorded a payment of £40 to John Sawbridge, his landlord on 34 acres in Jefferstone watering, suggesting a very similar rent. Other entries in Langdon's 'almanac' (his rather haphazard financial notebook) would appear to indicate somewhat lower rents of between 16s. *od.* and 22s. *od.* on his holdings elsewhere, but such variations may reflect not only differences in the quality of land but also in the precise terms of leasehold agreements. Langdon paid the land tax and manorial quit rents on land leased from 'landlord Godfrey', but not – it would appear – on other lands he occupied. It is therefore likely that some, but not all, of his rent payments reflected reductions to compensate for additional liabilities that had been agreed at the original negotiation of leases.³⁰ Further research may modify the picture, but the indications so far are that marsh rents during the first half of the eighteenth century remained fairly flat, depressed at levels first achieved a century earlier. Indeed, during the late 1730s, Henry and Jeremy Read, both of whom were among the most substantial tenants on the marsh, were negotiating rent abatements from Sir Wyndam Knatchbull, and in June 1739 another of Knatchbull's tenants, Mr Stace, offered to renew his lease on one parcel of marsh for a further five years, but only if there was some abatement of the rent. Stace, wrote Knatchbull, 'complained chiefly of the low price of wool, of which he told me he usually sheared 25 packs, but could not get more than £4 or £4 10s. *od.* at most'.³¹ Since, as we have seen, smaller farmers were retreating from the marsh during the early eighteenth century and, it would seem, fewer upland farmers were active in the mid-eighteenth century market for tenancies, those who were prepared to remain and able to invest found that they could expand their acreage relatively cheaply, at the expense of proprietors in a weak position to defend their rent income. It is therefore hardly surprising that the regional data for 1768 show that a significant number of proprietors – particularly smaller owners – had, over the course of the previous century, sold out to those better equipped to weather the climate.

Judging by contemporary comment, demand for tenancies was much more buoyant by the

²⁹ EKAC, S/Rm/SO 3, pp. 25, 32, 36, 38, 39, 42, 45, 47, 66, 70.

³⁰ EKAC, S/Rm/Z 2, fos 24, 27v, 30r, 32r; /Z 3, fos 23v, 24, 40v–41r. During the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries the high quality of pasture on the marsh guaranteed significantly – at least 50 per cent – higher average rents than for upland pasture. The gap may have narrowed somewhat after the mid-seventeenth century as the introduction of artificial grasses on uplands increased their relative attractiveness, but it was far from extinguished. In his scrutiny of farm advertisements in the *Kentish Post* between 1729 and 1764, Baker found 24 instances where annual rents and

acreages in various parts of the county are together stated unambiguously. The average rent for farms of 50 acres or less was 16.7s. per acre, and that for farms of more than 50 acres was 10.1s. per acre. Average marsh rents may have been flat in the first half of the eighteenth century, but clearly they were well above these levels, and this was probably significant in discouraging investment in the marsh by upland farmers. Hipkin, 'Land occupation', pp. 160–1; id., 'Tenant farming', pp. 670–1; Baker, *Agricultural prices*, pp. 129, 142–3.

³¹ CKS, U951 E 12. I owe this reference to Anne Davison.

early 1770s. In a letter to his kinsman in November 1773, Josias Pattenson reported on the efforts of potential tenants to outbid each other for marsh holdings. On getting wind of the availability of one estate, he wrote, 'no less than four graziers ... substantial men, went to London ... on purpose either to buy or hire the same ... and you know how the graziers ride after every parcel of land that is to be let in the marsh'.³² By 1786, according to the Reverend Daniel Jones of New Romney, rents for marsh pasture were 'in general from 20s. to 35s. per acre, but some prime fattening pieces so high as 40s. and even 50s. per acre', while 'the few acres that are ploughed let from 40s. to £3 per acre'. Grazing, Jones thought, was 'the prettiest and most gentlemanlike business', provided

one has money at command and can get a tolerable parcel of good land at a moderate rent ... But the evil of it is, that it is exceedingly difficult to get land for it requires almost as much interest to get at, as it would to procure a place at court, and besides, of late years it is become so excessively dear as to be hardly worth the hazard of using.

Here is glowing contemporary testimony to the efficiency with which marsh proprietors were, at least in a buoyant market for tenancies, capable of transferring the bulk of any increases in farm income into their own pockets.³³ And competition for tenancies further intensified with the advent of the Napoleonic wars. Writing in 1809, Daniel Price offered enough contemporary examples to suggest that breeding land on the marsh usually fetched at least £2 per acre, and that first quality fattening land easily commanded £3, and sometimes £4 per acre. The 'grazing land in Romney Marsh', Price observed, 'appears in general to be rented above its real value, which is owing to the number of competitors', but his examples also suggest that such rent levels were sustained by rentiers taking advantage of the premiums to be had from letting in small units.³⁴

If the 1770s signalled the end of the long lean period for rentiers, greater demand for tenancies was not brought about by any improvement in the prospects for wool-growers, since wool 'prices were flat, possibly even on a falling trend, from 1750 to the mid-1780s'. On the other hand, the pressure exerted on supply by population growth after 1750 was pushing up food prices, and although conditions may have favoured cereal producers rather more than pasture farmers, the money price of meat rose by 'about 52 per cent' between 1750–64 and 1790–4, and by 88.5 per cent between 1790–4 and 1810–14.³⁵ This was not going to tempt many more small farmers to compete for holdings on the marsh, for meat production favoured those with capital

³² CKS, U2140 E 25.

³³ Jones, 'Sheep farming', pp. 4–7.

³⁴ D. Price, *A system of sheep-grazing and management as practised in Romney Marsh* (London, 1809), pp. 264–287. In the absence of considerably more data it is not possible to reach any firm conclusions about the comparative movement of rent on Romney Marsh and other regions of Kent. While stressing the extent of local variations, John Boys reckoned 'the average rent of the county to be 15s. per acre' in 1796, and 20s. per acre by 1805. More recently, Hunt calculated that aggregate rent for 'farms' on the estate of Lord Darnley in

north-west Kent rose by 'about 100 per cent' between 1788 and 1820. It is probable that marsh rents rose, on average, by at least as much over the same period. J. Boys, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Kent* (sec. ed. London, 1805), pp. 38–9; H. G. Hunt 'Agricultural rent in south-east England, 1788–1825', *AgHR* 7 (1959), p. 100.

³⁵ B. A. Holderness, 'Prices, productivity and output' in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, VI, 1750–1850 (1989), pp. 110–11, 118; J. D. Chambers and G. E. Mingay, *The agricultural revolution, 1750–1880* (1966), p. 111.

to invest, but it was enough to cause graziers 'to ride after every parcel of land that is to be let in the marsh', and to encourage more monied upland farmers to rejoin the chase. Herein lies the core of the explanation for the reduced dominance of those with larger holdings on the marsh after the mid-eighteenth century. Specialist marsh graziers no longer enjoyed the luxury of weak competition for holdings that had previously enabled them to assemble large farms at low rents. Moreover, as the prospects for commercial meat production improved, not only did they face stiffer competition for tenancies from upland farmers with renewed appetites, they also had to compete in a contracting leasehold sector as more proprietors were seduced by the rewards of direct farming and the proportion of owner-occupied land within the marsh region grew.³⁶

On the old-enclosed land of the Leveson-Gower estates the great losers during the eighteenth century were the 'intermediate farmers proper with 20–200 acres, who probably became poorer as well as decidedly less numerous'.³⁷ In purely statistical terms, *within* the similarly old-enclosed Romney Marsh region there was no decline over the course of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries either in the number occupying 20–200 acres or in the proportion of land they farmed.³⁸ But the fortunes of intermediate farmers who occupied land on the marsh cannot be determined from scot-book evidence alone, for the simple reason that so many were dual-region farmers. To judge from domicile data for the Level, approximately half of those holding 20–200 acres were upland dwellers, and thus probably occupiers of land beyond Romney Marsh. Indeed *more* than half of the tenants holding 20–50 acres within the jurisdiction of the Level in 1834 were upland dwellers (Table 9), so it is likely that much of the increase in the number of occupiers farming 20–50 acres on the marsh between 1775 (when there were 80) and 1834 (by which time there were 118), reflected decisions by upland farmers to add marsh tenancies to their enterprises as incomes improved. There was also, probably, something of a revival of the genuine small commercial wool-grower during the Napoleonic wars. The average wool price between 1795 and 1820 was only double that of 1750–1775 (whereas general prices increased by about 160 per cent), but as Holderness comments, 'to judge from the bitter reaction among farmers to the fall of the 1820s, the levels of price achieved in the wartime inflation *were* regarded as profitable'.³⁹

Fortunately, since upland dwellers did not bulk large among them, it is possible to be more categorical about the smallest occupiers on the marsh. The late-eighteenth century brought no change in the number of smallholders, but, between 1800 and 1834 the number occupying less than 20 acres rose from 122 to 166. A few of these smallholders may have been looking to profit from dairy produce, prices for which rose 'quite precipitately until 1814', but most of those

³⁶ The revival of owner-occupation during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries was not peculiar to the marsh. John Boys commented on the increasing number of yeomanry 'by the estates which are divided and sold to the occupiers ... Many in the eastern part of this county have been so sold, within these few years, for forty, and some for fifty years purchase, and upwards. A remarkable instance of this change of property has occurred, in my own vicinity [Betshanger] since I began the farming business in the year 1771; at

that time ... ten farms around me ... were all severally occupied by tenants; but now, 1803, the whole, except the last, are in the hands of their respective purchasers, among which are only two of the old tenants'. Boys, *General view*, pp. 27–8.

³⁷ Wordie, 'Social change', pp. 603–4.

³⁸ In 1699, 261 20–200-acre occupiers held 39.4% of the land in the region, in 1800 263 held 45.1%, and in 1834 there were 278 such occupiers holding 45.5% of the land.

³⁹ Holderness, 'Prices', pp. 118–9.

occupying less than 20 acres were, as Wordie has put it, ‘not primarily farmers ... indeed ... most were not farmers at all’. As on the Leveson-Gower estates, the majority of under-20-acre occupiers on Romney Marsh were in fact under-five-acre occupiers, and their interest in land was primarily as a source of produce for the home table.⁴⁰ They mainly comprised agricultural labourers, town-dwellers (principally in New Romney and Lydd) who rented a few acres to supplement incomes derived from fishing, manufacturing crafts or the service sector, and small freeholders who had opted to work rather than let a modest inheritance. If their number increased in the early-nineteenth century it was probably because more sought shelter from the vagaries of the food market during the unprecedentedly volatile and inflationary conditions that persisted throughout the period of the Napoleonic wars.⁴¹

VI

In summary, the greater efficiencies achieved by those with capital to invest in measures to improve productivity and the leasing of additional pasture doubtless added to the difficulties experienced by smaller producers on the marsh after 1620. Nevertheless, large tenant farms came to dominate the Romney Marsh landscape by the mid-eighteenth century not so much because they had forced out those renting smaller acreages as because they filled the space vacated by the latter’s retreat in the face of weak consumer demand, particularly during the century following the Restoration. If larger tenant farmers enjoyed a ‘measure of prosperity’ between 1660 and 1750 it was partly because they were able to drive hard bargains with rentiers, and thus to pass on some of the costs of increasing their output. But as consumer demand revived after 1750, so competition for tenancies on the marsh became sufficiently robust and widespread to prevent any further drift towards the consolidation of land in the hands of fewer tenants. Indeed, as has been shown, after the mid-eighteenth century the regional trend was in the opposite direction, and by 1834 those farming more than 200 acres occupied 3113 acres less marshland than they had in 1746. That rents rose particularly rapidly during the period of the French wars is evident from contemporary comment, though whether they tripled, in line with the Turner-Beckett-Afton rent index, is a matter for further research.⁴²

Allen’s analysis of south Midland estates during the eighteenth century led him to the emphatic conclusion that ‘large farms were not being created by leasing up many small properties. Instead, large farms were the creation of large proprietors ... (who) ... were usually the owners of great estates’.⁴³ This paper concludes equally emphatically that the opposite was the case in the Romney Marsh region. Throughout the early modern period, large proprietors did next to nothing to promote the growth of large farms. The initiative lay almost entirely with tenants who assembled large (if not consolidated) farms by leasing land, often in small quantities, from a number of owners, some of whom had as little as half an acre to let. Henry Nickoll, with his 624 acres and his 14 landlords in 1768, was simply a notable exponent of the common art. But it was not just the large holdings that were constructed by tenants. In 1768, Henry Tilbe

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 115; Wordie, ‘Social change’, pp. 601–2.

⁴¹ Chambers and Mingay, *Agricultural revolution*, p. 112.

⁴² Price, *Sheep grazing and management*, pp. 264–287;

Jones, ‘Sheep farming’, p. 4, later marginal comment; Turner, Becket, and Afton, *Agricultural rent*, pp. 178, 192–3, 236–7.

⁴³ Allen, *Enclosure and the yeoman*, p. 88.

occupied 99 acres comprising land held directly from five owners, plus one parcel of five and one-half acres that he sublet from the formal tenant. Edward Carpenter, meanwhile, owner-occupied three acres, but, as a result of deals reached with four owners, farmed 84.5 acres dispersed across four waterings. In the same year, William Hunt and John Ashby each occupied 53 acres, and both had three landlords. Furthermore, it is clear that many tenant farmers on the marsh had upland holdings and other landlords to consider. Only by further investigation of the dual-regional context in which large numbers of holdings on the marsh were farmed may it be possible to reveal more fully the extent of tenant accumulation, and the size of farms they assembled during the long-eighteenth century. It is, however, clear that if scot-book data reveal trends in the structure of landownership and land occupation *within* the Romney Marsh region, they also indicate that these trends were heavily influenced by decisions reached in farmhouses well away from the marsh.

The dominance of livestock farming may have meant that Romney Marsh was host to exceptional numbers of large enterprises, but there is no reason to suppose that the methods by which they were constructed were unusual in eighteenth-century Kent, or, for that matter, England. Baker's examination of advertisements in the *Kentish Post* shows that 'there was always a very large number of plots or parcels of land available' to those seeking to expand their operations by rent or purchase from owners, some of whom, in turn, were far less wedded to the virtues of consolidation than historians have sometimes led us to suppose. In 1730, the owner of one farm in Sturry, near Canterbury, comprising '“a small tenement . . . for a labouring man, and 200 acres of arable, pasture and meadowland”, as well as “a very good dwelling house and convenient barns and stables”', advertised 'that “if not all let at Michaelmas the same will be let in parcels for one year”'. Likewise, the proprietor of Plumpton farm at Ashford was quite happy to advertise, in 1746, that the property 'was “very convenient to be used together or to be divided in two”'. Farm advertisements raised tenant awareness (if it needed raising) of the potential for expansion beyond the home or adjoining parish, and, like the scot-book evidence, should remind historians (when they need reminding) of the dangers of assuming that 'farm size' can accurately be determined from manorial or estate accounts. Single farming enterprises could be spread over surprisingly wide areas. In 1749, two parcels of land, one of 92 acres near New Romney, and one of 40 acres at Seasalter near Whitstable, some 25 miles distant on the North Kent coast, were advertised 'to be let separate or together'.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Baker, *Agricultural prices*, pp. 164–7.

Urban allotment gardens in the eighteenth century: the case of Sheffield*

by N. Flavell

Abstract

Many acres of the horticultural land surrounding Sheffield in the late eighteenth century were utilized as allotment gardens. Provincial town histories, apart from those of Birmingham (where small gardens were often different in character) make little or no mention of anything similar for this period. This paper makes the case for Sheffield being the first to experience workers' gardens *en masse* and demonstrates that there may have been, on a cautious calculation, 1500–1800 allotments available for rent in the town in the 1780s.

Given the rise to maturity over the past three decades of the discipline of Urban History, it is surprising that so little has been written about provincial town allotment gardens before the nineteenth century. That they existed is known from local studies of Newcastle, Nottingham and particularly Birmingham, and from books on allotment and garden history.¹ But the existing literature provides scant detail of early provision. Indeed, in the case of Birmingham, it partly obscures the picture by emphasising the proliferation there of the 'Guinea Garden', a form of leisure garden with little apparent resemblance to a working family's vegetable plot.² This article seeks both to fill a gap in the literature and to advance the case for Sheffield as not merely a major pioneer, but as the first town to possess large numbers of urban allotments, long before the era of statutory provision. It also seeks to provoke others to challenge the claim. It might well be that other towns also had large numbers of similar gardens which are as yet unresearched or unacknowledged.

* The author wishes to acknowledge constructive criticisms of earlier drafts of this paper from Jeremy Burchardt and Malcolm Thick. The term 'allotment' is used throughout to describe a small individual parcel of cultivable land rented by an amateur gardener separately from a house, not adjacent to that house, free of any building, and usually in a block with other similar parcels.

¹ H. Thorpe, 'The homely allotment: from rural dole to urban amenity', *Geography* 268 (1975), pp. 169–183; H. Thorpe, E. B. Galloway and L. M. Evans, *The rationalisation of urban allotments systems: a case study of Birmingham* (SSRC Report, HR 979, 1977), pp. 2–4; W. Hutton, *History of Birmingham* (1795), pp. 7, 202; J. Drake, *A picture of Birmingham* (1825), p. 44; J. A. Langford, *A century of Birmingham life, 1741–1841* (2 vols, 1871), II, pp. 5–9; R. J. Charleton, *A history of Newcastle-on-Tyne* (1894), pp. 397–8; J. V. Beckett (ed.), *A centenary history*

of Nottingham (1997), p. 399; D. Crouch and C. Ward, *The allotment: its landscape and culture* (1988), pp. 64–7. Thorpe, 'The homely allotment' also mentions Coventry and Southampton as having early allotments, but neither urban histories nor enquiries at respective local studies and archives have provided any relevant information for these towns.

² Thorpe *et al*, *Rationalisation of urban allotments systems*, p. 2; Hutton, *History of Birmingham*, p. 7.

In Sheffield, individual lease agreements for a sample of 60 manorial garden plots averaging some 150 to 200 square yards indicate a charge of just under 0.3*d.* per square yard from the 1730s to the 1760s.³ This is a clear suggestion that they were different in nature and usage from the typical 300 square yard Birmingham Guinea Garden priced at around 21*s.* or 0.84*d.* per yard.⁴ As late as 1792, when demand for housing and inflation were raising rents, Earl Fitzwilliam's agent was about to let out small gardens to cutlers in Little Sheffield at the then customary ½*d.* per yard, double the rate charged to professional gardeners who usually rented by the acre, and, significantly, half or less than half of the usual rent for building plots.⁵ Freehold parcels, particularly to the north and west of the built-up area, and largely belonging to industrialists, merchants, factors, attorneys, and others who had converted profits into landholding were also let as allotments.⁶ As the town expanded, these gardens became building ground and their owners realised the full value of their investments. In the meantime, whilst the land was rising in value, a steady second best rental income was being earned. Yet it is not only rents charged to tenants which distinguishes their holdings from pleasure gardens on the one hand and market gardens on the other; size and the inclusion in lease agreements of tenants' trades – cutlers (mainly), button makers, miners, bricklayers, shoemakers, innkeepers, tailors, butchers etc, plus a few widows – make it clear they were, for the most part, workers' or craftsmens' gardens.⁷ These tenants also need to be distinguished from the professional gardeners who appear in lease books, market traders' rent lists and all types of property indentures. John Cockayne, for example, who was established by 1773 to the south of the town in and near the Park, and had his own market stall, died in 1815 leaving a substantial portfolio of freehold and leasehold land and housing. The Winnell family, also stallholders, cultivated land at Brightside including three acres at Neepsend for more than fifty years. And three generations of Andrews, again market stallholders, were based in the same quarter for even longer, the Sheffield *Iris* noting in 1810 the death of a seventy year old 'who had worked

³ Or c. £6 per acre. The notional rate may have been ¼*d.* per yard, but rounded upwards to a convenient sum. Sheffield Archives (hereafter SA), Arundel Castle Muniments (hereafter ACM), S376–378. Most manorial leases give no yardage, but, for example, the 18 gardens leased at 3*s.* each in Lambert Croft in 1745–6 do not suggest a higher *pro rata* price. From the ACM leases above, 43 with tenant's occupation appended have been found, although not exclusively among the 60 gardens with yardage noted in the text. They are as follows: Cutlers 28 (all categories, 64% of the total), button makers 2, shoemakers 2, bakers 2, innkeepers 2, widows 2, and one each for a clerk, a grocer, a schoolmaster, a husbandman and a gardener (who appears to be a worker).

The cutlery trades included makers of files, scissors, shears, razors, tableware etc. as well as pen and pocket knives and surgeons', butchers', farmers' and joiners' blades and tools. Even so-called master cutlers were working craftsmen and rarely employed more than two or three journeymen and perhaps one or two apprentices

(evidence from the number of hearths recorded in cutlers' inventories in the Borthwick Institute, York).

⁴ Thorpe, 'Homely allotment', p. 170. One guinea per 300 sq yds equals c. £17 per acre. Hutton in 1795 has 'about sixteen pounds per acre' (*History of Birmingham*, p. 7). The last few surviving Guinea gardens are noted as measuring 600 sq yds in *The Times* 'Weekend' supplement, 29 Aug. 1998, p. 12.

⁵ SA, Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments (hereafter WWM), F121 (11). Professionals were leased land at £4–5 per acre, i.e. c. 0.2–0.25*d.* (one farthing) per yard. It was inevitable that as pressure of demand for housing and other construction grew, gardens would be overbuilt. At the stroke of a pen on a building lease a landlord's ground rent more than doubled.

⁶ SA, Bagshawe Collection (hereafter Bagshawe Mss) 300 (copy and key of the original c. 1788).

⁷ SA, ACM, S378, fos 67–80. The 40 gardens leased by the Duke of Norfolk in February 1760 near Broad Lane End averaged 167 sq yds.

for 40 years with Mr Andrews'. This latter detail is also a reminder that some gardeners were merely employees.⁸

I

Evidence from documents and maps illustrates the increasing provision of allotments in Sheffield during the eighteenth century. The rate of increase was at first modest, but by the late 1760s, when Dr William Buchan was writing enthusiastically about craftsmen's gardens, the provision was clearly substantial.⁹ The early manorial lease books show how 35 parcels had been let 'at will' to craftsmen between 1712 and 1730, and some 60 or more in the decade to 1746. The latter were mainly composed of apparently newly let blocks of 23 parcels at Millsands (1739), 18 at Lambert Croft (1745–46) and 14 in the Wicker (1746).¹⁰ But these three sites had been established by the time Ralph Gosling's *Plan of Sheffield* of 1736 was surveyed, with a dozen or more in the well-documented Ponds area, and almost as many again near the Beast Market (Bullstake).¹¹ (See Map 1.) Non-manorial parcels divided into small gardens are illustrated by Gosling at Lee Lane (Moore's Gardens), to the south of Snig Hill (Gosnock Hall) and in the backsides of Prior Gate (High Street) and Fargate. All have archive evidence, but with no firm numbers.¹² The surveyor has drawn them as separate plots on each bigger parcel, as he has with most garden areas, whereas the Spittle Gardens (Duke of Norfolk's Nursery) outline to the north of the river is in total contrast. This suggests that *all* the sub-divided garden areas could well have been smaller gardens, if not necessarily allotments.¹³ No evidence has been found to indicate that any of these sites were rented by men who described themselves as gardeners apart from Thomas Vessey who paid 7s. *od.* for a plot in 1745.¹⁴ The total number of small gardens shown by Gosling must exceed two hundred, with half reasonably deduced from documentary evidence as allotments.

Similar evidence for the three decades following the 1740s is in relatively short supply. Thirty-five gardens at Broad Lane End and 12 more near the Walk Mill were let out by the Norfolk estate in 1760, the majority to men in the trades.¹⁵ Twos and threes let separately from

⁸ SA, ACM, S376, S377, S378, S343; West Yorkshire Archive Service, Wakefield, West Riding Registry of Deeds (hereafter WRRD) *passim*; Cockayne, SA, Younge-Wilson Deeds 974 (1815); Winnells, WRRD, MM 495/683 (1737/8) and DN 717/887 (1794); Andrews, ACM, S377 fo. 191 (1745) and *Iris* 17 July 1810. Between 1736 and 1800 more than 50 Sheffield gardeners apprenticed sons into the cutlery trades (Cutlers' Company Records Database, courtesy of Dr J. Unwin). They were garden workers, not proprietors.

⁹ W. Buchan, *Domestic medicine* (1769), p. 144 and c.f. pp. 000–00 below.

¹⁰ SA, ACM, S376 *passim*; S377, fos. 89, 121, 200. By 1750 there were 25 gardens at Lambert Croft. 'At will' leases for small parcels continued until 1770/1 when they were replaced by leases for terms of 99 years. Twenty-one year leases for larger properties, with occasional 63 year terms

for industrial sites, lasted into the nineteenth century.

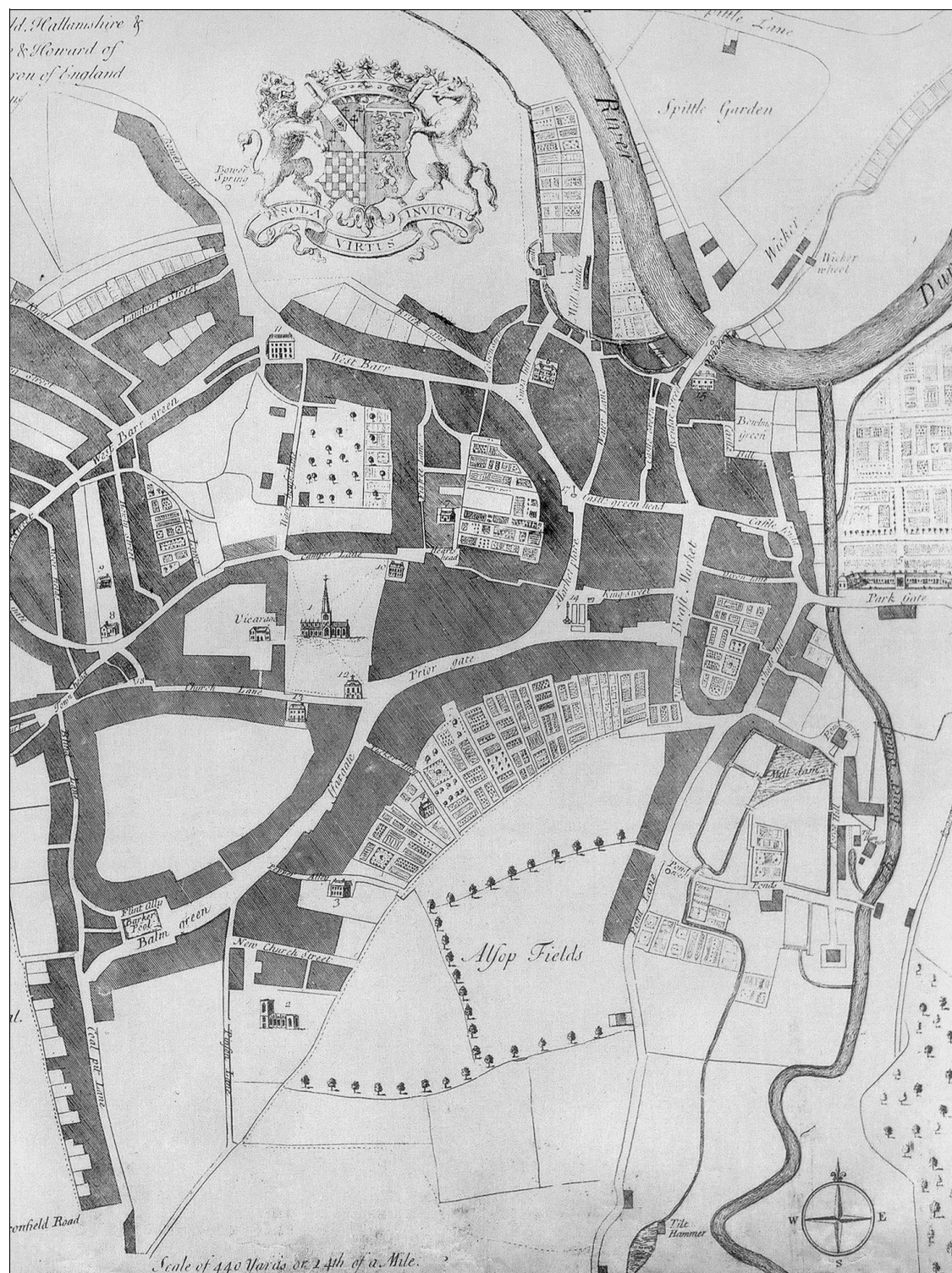
¹¹ SA, ACM, S376 part 3, fos 10–17 (1722–24); S377, 18 Apr, 14 July and 29 Sept. 1747 (lease renewals).

¹² Gosnock Hall, SA, Church Burgesses' Records, 870 (1730); WRRD, U 151/193, GG 401/563; High St., WRRD, C 125/173, L 6/9, R 462/623, GG 547/770, UU 405/543; Fargate, WRRD, H 83/113, EE 332/468, KK 123/155 and 385/508.

¹³ Those gardens drawn at Castle Orchards (to the north of Park Gate) belonged to the Shrewsbury Hospital (adjacent), but were let as closes in 1745 to the proprietor of the nearby cutler's wheel (SA, ACM S377, fo. 193) and hence have not been counted.

¹⁴ SA, ACM, S377, fo. 93. Vessey paid for a small part of Wright's Gardens (location as yet unknown).

¹⁵ SA, ACM, S378, fos 67–82; 18 out of 35 and 8 out of 12 to cutlers and grinders; none to gardeners.



MAP 1. Central part of Ralph Gosling's Plan of Sheffield 1736 showing urban gardens.

houses at Portobello and Little Sheffield, six at Green Lane and nine at Portmahon are revealed in indentures in the later 1760s and 1770s, with 30 more at Moorhills (Little Sheffield) by 1783.¹⁶ However, in 1787–88 the quantity of garden provision becomes much clearer. In those years William Fairbank made enclosure surveys within the township of Sheffield and mapped lands in the immediate vicinity.¹⁷ The latter are particularly relevant as the urban core was already expanding into adjacent parts of Ecclesall, Brightside, Attercliffe and Nether Hallam townships, some part of which were nearer Sheffield parish church than the central township's most southerly and westerly properties. Our assessment of the area given over to allotments is largely based on the Fairbank maps and written surveys supplemented by other evidence.

By the end of the 1780s that part of Brightside closest to Sheffield township and near the River Don contained a large cluster of *market* gardens – upwards of 60 acres in parcels of mainly two to three acres.¹⁸ Yet even here, and lying adjacent in a few cases, could be found allotments both in batches and piecemeal. The biggest group noted was of 23 gardens on manorial land at Bridgehouses let to William Dixon *et al* and averaging 233 square yards each.¹⁹ A group of nine on half an acre plus other separately rented pieces at the Wicker, again manorial, were clearly a continuation of those illustrated by Ralph Gosling in 1736.

In broad contrast, across the river westward, near Penistone Road in the northern part of Sheffield township, gardens were almost all on freehold parcels and only 6½ acres were in the hands of three professional gardeners. Those 35 allotments on 2½ acres belonging to the Infirmary (an average of c. 350 square yards each) and six others individually let are easily countable, as are 25 in nearby Millsands. Yet, typically here and elsewhere in the surveys 'gardens' (almost always plural) and the phrases 'in the hands of several tenants' or 'held by sundry persons' present a problem of obtaining exact numbers from a huge raft of circumstantial evidence.²⁰ Single garden parcels found in this northern quarter range in size from 217 square yards (with other examples of 363 and 435 square yards) to possibly upwards of 800 square yards.²¹ William Hoyle's five acres of gardens, whose tenants were not enumerated in 1787, were let to 63 individuals by his son in 1812.²² Holdings then averaged c. 385 square yards and ranged from 206 to 825 yards. At the risk of anachronism these figures appear to give general confirmation of garden size in this area. With the most circumspect calculation, over

¹⁶ WRRD, BL 128/188, BM 685/867, BX 507/701, BZ 426/550, CG 190/233, CL 718/919.

¹⁷ SA, Fairbank Mss, Miscellaneous Books (hereafter MB), 387–90, 440, and Bagshawe Mss 300. The whole is illustrated by Fairbank's 1808 town plan, the first since Gosling's (1736) to show more than the streets and built up parts of the town.

¹⁸ Pitsmoor, Neepsend, Farfields, Tom Cross Lane, Bridgehouses and Wicker. SA, Fairbank Mss, MB 440: of 30 parcels half were between 2 and 3 acres, and only two more than 5. (Thomas Calverley held 6.42 and Joseph and Michael Swallow 7.48 acres.) Joseph Bennett held more land (c. 10.5 acres), but in four separate pieces. The surveyor in MB 440 decimalises all acreages.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ SA, Bagshawe Mss, 300; ACM, SheS 1495L and

1496L (1781, 1789) show 33 gardens at Millsands (manorial property), but only 25 are allotments as defined since the other eight contain some form of buildings.

²¹ Larger yardages, even when noted as 'garden' (singular), may well have been subdivided and sublet.

²² SA, Bagshawe Mss, 300 and Tibbitts Collection (hereafter TC), 1076–1078 (rentals). Tenants' trades in 1811/12 were as follows: Cutlers (all categories) 34, saw-makers 9, other metals 2, cutlery ancillary workers (haft & scale pressers) 3, shoemakers 4, publicans 3, joiner 1, cooper 1, plumber & glazier 1, wheelwright 1, butcher 1, not known 6. There are more names than plots since some changes of tenancy took place. Most trades are noted in the rentals; others are from contemporary sources.

30 acres of parcels separate from houses in north Sheffield were devoted to allotments in the late 1780s.²³

To the immediate west of town, in and near Broad Lane and Portobello, lay both lands of the Duke of Norfolk's estate and freehold also divided into gardens. Some, in Garden Street (off Broad Lane), the location of allotments in the 1760s, were already beginning to be overbuilt two decades later, but a little further out 20 acres and more were let to 'sundry persons'. John Hoyland's two closes of three acres, so divided, are further confirmed as small gardens in a subsequent sale and four of Robert Brightmore's nine acres in a demise. Fairbank, the surveyor, also measured 106 existing gardens on eight acres (an average of some 360 square yards) at nearby Brookhill for the Church Burgesses and others in 1798.²⁴

The south-eastern part of the township, from Charles Street to Jessop Street (formerly Alsop Fields), destined from before 1771 to be a dense grid of manorial streets and housing, but still far from completion in 1808, contained numerous plots with building leases. Many of these were cultivated wholly or partly as gardens until eventually fully built-up. Fairbank set out 42 of them (averaging 230 square yards) 'in a manner corresponding with the General Building Plan' in 1783, and his son measured another eleven (c. 210 yards on average) on a different part of the grid nearly thirty years later for the attorney John Watson.²⁵ In 1787 Fairbank *père* surveyed another 12 acres a little way to the south and not yet let for building, near the White Lead Works. All the parcels counted are labelled 'several gardens'.²⁶ He also measured a total of 5½ acres of freehold close by, again described as 'gardens'. The parcels ranged from c. 260 square yards upwards.²⁷

To the south, near Little Sheffield Moor, the entrepreneur Henry Tudor still held his gardens and a bowling green on seven acres. Nearby, in 1790–1 John Trevers Younge made eight building leases of plots of 300 to 400 square yards, not all contiguous, but several described as previously 'part of a garden'.²⁸ More of this adjacent land, in the township of Ecclesall, was part of Earl Fitzwilliam's estate for which no detailed description has been found. Even so, evidence for at least additional garden provision comes in a letter of 1792 (only four years after Fairbank's survey) from the Earl's agent, Charles Bowns, to Fitzwilliam, stating that the expected tenants for his newly enclosed 2 acres and 3 roods of garden ground on the Moor were journeymen 'from whom it is difficult to obtain the rent'.²⁹ However, in the eastern part of Sheffield — in the Ponds (site of some of the earliest allotments), the lower Park, Cricket Inn, Wybourn and Attercliffe — the

²³ 30 acres divided by, say, 350 square yards yields 415 plots. Another 4.605 acres near the Cotton Mills were confirmed as small gardens in 1806 (WRRD, EZ 67/114) and could perhaps have been added.

²⁴ SA, ACM, SheS 1533 (1777 plan). Building leases from 1782 in ACM, S382, fos. 51–132, but overbuilding often took at least a decade, sometimes several decades. It is clear many gardens still continued at Broad Lane to the 1790s and beyond (ACM, S158, Michaelmas 1793–1802; manorial rentals still showed gardens here); SA, Bagshawe Mss, 300. Fairbank's 1808 plan of Sheffield shows most gardens intact in this western sector. WRRD, DN 728/902 (1794) and EX 353/442 (probably a sale 1805). SA, Fairbank Mss, SheS 157L (1798).

²⁵ SA, Fairbank Mss, Town Plans 1771 & 1808; ACM,

S382, fo. 125r, S383, fo. 56. ACM, SheS 1758S (Union Lane 1783); Fairbank Mss, SheS 387S (Eyre Street 1810).

²⁶ SA, Bagshawe Mss, 300. A two-acre piece belonging to a gardener, John Milner, and garden ground with buildings have not been counted.

²⁷ *Ibid.* Thomas Holy, entrepreneur, held half the parcels and John Watson, attorney, two large plots jointly 1.9 acres. All the bigger plots are described as 'several gardens'.

²⁸ WRRD, GN 483/403 (1817) The bowling green and most gardens were still extant, with more gardens added on adjacent enclosed land by this date; SA, Younge Wilson Deeds, 2127 (1790–1).

²⁹ SA, WWM F121 (11). Bowns also noted that because of clay extraction and brick-making, much newly enclosed land was only suitable for building, but gave no quantities.



MAP 2. Part of William and Josiah Fairbank's Plan of 1808 illustrating most of the later eighteenth century allotment usage described in the text and showing new areas of expansion to the south west.

survey is much clearer. There lay another 20 plus acres of parcels, most described as made up of 'several gardens', together with a similar quantity of market gardens in the hands of gardener John Cockayne and a much smaller acreage of pleasure gardens belonging to larger houses.³⁰

When the area given over to allotment ground in and around the town in the late 1780s is estimated (counting only those pieces which are clearly sub-divided or made up of 'several gardens' or 'let to several tenants'), the total comes to more than 90 acres. Since some of the evidence reviewed before suggests an average plot to be about 350 to 385 square yards, a cautious calculation indicates that there were, at this time, around 1200 individual gardens available for cultivation by Sheffield families. This may seriously underestimate contemporary provision. It is very likely to be too low because the criteria applied have been too strict, thus excluding many acres of small gardens. It has not counted gardens linked to houses, nor even those which have any other building on them like the dozen or so (*circa* one third) at Millsands and many others in the surveys which fall outside the definition of 'allotment'. It cannot more than partially include garden ground in the extensive township of Ecclesall for which the vital Fairbank survey is not extant and other sources are quite limited. Nor has it been possible to make a full count for those several hundred building plots, *i.e.* those with building leases, on the former Alsop Fields and elsewhere (Broad Lane, for example) sometimes standing potentially idle or only partially overbuilt and for which new or continued garden use would offset the heavier rent.³¹ And finally it may well be that 200–300 square yards, as at the Ponds and in Union Lane, was a more realistic average with a greater *pro rata* number of parcels per acre.³²

How many gardens might there have been, given various shortcomings in primary sources? Is there another approach? Dr Buchan implied that almost all *journeymen* cutlers had ground that they cultivated. Had that been broadly true in 1787 when contemporary evidence showed some 6000 families in Sheffield township plus others at the periphery, we may deduce that there were around 1500 'journeyman cutler' gardens.³³ However, this figure would have excluded the freemen (*i.e.* those who had taken their freedom of the Cutlers' Company and their own mark, and some of whom it is known had allotments).³⁴ As an incomer, Buchan was probably not really aware of the difference. But neither garden rentals nor parish registers make any distinction either. So whether we count all cutlers as one group or add freemen to journeymen matters little. Then there are the many other tradesmen who held plots, fewer in number than the cutlers, but still very significant. The outcome using this method is an overbold 'top end' reckoning of around 3000 allotment holders, or a suggested half of Sheffield's families with their own allotment. The true figure in the later 1780s falls somewhere between 1200 and 3000

³⁰ SA, Bagshawe Mss, 300, Fairbank Mss, MB 390. Cockayne's parcels ranged from c. 1.5 to c. 2.9 acres and were mainly grouped together between the River Sheaf and Park Grange.

³¹ SA, ACM, S382, S383 (manorial building leases of the 1780s) at 1d. per square yard contrast with gardens at ½d. The Norfolk estate made 750 plus leases for house and other building between 1771 and 1797.

³² SA, Fairbank Mss, SheS 913L and ACM, SheS 1758S.

³³ [Joseph] Gales and [David] Martin (comp.), *A directory of Sheffield including the manufacturers of the*

adjacent villages ... (1787), John Robinson, *A directory of Sheffield ...* (1797) and J. Aikin, *A Description of the Country from 30 to 40 miles around Manchester* (1795), pp. 539–51. Over half of adult males in Sheffield were in the cutlery trades; less than half of these took their freedom, so remained journeymen (J. Unwin, Cutlers' Database).

³⁴ See n. 3 above. Freedom of the Cutlers' Company did not necessarily imply 'master' or 'employer'. From the Cutlers' Database it is clear that freemen were often tenants of gardens.

although a reasoned judgement might be a quantity below the mean, perhaps 1500–1800. Some idea of the extent at this time can be obtained from the Fairbanks' plan of 1808 (Map 2).

Frustrating though it is to be so imprecise in this matter, the large number of allotments in proportion to the population is still remarkable. Nothing comparable in such magnitude or significance has yet emerged for the *eighteenth* century from studies of Birmingham, Newcastle, Nottingham or elsewhere.³⁵ Sheffield appears unchallenged as the pioneer of large scale allotment provision, although with no claim lodged for any pre-planning or social policy, but rather a wide-scale response to unprecedented demand.

II

Details of the crops grown by either the professional or amateur gardeners in Sheffield are, unfortunately, far from abundant. Dr William Buchan, who had lived in the town from about 1760 to 1769, gives an inkling when he uses the place to illustrate the advantages of a regime of healthy living in his book *Domestic Medicine*.³⁶ The relevant section is worthy of quotation:

It may seem romantic to recommend gardening to manufacturers in great towns; but observation proves that the plan is very practicable. In the town of Sheffield in Yorkshire where the great iron manufacture is carried on, there is hardly a journeyman cutler who does not possess a piece of ground which he cultivates as a garden. This practice has many salutary effects. It not only induces these people to take exercise without doors, but also to eat many greens, roots &c of their own growth, which they would never think of purchasing.³⁷

James Montgomery, editor of the Sheffield *Iris*, was slightly more specific in 1808 at a time of 'extreme dearth' when he wrote of the great value of home grown produce, especially potatoes, to the 'very numerous proprietors of small gardens in the neighbourhood of this large and populous town'.³⁸ This last reference is rather late, but certainly potatoes were grown for sale locally by 1759. William Fairbank, surveyor, measured two 'potato pieces' in that year for Thomas Handley and another in 1761 for gardener John Dixon, each at around one acre.³⁹ It seems logical that this vegetable would be one of the cutlers' roots noted by Dr Buchan a few years later, along with peas, beans and turnips. These three were grown as field crops respectively at Walkley Bank in 1764, at Attercliffe in 1768 and near the Infirmary in 1799 and 1806. All would have appeared on market stalls of which sixteen were listed as being let to local 'gardeners' in 1790.⁴⁰ Nothing in the records indicates what other vegetables these professionals might have been growing and

³⁵ See the references at n. 1 above. Drake and Langford give the clear impression that the heyday for Birmingham's small gardens was the early nineteenth century, and Thorpe *et al* say 1820–1830.

³⁶ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, p. 144. The book went to at least 19 editions before 1810.

³⁷ The theme of good diet (with a variety of essential vegetables) and exercise was voiced by Charles Deering in his *History of Nottingham* (1751, repr 1970), pp. 70–1, and closely echoed for the early nineteenth century in Drake, *Picture of Birmingham*, pp. 44–5. The latter sounds like a reborn Buchan: 'They [small gardens] pro-

mote healthful exercise and rational enjoyment among families of the artisans; and, with good management, produce an ample supply of those wholesome vegetable stores, which are comparatively seldom tasted by the middling classes when they have to be purchased'.

³⁸ Editorial in the *Iris*, 26 Apr. 1808.

³⁹ SA, Fairbank Mss, Account Book 4, fo. viii and Field Book 19, fo. 23.

⁴⁰ SA, Fairbank Mss, Field Books 27, fo. 83; 35, fo. 12; 87, fo. 6b; 98, fo. 49; ACM, S343 (1–3). All the rents were £1 11s. 6d. or £1 16s. 9d. per half year. All addresses noted were in Sheffield parish.

selling, but onions, leeks, spinach, cabbages, radishes and lettuce had been cultivated in England since the fifteenth century and Pehr Kalm, a visiting Swedish botanist, found, in mid-eighteenth century, many commercial gardeners growing as their main crops cauliflowers, radishes, asparagus and turnips.⁴¹

For the amateurs, some evidence comes from the accounts of a Sheffield innkeeper who, himself tenant of a small garden, turned his hand to buying and selling a wide range of goods including scissors, penknives, hardware, flax, cloth, timber, and seeds before going bankrupt in 1767. Joseph Rowbotham of the 'Horse and Garter' purchased from William Perfect of Pontefract in the spring of 1763 an (unspecified) parcel of seeds and plants 'per Acct' at £1 2s. 6½d., a pound each of best onion seed (2s. 6d.), radish (1s. 0d.) and parsley (1s. 0d.), and a smaller amount of 'Best Lettuce of Sorts' (4d.). Three and a half years later his account detailed an October delivery of 800 cabbage plants in two baskets at 8s.; in April 1767 one peck of long Hotspur peas at 2s. 0d; in May, two quarts of Ledman's dwarf peas at 8d. together with another parcel of seeds 'pr Acct' at 10s. 11d.; and in June, four quarts of Kidney Beans at 2s. 4d. A similar receipt for the same period given to Rowbotham's son by a William Wragg includes one peck of early peas at 3s. 0d, and two half pecks of beans at 1s. 0d and 10d. respectively.⁴²

The question which might be asked here is why there was a demand for such a variety of vegetables. London had initiated a long-term trend, beginning with the failure of grain harvests in the late sixteenth century, and continued by the acceptance by the populace of more garden produce in their everyday diet. Subsequently the rich developed a fashion-led taste for vegetables, leading to market gardeners around the capital producing roots for general consumption and the more prized greens for subtler preferences.⁴³ London exercised a widespread influence on the provinces, and Sheffield craftsmen, some very widely travelled, were well acquainted with its trends, the metropolis being the biggest single market for cutlery and hardware products, and for those most taste-sensitive luxuries, artefacts of silver and fused plate.⁴⁴

All the above mentioned vegetables and more featured in the increasing numbers of gardening books.⁴⁵ *Adam's luxury, and Eve's cookery* (1744) has been described as 'an excellent little book', providing not only advice on cultivating a kitchen garden, but on cooking the resultant produce. Its rarity may well be due to the wear and tear of most copies from constant use.⁴⁶ Thomas Mawe and John Abercrombie's *Every Man his own Gardener* of 1767 went to twelve editions within two decades, such was its popularity. Abercrombie's *The gardener's pocket journal* of 1789, priced one shilling, was also extremely successful, achieving ten editions over a similar period.⁴⁷ Since Sheffield craftsmen commonly had books in their inventories, it seems unlikely

⁴¹ R. Webber, *Market Gardening* (1972), pp. 27, 32; SA, Beauchief Muniments 54 (1). Two pounds of turnip seed were purchased in 1788 at Beauchief, then just outside Sheffield.

⁴² SA, TC, 1045, fos. 50, 51, 58, 59, 114, 150.

⁴³ M. Thick, 'Market gardening in England and Wales', in Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* V (ii) (1985), ch. 18, and M. Thick, *The Neat House Gardens: early market gardening around London* (1998), ch. 1. Artichokes, asparagus, cauliflowers, cucumbers, French and kidney beans, green peas, lettuce,

mushrooms, spinach and, later, broccoli were amongst the most valued.

⁴⁴ Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1986 edn), p. 55. Fused plate (silver on copper, now known as Old Sheffield Plate) was invented in Sheffield c. 1743. The town had its own assay office for silver from 1773.

⁴⁵ Blanche Henrey, *British Horticultural Literature before 1800* (3 vols, 1999), II, *passim*, lists them comprehensively.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 459

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 369

that such writings would pass unnoticed. To add a degree of confirmation, Benjamin Lomas, described somewhat oddly after his death in 1795 as a 'cutler gardiner', had a gardening book worth two shillings noted in his inventory.⁴⁸ And many seedsmen from London, and later from the provinces provided free printed instructions for cultivating their seeds.⁴⁹ In addition, keen amateurs would probably want to experiment with different crops; others might keep to familiar varieties known to do well locally; and many were almost certainly influenced by observation of and advice from their fellows.

If Dr Buchan is to be taken at his word that the cutlers would never think of *buying* the greens and roots they grew and consumed (and, coincidentally, James Drake made similar observations about Birmingham artisans half a century later), we might ask 'why not?' Sheffield was not a low wage economy, as was the case with the nineteenth-century countryside where agricultural labourers were rented their allotments for the sake of subsistence.⁵⁰ On the contrary, Sheffield (like Birmingham) was a high wage town. The cutlery and allied trades are difficult to assess because of piecework and customary prices, but limited evidence indicates journeymen earning typically 11s. to 12s. per week in the 1740s to the 1760s, with a few workers reaching 20s.⁵¹ As fifty to sixty per cent of adult males were in the trades, this group dominates wages.⁵² In building for the same period bricklayers earned a similar 11s. *od.* per week, and labourers 7s. *od.* (or 1s. 2d. per day). The same day rate for mining and turnpike labourers contrasts with the 1s. *od.* per day paid to similar workers in much of the southern West Riding. The differential is most striking in the payroll of the Sheffield-Wakefield turnpike where Sheffield labourers consistently earned 2d. (16 per cent) per day more than their Barnsley and Wakefield counterparts, and broadly *pro rata* when wages began to rise with inflation later in the century.⁵³ Nor is it a matter of supply, for we have already noticed extensive areas of market gardening on the edges of the town.

The practice of 'Saint Monday' could well provide part of the explanation why cutlers would not part with money for vegetables.⁵⁴ Garden produce helped justify rents paid and perhaps,

⁴⁸ Borthwick Institute, York, Wills and Inventories, Apr. 1795. His total probate valuation was £34. He was son of William, gardener, apprenticed as a cutler in 1777 and took out his freedom in 1791.

⁴⁹ M. Thick, 'Garden seeds in England before the late eighteenth century' *AgHR* 38 (1990), pp. 58–71; id., 'Market gardening', p. 528.

⁵⁰ Drake, *Picture of Birmingham*, pp. 44–5; B. Moselle, 'Allotments, enclosure and proletarianization in early nineteenth-century southern England', *ECHR* 47 (1995), pp. 482–500; J. E. Archer, 'The nineteenth-century allotment: half an acre and a row', *ECHR* 50 (1997), pp. 21–36; J. Burchardt, 'Rural social relations, 1830–1850. Opposition to allotments for labourers', *AgHR* 45 (1997); id., 'Land and the labourer: potato grounds and allotments in nineteenth-century southern England', *Agricultural Hist.* 74 (2000).

⁵¹ SA, TC 762 (1742); Rev. E. Goodwin, 'The natural history of Sheffield' in *The Gentleman's Magazine* 34 (1764), p. 157; superior skilled cutlers often moved into the silver plated trades, an important minority industry,

where they could earn 15s. per week and more (TC 833). A. Young, *A six months tour through the North of England* (4 vols, 1770), I, p. 125; W. Bray, *Sketch of a tour into Derbyshire and Yorkshire* (1783), pp. 246ff; F. M. Eden, *The State of the Poor* (3 vols, 1797), III, p. 874.

⁵² Sheffield parish registers. The percentage of cutlery trades fathers of baptised infants (a very large sample) is consistent for the whole century. Burial Registers often omit trades/occupations, so are not helpful.

⁵³ SA, Fairbank Mss, Building Books *passim* for the 1750s–1790s. The most common cost was 3s. per day for bricklayer and labourer *i.e.* 1s. 10d. + 1s. 2d.; TC 364, 365, 452, and South Yorkshire County Record Office (now subsumed into SA as SYCRO) 22/Z 3/2 (Turnpikes); Osborne Records 7 (Mining). E. Gilboy, *Wages in eighteenth-century England* (1934), ch. 6.

⁵⁴ D. Hey, *The fiery blades of Hallamshire: Sheffield and its neighbours, 1660–1740* (1991), p. 102. Prolonging the weekend by not working on a Monday was commonplace in the trades.

in a piece-rate culture, Mondays' notional output lost. A garden had to pay for itself.⁵⁵ But primarily roots and greens freshly picked from a man's own garden would always be preferable to those bought, and, no doubt, bartering and exchanging among allotment holders was widespread. Taste, quality, convenience, cheapness, and perhaps a feeling of self-indulgence were an unbeatable combination. Crops harvested when seasonal market prices were high were an extra bonus.⁵⁶

Other, more general, reasons for choosing to cultivate a garden also spring to mind. Yet no more than partial self-sufficiency could have been one of them. Some 300 square yards were needed to supply a family of three with all-year-round vegetables (and broadly *pro rata*) in Second World War Britain.⁵⁷ A typical household in eighteenth-century Sheffield was four or five persons; only a minority of allotment gardens were 400 to 500 square yards or more and yields were probably smaller. Rather, observable benefits may well have been, as Buchan claimed, those of better health and fitness for the individuals involved. That is not to say there was never monetary gain via substitution of, say, potatoes for bread. Montgomery's comment above clearly suggests this in economic recession. Nor does it preclude the selling of surplus crops. R. E. Leader concedes 'a few instances' when a working man may have been assisted by his garden to pay off enforced debts.⁵⁸ Further motives may have included, as in the present, enjoyment of the outdoors and of the camaraderie of fellow gardeners, perhaps friendly competition, the satisfaction of successful cultivation and escape from the home (many would hardly have been cosy). Dr Buchan certainly believed amateur gardeners enjoyed their pursuit: '... the very smell of the earth and fresh herbs revive and cheer the spirits, whilst the perpetual prospect of something coming to maturity delights and entertains the mind'.⁵⁹

III

In 1764 Rev. Edward Goodwin noted of Sheffield that 'The town is ... in general very healthy, seldom any epidemical disorders prevailing here except the small-pox, whooping-cough, or measles, the first of which, as inoculation has not gained much ground here, sometimes proves very fatal'.⁶⁰ His contemporary, Dr Buchan, was soon to commit to print his observations that allotment gardening and its concomitants of regular exercise and better diet were of major benefit to Sheffield's working families and an excellent example for others. Buchan's conclusion that: 'There can be no reason why manufacturers in any other town in Great Britain should not follow the same plan' does add credence to the view that Sheffield was indeed at the forefront of the provision of small gardens for craftsmen and other workers. The challenge is now for others to identify (if they can) similar areas on the fringes of industrialising eighteenth-century towns.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Traditionally cutlers and others worked harder and put in extra hours later in the week. It was the attention paid to cutting costs and improving quality which gave the Sheffield cutlery industry its productivity advantage over all competitors by 1800.

⁵⁶ The problem for all growers is that vegetables are seasonal. Experience is needed to time and spread the various crops. Most roots will store under appropriate

conditions, but greens will not, unless pickled.

⁵⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1950 edition, sub 'Allotments'.

⁵⁸ R. E. Leader, *Reminiscences of Old Sheffield* (1876), p. 147. Selling of produce at the garden gate was probably more commonplace than Leader supposed.

⁵⁹ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, p. 143.

⁶⁰ Goodwin, 'Natural history of Sheffield', p. 157.

Annual list of articles on Agrarian History, 2001^{*}

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- ALDRIDGE, NEIL, 'Little Farningham farm, Cranbrook, revisited', *Arch. Cantiana*, 121, pp. 135–56.
- ALFREY, JUDITH, 'Rural building in nineteenth-century north Wales: the role of the great estates', *Arch. Cambrensis*, 147, pp. 199–216.
- ALLEN, R. C., 'The great divergence in European wages and prices from the Middle Ages to the First World War', *Explorations in Economic Hist.*, 38, pp. 411–47.
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Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

DELLA HOOKE (ed.), *Landscape: the richest historical record* (Society for Landscape Studies, Supplementary Series 1, 2000). 170 pp. Illus. £28 incl. p & p from Kathryn Brown, 9 Rowan Close, Wellingborough, Northants. NN8 3GE.

Most multi-authored collections are to a degree like the curate's egg, allowing reviewers to savour and discard, but not this one which is wholesome in all of its parts. Richard Bradley discusses prehistoric landscapes and stresses that very often the interpretation of ritual monuments and rural features needs to be integrated (e.g. disused Iron-Age granary pits were used for ritual deposits, including human burial). Mark Corney reviews Roman Britain, painting a picture of a highly-cultivated and well-settled rural landscape from the North to the wetlands, to what we now call the downlands of Wessex (the location of his own expert researches). Stephen Rippon, surveying the later Roman and early medieval landscape, makes a convincing case for survival of the old alongside new 'Anglo-Saxon' settlements and fields – continuity not everywhere but in places and with marked regional variation in the relationship between the two. Brian Roberts and Stuart Wrathmell, spanning the periods covered by Corney and Rippon and concentrating largely on the Midlands, conclude from their innovative maps that the boundaries between open land (the 'champion' of later ages) and woodland were generally 'already well marked by the time of the Roman conquest', although of course we know of local exceptions to this generalization. There is no general chapter on the high middle ages but Tom Williamson takes up the story with a study entitled 'The rural landscape, 1500–1900, the neglected centuries'. He is absolutely correct when he says that the creation of around sixty per cent of the walled or hedged landscape of England post-dates 1450, and when he asks why the 'open lands' of Roberts and Wrathmell (above) were in arable cultivation in Roman, Anglo-Saxon and early medieval times despite the views of all later commentators as to their greater suitability for grazing.

There are chapters on more localized and non-agrarian themes, including those by Kevin Edwards (with

Y. Mulder, T. Lomax, G. Whittington and K. Hiron) on the Outer Hebrides where long sediment sequences stretching back to the Mesolithic reveal changes in land use which may be compared with distributions of settlements and find sites; by Angus Winchester on the hills of northern England, in which he makes the useful distinction between 'closed' upland strongly controlled by lords and 'open' tracts where peasant settlement was allowed and encouraged; and by James Bond who surveys 'Landscapes of monasticism' in a novel and interesting way. Terry Slater writes an extremely useful historiographical review of progress in our understanding of urban landscapes, pointing out, for example, that the plan of the very early (if not the earliest) English post-Conquest town with streets intersecting at right angles, Bury St Edmunds, may have been influenced by the geometrical works of Adelard of Bath, kept in the monastic library there. Marilyn Palmer also discusses historiography, in her case that of the study of post-medieval industrial landscapes, and she is one of the few authors here to include a formal discussion of methodology. John Chandler writes on 'The discovery of landscape' in a learned and novel way and considers that, in part, rapid changes in society and landscape were often the stimulus which led men in the past, from Leland to Hoskins, to go out and explore. Della Hooke, in a timely chapter, writes of the practical implications of the discipline, discussing the historical landscape characterization maps (a description almost designed to be off-putting) now being produced by English county councils, and the future European dimension. Christopher Taylor engagingly rounds off the collection with a wealth of reflections, that which struck me most being his comment that landscape history is not simply economic or agrarian or urban history with the difficult bits missed out and a few pictures substituted.

This collection of papers (and their excellent bibliographies which, collectively, provide a good survey of the literature up to 2000) prompts many thoughts. One is that landscape history is the most difficult and taxing of subjects. Another, and related one, is that we can only succeed by juggling together all of the different types of evidence, including the palynological, and including the documentary, which is highly important (I disagree with Robert Dodgshon's comment on this in his preface).

Multi-disciplinary is a term which usually makes me wish to reach for a gun and I would like to think that the discipline is now mature enough to take that approach for granted. Third, the influence of W. G. Hoskins on the subject is profound. His name, with a great variety of spellings in the genitive form, and his ideas appear everywhere in this collection, from his views on the great woodlands of Anglo-Saxon England to his comment on Leicestershire's industrial landscapes: 'profoundly dull, as one might expect from factories producing such prosaic things as vests and pants . . . biscuits and bricks'. The hare which he set running from the Department of English Local History in the early 1950s still has a good running ahead of it.

HAROLD FOX
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J. G. MINTON, *Agrarian archives. A thousand years of records* (Durham: History of Education Project, 2002). xviii + 408pp. Illus. £25 plus p&p from History of Education Project, The Miner's Hall, Red Hill, Durham, DH1 4BB.

In 1539 Barking Abbey was surrendered to Henry VIII and subsequently granted by him to William Petre, the son of a Devon tanner and Secretary of State to Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary Tudor. The land formed the basis of an estate that eventually included over 30,000 acres. Fortunately for historians, William founded not only the Petre estate in Essex, but also an estate archive. This included records saved from the muniments room of the abbey. Altogether an archive of over 2000 'ancient' or pre-Dissolution records along with many later documents ranging from manor court rolls, charters, surveys and maps to account books, leases, crop books and wills is located on the estate, at the Essex Record Office, and at Wadham College, Oxford. The earliest surviving document in the archive is a charter from the reign of King Stephen. *Agrarian archives* relies heavily on these records, along with some from Scottish estates, to document rural development from prehistoric to modern times.

The task was ambitious, possibly too ambitious. There is often an ambiguity about the book. Is it a general history or an examination of an archive? The author seems uncertain. For the medieval and early modern period the book, based almost entirely on documentary evidence from the Petre archives, is an excellent study of the archive. Dr Minton quotes extensively from the records. Documents are placed in context. A range of topics from woodland management and medieval deer parks to field systems, the annual calendar of labour and land holding patterns are examined. Material is compared over time and across a range of different types of records including surveys and manor court roles, leases and

accounts. The author skilfully uses the Petre archive as foundation from which to explore agrarian issues. For the later period, particularly from the nineteenth century, the nature of the book alters. The close relationship between the Petre documents and text ends and more emphasis is placed on secondary sources and, perplexingly, on Scottish estate records. The contrast between the two approaches is stark. For example, the author convincingly uses a survey from 1280 along with other documentary evidence to argue that from the thirteenth century there was no open field system functioning in those Essex parishes later owned by the Petre family. However, a later section relying almost entirely on modern sources and devoted to Midland enclosures, is also included. Although most of the first 200 pages of the volume and the 78 pages of the appendices are about Essex, the section on enclosure makes only passing, non-specific reference to the county. As a general history of rural Britain, the book is unconvincing. There are other more widely researched studies available.

As a study of an archive, *Agrarian archives* has much to recommend it. The exceptional material in the archive is well presented. There are eleven appendices containing various documents and maps. It should be ideal for comparative studies. Unfortunately very few of the documents used in the text have been sourced. Possibly this was the result of the death of the author during the final preparation of the volume for publication. Without source information future historians will find it difficult to locate individual records in an extensive archive split between several repositories.

BETHANIE AFTON
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CATHERINE DELANO-SMITH and ROGER J. P. KAIN,
English maps: a history (The British Library, 1999). xiv + 320 pp. 163 figs; 26 plates. £25.

This study has its origins in lectures given to the Cartographic Institute of Catalonia, Barcelona in 1996, which were published by the Institute in 1997 as a monograph entitled *English cartography*. Delano-Smith and Kain have reorganized, reworked, and extended that text, and added a wealth of map illustrations in both black-and-white and colour to produce the present volume. Their approach remains unchanged – the appraisal of maps in their social and cultural context, with equal emphasis on both map-users and map-makers – but the material is presented, with advantage, with greater thematic emphasis. After a brief introduction discussing the spirit and purpose of maps, chapters examine medieval maps; country, county, and regional mapping; property mapping, especially estate, enclosure, and tithe surveys; travel and road maps; urban cartography; and maps in

everyday life. The final chapter is devoted to a short but welcome appraisal of map survival. Each chapter provides a clear introduction to its respective topic, a comprehensive review of existing research, and a measured assessment of current thinking. The authors' practice of highlighting areas and avenues for further research is thought-provoking and is to be congratulated. This reviewer, writing these comments in Keele's William Smith Building, named after the Cheshire sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cartographer, particularly appreciated their call for a major study of his work. In sum, Delano-Smith and Kain have produced a most authoritative and satisfying introduction to the history of English maps. With its modest price and its high-quality production, the volume is much recommended.

A. D. M. PHILLIPS
Keele University

D. A. CROWLEY (ed.), *The Victoria history of the counties of England. A history of the county of Wiltshire, XVII, Calne hundred* (Boydell and Brewer for the Institute of Historical Research, 2002). xxi + 204 pp. 70 illus; 18 maps. £75.

The latest volume of Wiltshire VCH deals with the eight parishes in the small hundred of Calne. This includes parts of both the 'chalk' and the 'cheese' areas of Wiltshire, since it comprizes the western edge of the Marlborough Downs and the low-lying land in the valley of the river Marden west of Calne. There was the traditional division of sheep/corn husbandry on the downland, and dairy farming along the river valley. The number of parishes is small because almost the whole of the western part of the hundred formed part of the large royal estate of Calne. Much of the rest of the hundred was likewise Crown land administered from Calne, and the parish churches continued to be dependent upon the church at Calne. The hundred was bounded on the west by the royal forest of Chippenham.

Calne hundred has always been primarily dependent upon agriculture, although the spinning of yarn and the manufacture of cloth, often combined with farming, also provided employment. Until the nineteenth century Calne was one of the centres of the west-country cloth trade; there were several cloth mills in the town, and no less than 14 mills along a short stretch of the river Marden. Two features of the hundred are of particular interest to agricultural historians. These are the development of Calne as a major centre of bacon curing and food processing, and the creation of a major estate at Bowood, involving a total transformation of the landscape.

As the cloth trade declined, it was replaced at Calne by large scale bacon-curing. This was largely due to the Harris family, who were butchers in the town by 1780.

A century later Calne was dominated by the factories of C. & T. Harris, and by those of their competitors. The Harris business alone employed some 230 people and slaughtered 2000 to 3000 pigs each week, producing bacon, sausages and lard. An idealized view of the Harris steam-driven factory in 1887 shows an orderly queue of pigs waiting to enter. The industry continued to flourish in Calne, and C. & T. Harris (Calne) Ltd. had 1171 employees in 1934, and 2116 in 1957.

This aspect of Calne's history illustrates a difficulty of the VCH approach. For details of how the industry was established, using some of the droves of Irish pigs regularly driven through Calne from the port of Bristol to London, and details of the special method of curing bacon which gave the name 'Wiltshire Bacon' such high esteem, the reader must turn to VCH *Wiltshire* IV, (1959), pp. 220–3. This was published before the total collapse of the trade during the 1970s; by 1982 all the factories were closed, and by 1986 they had been demolished.

Another notable feature of the volume is the account of the development of the Bowood estate. This had been part of the royal forest, and in 1754 was purchased by John Petty, earl of Shelburne, whose son, William was created marquess of Lansdowne in 1784. Work on the mansion, garden and parkland employed a succession of notable names including Robert Adam, C. R. Cockerell, Charles Barry, Lancelot Brown and the local firm of 'grotto-makers', Josiah Lane of Tisbury. The result is a classic estate landscape with characteristic farms, cottages, park, woodland, a mausoleum, and even an attractive wooden church with a thatched roof. The family still live on the estate, although much of their vast mansion was demolished in 1955.

Throughout the volume the maps and plans are, as usual, clear and informative, but the illustrations which have been such a useful feature of recent volumes are disappointing. There are seventy well-chosen illustrations, but the quality of paper used means that the reproduction is much less sharp than in previous volumes. Apart from this criticism, however, this is an interesting volume, with the customary wealth of detailed research and invaluable references.

J. H. BETTEY
Pensford, Bristol

DAVID HEY, *Historic Hallamshire. History in Sheffield's countryside* (Ashbourne: Landmark Publishing, 2002) 176 pp. Illus. £19.95.

This book answers many questions that will have crossed the mind of any moderately curious person who lives, or has lived, in the environs of Sheffield. What was the origin of the name 'Hallamshire' and what did it refer to; who made the millstones that symbolize the Peak

National Park and strew the countryside, and how was the millstone industry organized; what kind of institution was Beauchief Abbey and why does so little of it remain? It also reveals and explains aspects of local history that even the more observant might have missed: the water troughs for grouse carved into moorland stones; a number of surviving houses built for the minor gentry in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the unusual longevity and local origin of many Sheffield surnames. Yet the book does more: it provides an introduction to the local history of Sheffield's environs, avoiding the history of the metal-working trades and growth of the city which have been thoroughly treated elsewhere, to concentrate – as the title suggests – on the rural history of the locality. This includes both the countryside which remains around Sheffield (stretching out of Hallamshire into north Derbyshire in places) and that which formerly existed beneath the modern urban area.

While there are a few mentions of prehistory, the book's scope is primarily that of the documented historical era from the eleventh to the early twentieth century. Some topics, such as the development of the moorland landscape, cover the whole period – from medieval hunting reserves to early-modern pasture farms via parliamentary enclosure to grouse shooting in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The medieval period is well represented from the twelfth-century establishment of Ecclesfield Priory and Beauchief Abbey, to the development of local surnames from farm-names and occupations from the thirteenth century onwards, and an examination of the place and family names which did not survive beyond the late medieval or early modern centuries. The history of the local gentry encompasses both the Norman origins of some families, such as the Furnivals and Mounteneys, and the rise of others such as the Shirecliffs and Brights from local farming origins. As the subtitle suggests, this is not an all-inclusive history – it is 'history in' not 'the history of' Sheffield's countryside. For instance, there is no systematic treatment of the development of the region's agricultural economy, although there is a chapter on farming families and many other incidental references. And while there is a chapter on the historical background of the Dragon of Wantley, as recounted in a seventeenth century ballad (demonstrating the relatively recent origin of many ancient 'myths'), the local connections to the Robin Hood legends (Robin of Loxley, Little John of Hathersage) are not explored. Nevertheless, the topics covered are covered thoroughly, and carefully documented. Although the index is restricted to place and family names, there is an extensive guide to further reading, and the whole book is well illustrated with maps, photographs and illustrations. This is good local history designed to be accessible

to all those who want to know more about the area they live in or visit at the weekends, and could be used as a guide book to explore historical aspects of the locality. But it is also a book of sound scholarship written by an expert in English local history who comes from the locality under investigation. It provides a reliable background and methodology for any historian seeking to investigate this, or any similar locality, and is perhaps a start of a new genre – the rural history of England's industrial cities.

JANE WHITTLE
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ELIZABETH GRIFFITHS (ed.), *William Windham's Green Book, 1673–1688* (Norfolk Record Society, 66, 2002). vi + 301 pp. 2 illus; 3 maps; 6 graphs. £20 incl. p&p. Further information from the Society's website, www.norfolkrecord.plus.com.

Detailed estate accounts survive relatively rarely for England in the seventeenth century, and only a few of these survivors have yet been printed. Elizabeth Griffiths' edition of the estate accounts of William Windham of Felbrigg in north-east Norfolk is a significant addition to the published stock of such sources, and also to our understanding of the practice of estate management in this important century. As Dr Griffiths argues in her comprehensive introduction, the unrelenting fall in grain and livestock prices in the third quarter of the seventeenth century forced innovation and diversification upon Norfolk landowners in their struggle to maintain estate income. This sowed the seeds of changes in husbandry, tenancy-agreements and estate management that eventually came to fruition in the classic west Norfolk agrarian improvers of the eighteenth century – Coke, Townshend and the Walpoles. William Windham was one of their precursors, on his small East Anglian estates (2,300 acres in north Norfolk, north and east Suffolk, and north Essex). His account book reflects his efforts to bring order and systematic management to these properties, and his experiments with tenures and crops in the face of continuously falling grain prices.

Dr Griffiths details the scope of Windham's activities in her scholarly introduction. She describes the structure and organization of these accounts, the history of the Felbrigg estate, its arrangement when William inherited it in 1673, and his subsequent management of the house and farms. In particular, she highlights his very unusual attempts at share cropping or 'letting to halves'. Windham sought to overcome a shortage of properly capitalized tenants (and low rental yields) by supplying dairy herds and arable equipment to tenants in return for half the profits, generally with little success. The introduction also details Windham's relationship with his family,

the estate professionals, tenants and labourers, and locates his efforts effectively within the wider economic, governmental and intellectual contexts.

The accounts themselves are arranged in double entry form, detailing the debts followed by the credits of each tenant on the estate between 1673 and 1689. This is rare among printed estate accounts, although Blake Tyson's recent edition of *The estate and household accounts of Sir Daniel Fleming of Rydal Hall, Westmorland 1688–1701* (C.W.A.A.S. Record Ser., 13) does provide a northern equivalent, albeit one that is not arranged conveniently property by property. The historical interest in these accounts lies in the strategies that Windham adopted in order to balance the two columns. So, for example, the reader can trace how on Widow Skipper's 220-acre farm at Crownthorpe in central Norfolk arrears had mounted to £522 by 1675, and see Windham's response in the list of stock and contents sold to the value of £354 to clear the account. Such attention to detail, together with Windham's efforts at mathematical accuracy, and the editor's thorough cross-referencing of accounts, estate surveys and leases will allow students of agrarian history to use this volume to produce a systematic picture of estate management at this time. More unusually among seventeenth-century accounts, the double entry bookkeeping should also make possible a coherent analysis of Windham's solvency during this agrarian depression.

As a consequence, this is a very important source for the agricultural history of early modern England, and Dr Griffiths' edition makes it fully accessible for historical analysis, and sets it alongside a collection of other relevant estate records. At present, however, this source's greatest strength is also its single weakness, because as the editor observes, 'no other document of this nature has come to light'. Hopefully, this particular deficiency will soon be put right.

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JOHN BECKETT, *Byron and Newstead. The aristocrat and the abbey* (Associated University Presses, 2001). 347 pp. 14 illus; 1 map. £42.

When Sir John Byron managed to secure the grant of the dissolved Augustinian abbey of Newstead in 1540 he probably thought that he had provided a solid landed platform for his ancient family to rise steadily in wealth, status and power. For a couple of centuries, matters progressed smoothly as successive life tenants husbanded their resources, developed the estate, remodelled the house and managed to hand to the fifth Lord Byron (1743–98) a property unencumbered with debt. Thereafter followed a sad tale of profligacy and woe.

Although John Beckett manages in his meticulously-detailed study to rescue this particular Byron from the miasma of myth surrounding his seemingly picaresque life, the fact remains that in his penchant for overspending lay the foundations for later financial difficulties. Beckett's workmanlike, dusty legal detective work reveals that the fifth Lord Byron (among whose attributes included running a neighbour through the stomach in a duel following an argument over the preservation of game), though attentive to many aspects of the management of the estate and ingenious in his ability to sidestep his creditors, lived for long beyond his means. Estranged from his son following the latter's elopement to Gretna Green with his cousin, and deserted by his wife, Byron lived in a virtually denuded Newstead for the closing years of his life, in the hope that his grandson William John Byron would eventually inherit. But fate was to take a curious turn when that unfortunate gallant succumbed to a cannon ball at the siege of Calvi in 1794 and Newstead and the remaining family property descended to the fifth Lord's ten-year old great-nephew George Gordon Byron, the future poet, whom the former had never met. Due to various quirks in the family settlement, and the fifth Lord's numerous land sales, which Buckett explores in some detail, Byron inherited the estate both debt-free and in fee simple. The subsequent history of Newstead offers an exemplary case of precisely why the device of strict settlement was such an important means of restricting the ambitions of an heir for whom a sense of family responsibility and trusteeship remained forever on the back burner.

Byron, of course, in addition to having a towering ego and a libido to match, was a major poet of enduring genius. Following his return from Europe and the publication of *Childe Harold* in 1811, his dizzy literary career was launched, and with the appearance of the *Bride of Abydos* and *The Corsair* two years later he had become the toast of London and the possessor of debts of some £20,000. Whatever his qualities as a poet, his concern for business was vestigial and (for all his protestations in *Don Juan* and other works) his interest in the management of Newstead limited. Indeed, he seems to have regarded his landed property as little more than a milch cow from which his various agents (to a greater or lesser degree corrupt) could raise the wherewithal to enable him to pursue his epicurean lifestyle and operate the legerdemain required to keep his creditors at bay. In 1815 Byron left for Europe (under a haze of suspicion of all manner of salacious scandals) on a journey which was to take him to Italy and finally to his romantic apotheosis in Greece in 1824. As his creditors bayed and his finances descended further into

turmoil, so his love affairs flourished and the poetry poured from him. Meanwhile he bombarded his lawyers and agents with a mass of letters, in turns demanding and accusatory, but all with the ultimate objective of securing funds. His correspondence over the sale of property to secure cash emphasizes the point that however worthy the virtues of patrimony, matrimony and parsimony in underpinning the financial bona fides of an estate, an owner prone to profligacy can readily overturn the steadfastness of generations. After several abortive attempts to dispose of the property, Newstead and its 3200 acres was finally sold in 1817 to one of Byron's old school friends, Colonel Thomas Wildman, who subsequently spent lavishly in restoring the house and land. Ironically, especially since Byron cynically sold off portraits and heirlooms in addition to real estate, Newstead survives today largely because Wildman and subsequent owners developed the property as a shrine to the poet. The house eventually passed into the care of Nottingham City Council in 1931 through the good offices of that extraordinary philanthropist, Sir Julian Cahn, something of an unsung hero whose many financial contributions to the national good included the refurbishing of Trent Bridge cricket ground and the facilitating of Sir George Stapledon's remarkable land reclamation works in Cardiganshire.

John Beckett has produced in this book not only a vital source work for future Byron scholars, but a significant addition to the literature of eighteenth-century estate finances, more especially insofar as Byron's experience highlights the absolute importance of the owner's personal attention to his patrimony. Beckett's text is based on a rich variety of primary sources and is constructed on a massive reading of accounts, perusal of business letters and pouring-over of legal documents. It is a worthy work and a testament to the assiduous scholarship of the author and his assistant Sheila Aley. Despite the occasional irritating Americanisms, the mis-spellings of place and personal names and the *longueurs* almost inevitable in a book crammed with financial detail, it will prove an invaluable text for all interested in the economic and socio-cultural history of the later eighteenth century. Readers will, of course, realize that George Gordon, Lord Byron was different from other men. If, like the character in the Book of Ecclesiastes, he had been yoked to the plough and his talk was of bullocks, he would probably not have enriched the canon of English literature with such felicity. After all, as he noted in *Don Juan* with respect to marital fidelity:

Think you, if Laura had been Petrarch's wife,
He would have written sonnets all his life?

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PATRICK POLDEN, *Peter Thellusson's will of 1797 and its consequences on Chancery law* (The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002). v + 484 pp. £79.95.

Once known as the most famous will in the world, Peter Thellusson's will has nevertheless had to wait for more than two hundred years before a book has been devoted to it. The will was famous for two rather different reasons. For a while contemporaries thought that it might pose a threat to the established social order, for it provided that the Thellusson fortune from trade and finance should be invested in land, and the income should be invested in more land to accumulate during the lives of his three sons and six grandsons, and on the death of the last of these nine lives the accumulated property should be divided into equal shares for the three eldest male lineal descendants of his three sons. Since the youngest grandson was *en ventre sa mere* when his grandfather died, the accumulation would continue for an entire lifetime before anyone could inherit the estates, and it was supposed that by then these would have grown to such a vast size that they would eclipse the grandest of the ducal estates. Precisely because the will disinherited the sons and grandsons, the family was bound to challenge it, and for a very long while, little short of 60 years, the Thellusson will was in Chancery. Practically every lawyer of note and every Lord Chancellor had a finger in the case, and many have thought it was the model for Dickens's *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce* (the case of William Jennens, who died in 1798, may have a better claim; claimants to part of the Jennens fortune were still appearing over a hundred years later).

Peter's sons tried to have the will set aside on the grounds that it ran foul of the rules against perpetuities, but much as some of the judges in the Chancery court may have wished to strike it down on social and moral grounds – that it amounted to an 'unnatural' disinheritance – they were obliged to uphold it on legal grounds since it did not attempt to tie up the estate beyond the term of lives in being. Loughborough, as Chancellor, delivered judgement upholding the will in 1799, and an appeal to the House of Lords was finally rejected in 1806. Meanwhile Loughborough as a cabinet minister, fearing that Thellusson had invented a device for the delayed action destruction of the power of the territorial aristocracy by the power of new money at compound interest, had put through the so-called Thellusson Act in 1800 'to prevent the effects of posthumous avarice' by limiting the right to provide for the accumulation of the income from real or personal property to a period of 21 years from the grantor's death. This was the effect of the will on statute law. Its effects on Chancery law are not so simple to detect.

Polden tells the story as legal history as well as family

history, and provides abundant information on all the leading cases affecting perpetuities, trusts, lineal male descendants, contingent remainders, and the like, but to the layman it seems that the Thellusson case was subjected to the established rules and doctrines and did not produce any development of them. It is true that because the will had been contested in Chancery the trust created by it was 'in Chancery' throughout its life, so that every decision by the trustees – not merely the big ones of what lands to purchase on what terms, but the minor ones on what repairs to carry out at what costs – had to be approved by a Master in Chancery. This was a slow and costly process, and the publicity attracted by this particular case may well have contributed to the pressure, eventually successful, for the reform of Chancery procedures. That, however, appears to be the limit of its 'consequences on Chancery law'.

As family history the book provides exhaustive information on Peter Thellusson's forebears as well as on all his descendants, in the remorseless detail which family historians find irresistible. The big disappointment is that very little can be said about the core operations of the will-trust as purchaser and manager of landed estates. Polden records the bare bones, concluding that by 1833, when some of the more irksome features of the trust were removed by a private estate act, the great accumulation had become a harmless laughing stock since instead of performing like some giant snowball threatening to crush the old aristocracy it had produced fat pickings for lawyers and precious little land. In fact by the time the accumulation ended with the death of the last of the 'measuring lives' in 1856 over £1 million had been laid out in the purchase of over 30,000 acres, not a spectacular outcome for a fortune valued at about £500,000 in 1797, but not negligible. Polden perhaps tends to underestimate its importance because in comparing the trust estates with long-established great estates an extra nought has strayed into the rental of the Duke of Bedford's estates in the home counties which he puts at £300,000. In the event there were only two eligible male lineal descendants of Peter Thellusson living in 1856, and they each inherited sizeable estates. One, centred on Rendlesham in Suffolk, went to the third Lord Rendlesham, grandson of Peter's eldest son, and the second, with a seat at Brodsworth near Doncaster, to Charles Sabine Thellusson, grandson of Peter's youngest son (the middle son died unmarried). The Rendlesham side of the family sold up in 1921. In the Second World War the land and house were swallowed by the U.S. Bentwaters airfield and no trace remains. Charles Sabine, on the other hand, employed the Tuscan architect Chevalier Casentini to build a splendid new house at Brodsworth, subsequently both supported and undermined by coal workings.

Brodsworth was given to English Heritage in 1988, and sensitively restored it has become Lucinda Lambton's favourite country house. Could Peter Thellusson have wished for a more memorable legacy?

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SUSANNA WADE MARTINS, *The English model farm.*

Building the agricultural ideal, 1700–1914 (Windgather

Press, 2002). xiv + 242 pp. 21 plates; 105 figs. £18.99.

In an important and timely reassessment of the model farmsteads consciously built and planned as complete units, but often dismissed as trivial and impractical, this volume builds on an English Heritage survey of planned and model farmsteads. Research on surviving examples or documentary references has identified over eight hundred sites widely distributed over England's arable and mixed farming regions.

The author identifies the preconditions necessary for the movement, unique to Britain, to develop: the rise of the great landlords; the development of leases; the establishment of the landlord and tenant system, which split the use of capital between land and buildings on the one hand, and stock, crops, labour and manures on the other. Though much landlord wealth came from outside agriculture – property, mining, manufacturing, banking and shipping – the scale of investment suited only estates of over 3000 acres which incorporated mixed farms of over 200 acres.

Many great estates have archives of plans and documents, enabling their steadings to be precisely dated and firmly attributed not only to nationally-known architects such as Samuel Wyatt but also to versatile provincial land agents and architects like John Douglas in Cheshire and Frederick Chancellor in Essex. In some cases, sources of ideas and designs can be linked to the work of contemporary architectural and agrarian writers or to the RASE farm prize competitions. A strength of the study is that it avoids concentrating on well known examples and features estates, such as the Strutt farms in Derbyshire, which are little-known outside their own locality.

The emphasis is on motivation, design, and function, rather than structural technicalities. With an eye for practical detail, the author clearly elucidates the development and evolution of farmstead layout, showing the favoured courtyard arrangement to have originated in the combined influences of medieval English traditions and the Palladian villa farm.

The earliest phase, 1790–1840, affected newly-enclosed or reclaimed land which awaited infrastructure, notably in Northumberland and East Yorkshire, where labour was scarce due to industrialization. Cereals were the main

enterprise, hungry for manure produced by yarded cattle. The study highlights the distinction between horse-powered threshing in the mechanized north of England and hand-power in the labour-surplus south. Siting of motive power is shown to influence the orientation of the barn in relation to the yard. Wherever landlords were transforming estates, landscape enhancement with classical or picturesque designs, often sourced from pattern books, was part of the project. The freshness of the newly-built farmsteads is recaptured in the high quality colour photography.

Dr Wade Martins considers mid-nineteenth century examples, especially of the decades 1850–1870, to be of most value to agricultural historians. In this ‘industrial phase’ utility was the priority and technological advance more widespread, leading to greater involvement in planning by land agents and engineers. More livestock accommodation, especially for beef cattle, prompted renewed interest in mechanized crop and feed processing, efficient process flow, and economy of labour. In the late nineteenth century, highly specialized dairying farmsteads were constructed in districts convenient to urban markets, such as Cheshire. There was marked interest in reducing building and maintenance costs, seen in the popularity of iron-framed barns clad with corrugated iron. Planned and model farms were now widespread in mixed farming areas and, though not necessarily profitable, the innovation was known and potentially influential countrywide.

Although the complete database is located in the National Monuments Record, county summaries describe the more important examples. However, a differently arranged index would have improved the book as a working tool. Sites are currently indexed firstly by parish, then holding, then county. If re-ordered by county/parish/holding, the index could be more easily used in conjunction with the county synopses. Regrettably, proof-reading has been lax. There are spelling and captioning errors and, more seriously, a number of references in the notes are missing from the bibliography.

A wealth of carefully-chosen photographs and plans, combined with textual descriptions, make the farmsteads accessible, illustrate the dovetailing of enterprises and allow exploration of the relationships between the different functional parts. The plans emphasize the sharp contrast between the adaptable general purpose buildings of today and the highly specialized structures with precisely-named functions of the planned and model steadings.

Concisely summarized chapters trace factors which emphasize regional and sectoral differences within English farming, set in a clear context of time, place and personages. The author has produced an accessible, reasonably-priced source book which teases out the

influences behind the sometimes fanciful facades whilst bringing out the social, economic and agrarian background.

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IAN PACKER, *Lloyd George, Liberalism and the land. The land issue and party politics in England, 1906–1914* (Boydell / The Royal Historical Society, 2001). xii + 222 pp. £35.

One of the great paradoxes of late Victorian and Edwardian political history is that at a time when Britain was the most urbanized large country in the world, and when agriculture was rapidly losing its economic significance, land reform should have become a key arena of party conflict between Liberals and Conservatives. Historians have by no means ignored this, but most accounts (E. D. Steele’s *Irish land and British politics* or Roy Douglas’s *Land, people and politics*, for example), have focused largely on the role of the ‘Celtic fringe’ in pushing land reform up the political agenda. This can lead to the conclusion that land reform was not an important independent element within English politics and that in this respect at least late nineteenth-century British politics was driven by the agendas of the ‘periphery’ of the United Kingdom. Ian Packer’s study provides an important corrective to this in offering the first detailed study of role of purely English land reform.

Lloyd George, Liberalism and the land is attractively produced, fluently written and carefully researched. It provides the most detailed account available in print of Liberal policy on land reform between 1906 and 1914, and offers a significant reassessment of the role of land reform within the party, arguing that commitment to land reform, although long-lasting, was less deep-seated than many have supposed. Fully-fledged land reformers constituted a small and divided minority within the party. Some adhered to Henry George’s ‘single tax’ on land values, to replace all other taxes, but most avoided what was seen as an extreme position and until the early years of the twentieth century the single-taxers could only count on the support of one MP, the maverick William Saunders. Others favoured leasehold reform but this group was largely confined to London and a few other large cities where leasehold rather than freehold was the dominant form of tenure. The persistence and prominence of land-reforming policies within the party are to be explained, Packer argues, by short-term electoral and parliamentary exigencies rather than ideological principle. In some ways, this downplays the significance of land reform within the Liberal Party. But Packer’s account offers no support for the argument that land reform was a political irrelevance, indicative only of the

exhaustion of the late Victorian Liberal Party and of its increasing distance from its working-class supporters. On the contrary, Packer shows that land reform achieved prominence within Liberal policies between 1906 (and earlier) and 1914 as a pragmatic response to party divisions and to the perceived need to make inroads into rural constituencies through attracting the votes of agricultural labourers (and at times even farmers). This strategy had varying success – the Liberal government of 1892–95 received scant reward from the rural electorate for passing the 1894 Local Government Act (which created parish councils and facilitated allotment provision), whilst the 1906 government fared little better with its 1907 Smallholdings Act. Between 1909 and 1914, however, land reform paid dividends for the Liberal Party and would probably have produced electoral gains in rural areas in the 1915 election had the First World War not intervened. A particularly interesting feature of Packer's argument at this point is his assessment of Lloyd George's 1914 budget, which included site value rating proposals. The recent consensus has been that the inherent complexity of site value taxation and the carelessness with which Lloyd George put his proposals together caused a serious reverse for the cause of land reform, from which it might not have recovered even had war not foreclosed the issue. Packer rejects this, arguing that at most the treatment meted out to the 1914 budget would have forced Lloyd George to delay introducing his local authority grant and site value rating scheme by a matter of a few months.

Packer displays so much careful scholarship that it would be ungenerous to cavil at his book for failing to do things it did not set out to do. But it is right to point out that this book is essentially a detailed monograph on Liberal land policy with respect to England between 1906 and 1914. To set this in context, Packer's work (as he would be the first to accept) needs to be supplemented with older accounts – Green on Conservative and Tichelar on Labour policy, Ward's regrettably unpublished PhD thesis for the Land Nationalisation Society and the 'single taxers' of the English Land Restoration League, Douglas for his emphasis on the 'Celtic fringe' and for a longer-term perspective. Valuable though it is to isolate and explicate the specifically English component of land reform, the political profile of the issue only really makes sense when seen in this broader context. Nevertheless, *Lloyd George, Liberalism and the land* marks an important advance in our understanding and should be on the bookshelves of anyone with an interest in early twentieth-century politics, Liberalism or land reform.

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NICHOLAS MANSFIELD, *English farmworkers and local patriotism, 1900–1930* (Ashgate, 2001). xiii + 227 pp. 10 illus; 3 maps. £40.

Writing on the history of the English farmworker and his politics has concentrated overwhelmingly on the nineteenth century and particularly on the period between 1870 and 1914. The reasons for this are obvious enough. Especially for the historian of organized labour or of working class radicalism, this was the heroic period when the rural poor apparently threw off their bondage in the revolt of the field. For the same reasons, contemporary observers suddenly became interested in the newly-liberated Hodge and produced a mass of material, which makes the period one of the best documented in the labourer's history.

This concentration on the period of Arch's union is made even narrower by a concentration on the cereal-growing areas. Even where studies have moved outside the south and east of Britain they have, as with Caunce on Yorkshire and Carter or Devine on Scotland, remained focused on the larger farm units usually associated with arable farming. Again the reasons for this are clear enough. Nineteenth-century studies of the rural poor frequently have worked within a paradigm which saw a movement from a 'pre-class' social situation dominated by tiny producers and farm servants to a 'class' society dominated by landless 'proletarians' with nothing to sell but their labour power and no relationship between them and their employers but the cash nexus. It was on the large farms of the arable areas, especially those of the eastern side of Britain, that this was most obvious.

However, this version of the farmworkers history looks increasingly unlikely when we move away from these areas and this period – which is what Mansfield has done in this fine, illuminating, and very useful book. Born in and shaped by East Anglia, Mansfield is Salopian by adoption, and although he frequently glances over his shoulder at Norfolk, and especially at his Cambridge city family, it is Shropshire which lies at the core of this work. Here is a country, which, in most respects, is completely different from those studied by most historians of the farmworker and especially of farmworkers' trades unions. Yet, as Mansfield shows, in the early twentieth century Shropshire was the strongest union area in Britain after Norfolk. However, this was a different kind of unionism. Substantial numbers of rural workers were organized not into the farmworkers' union, the National Union of Agricultural Workers, but in the general labourers' union, the Workers' Union, which was dominated, even in Shropshire, by industrial or semi-industrial workers. As a result, even in periods of sympathetic local leadership, the interests and concerns of the farm labourer were all too often secondary to those of the more powerful

industrial sections. Further, the Workers' Union and the National were, in pre-Bridlington days, constantly at odds over recruitment and joint actions, with the Workers' Union often taking a much less progressive path despite its radical history.

Although the Great War saw union growth, as elsewhere in the rural districts, the division between the NUAW and the WU hampered a unified campaign. Further, the roots of radicalism in the co-ops and the new Labour Party were much shallower than elsewhere. As a result, the radicalizing effect of the war was short lived, especially in the face of falling wages after 1920 and the end of the Wages Board in 1920. The NUAW, with a much stronger local village base than the WU, fared better, but even here losses in membership were dramatic.

Most important of all, Mansfield sees the 1920s as a period in which older paternalist institutions were either revived or found their way into 'new' social organizations and rituals like the village hall or Armistice Day. It was here that 'local patriotism' – a sense of supra-class allegiance based upon the village – found its strongest expression. By the end of the 1920s, the county-wide celebration of Armistice Day brought into even the smallest village a 'new national occasion' and 'new village institutions' which were 'profoundly conservative' (p. 184).

In the 1920s and the 1930s, Shropshire, like most of rural England, returned Conservative MPs. Despite pre-war Union strength, Labour was only victorious once, and that was in the semi-industrialized Wrekin constituency in 1929. Local patriotism was at the base of this success, but on it was built a powerful Tory political organization, which managed to capture (or perhaps recapture) the local patriotism of rural districts for its own political ends. Despite the War and trades unionism's effects on the county, in Shropshire, as in most of rural Britain, the farmworker saw his political home within Conservatism rather than within Socialism, even in the diluted form offered by the Labour Party.

This is a complicated and interesting book. Its central argument, that local patriotism and the organizations associated with it before and, crucially, after the Great War shaped the social and political behaviour of Shropshire farmworkers, is well made and challenges many assumptions. What we need now is more local and national studies of this forgotten workforce in the twentieth century to see if Mansfield's findings are replicated elsewhere.

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Elsewhere and General

DIANA WOOD, *Medieval economic thought* (CUP, 2002).
xii + 259 pp. £40 (hbk); £14.95 (pbk).

Diana Wood's introduction to the economic thought of medieval Europe is the latest volume to appear in the excellent CUP Cambridge Medieval Textbook series. Although the book traces the origin of medieval economic thought in the work of Aristotle, the Bible, the Church Fathers and Roman law, it particularly concentrates on the period from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. One of its main aims is to relate the fundamental aspects of pre-Reformation economic thought to the actual economic practice of the day. To explore this relationship between theory and practice, Dr Wood draws on examples from all over western Europe although her main focus is on English and Italian developments. The book begins with a discussion of how medieval thinkers were able to reconcile the existence of private property with the common possession of the earth laid down in natural law. It then moves on to attitudes to poverty and charity; looks at views of money as a measure of value and as a commodity with its own value; examines the regulation of weights, measures and coinage; surveys opinions of trade and identifies the early development of mercantilist thought; analyses the doctrine of the just price and the just wage; and finally offers two chapters tracing the history of medieval attitudes to usury.

The book has a useful appendix with notes on key authors and works referred to in the text, provides a glossary of technical terms and includes a valuable bibliography of primary and secondary sources. Its argument is clearly signposted and its varied subject-matter is given a coherence by its stress on recurrent themes such as the need for justice in economic relations, justice being defined in terms of the Aristotelian virtuous 'mean' between two extremes. Student readers of the book will be grateful for the clarity and logical structure with which it puts across some extremely technical aspects of medieval law and theology whilst their teachers will profit from its learning and scholarship. Particularly valuable is Dr Wood's emphasis on the wide range of conflicting economic opinions which were put forward by theologians and lawyers in the middle ages as is her discussion of the economic attitudes implicit in contemporary legislation and everyday life.

Surprisingly, perhaps, given the importance of the church as a landowner within medieval society, it seems from Dr Wood's account that medieval economic thinkers had little to say about actual agricultural production since most of her discussion centres on of issues related to commerce and money. However, the emphasis placed by recent scholars on the impact of commercialization

on medieval agriculture means that these are now matters of prime interest to readers of this journal. In her preface, Dr Wood notes how, following advice from readers of her first draft, she had to abandon the assumption that it would be possible to 'write about economic thought in isolation from economic practice' (p. ix). Nevertheless, it is likely to be this aspect of her work which readers of this journal would have liked to have seen developed in even more detail. Of course, this matter raises questions which have been debated since the time of Max Weber's 'Protestant ethic' thesis and beyond. As Dr Wood says, the medieval church's otherworldly teachings would, if they had been put into practice, have 'put a firm brake on economic development' and would have inhibited the growth of the 'commercial or entrepreneurial attitude necessary for economic take-off' (pp. 3–4). Yet, in reality, this does not seem to have been the case. Rather, the economy changed and the attitude of scholastics changed with it. As Dr Wood concludes, whereas political ideas often anticipate actual practice, in the economic realm, ideas tend to trail behind reality (p. 208). Yet, in that case, it seems that the scholastic theories and attitudes set out in such detail here would have had little real economic impact and become chiefly an aspect of the history of ideas. Thus, if we hypothesized a counterfactual situation in which there was no scholastic economic theory, would the medieval economy have been significantly different apart, perhaps, from the extent of its production of parchment and ink? Similarly, whilst one of the strengths of Dr Wood's book is its insistence that there was no single economic teaching amongst medieval thinkers, the fact that medieval scholars and lawyers could not agree on what kind of economic behaviour was moral or licit seems to make the gap between theory and practice all the more marked. Was it, therefore, the attitudes implicit in everyday economic practice and in contemporary legislation, rather than the explicit theorizing of theologians, which had the greatest impact on economic reality? Of course, a definitive resolution to the debate which has raged for the century since Weber's work is unlikely. Nevertheless, flagging up these issues and the historiography which goes with them might have strengthened Dr Wood's book even further.

However, it would be wrong to end on a negative note. In its range and clarity, *Medieval economic thought* is an excellent introduction to its topic. If Dr Wood's volume encourages historians of the medieval economy to turn their attention to the impact of contemporary teachings and economic attitudes, it will more than have served its purpose.

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JOSÉ MIGUEL MARTÍNEZ CARRIÓN (ed.), *El nivel de vida en la España rural: siglos XVIII-XX* (Publicaciones Universidad de Alicante, 2002) 734 pp. €30.

This weighty edited volume offers a number of new and valuable insights into the recently-initiated debate on the standard of living in rural Spain from the eighteenth century down to the Franco era. Following an excellent introduction by José Miguel Martínez Carrión, the work is divided into four sections on agricultural wages and the cost of living, consumption and reproduction, health and stature, and child labour and education. Perhaps the main conclusion of the dozen contributions is that, notwithstanding modest advances that were made during the first third of the nineteenth century, the living standards of Spanish peasants and agricultural labourers deteriorated significantly over the period 1840–70, while further notable progress was achieved between 1900 and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.

Traditionally, Spanish scholars have emphasized the poverty of the rural population in the contemporary period which was seen as a consequence of the backwardness of Spanish agriculture. The disentailing legislation of the mid-nineteenth century and the failure of the Second Republic's agrarian reform legislation in the 1930s are frequently portrayed as lost opportunities to improve the welfare of the nation's downtrodden peasantry. Spanish farmers, James Simpson informs us, indulged in a 'long siesta' from the 1760s to the 1960s. That said, agricultural historians south of the Pyrenees point out a number of positive factors at this stage including the adaptation of Spanish farmers to new opportunities provided by the market, the versatility of individual sectors and the emergence of regional specialization. Most commentators, moreover, now accept the revisionist picture of significant advances in Spanish agriculture during the early twentieth century, above all in horticulture and livestock farming.

The various contributors to this volume agree on a number of points. Firstly, it is not possible to speak of 'Spanish agriculture' as such, but rather of a variety of different 'agricultures' based on dissimilar environments and different types of labour organization, etc., all of which influenced the standard and quality of rural life. Secondly, while market integration undoubtedly brought about an improvement in peasant living standards in the long term, in the short and medium terms it could also lead to a widening of the gap between social groups. Many rural Spaniards lost out. For them, the development of markets entailed an increase in debt as usury became a common feature of rural society. This was partly due to the requirement to buy in farm inputs such as tools, machinery, seeds and livestock. Hence we arrive at the seemingly paradoxical situation where the

rise of agrarian capitalism in the middle decades of the nineteenth century resulted in falling consumption amongst the rural population – as a greater part of the harvest was directed towards the market in order to pay off debts – worsening diets, malnutrition and higher mortality rates. Thirdly, institutional factors had an important effect on the quality of life. For example, the parcelization of land in Atlantic Spain was to prove a serious obstacle to agricultural development and the welfare of peasant families while, in the case of Catalonia, the practice of sharecropping resulted in higher-than-average living standards.

Among the many interesting findings of these studies are new data on the height of different social classes and education levels. New research demonstrates that children born in rural districts before the 1880s were on average three centimetres shorter than their urban counterparts. Not until the 1920s and 1930s was there any significant convergence in the height of Spanish children thanks to a combination of more widespread economic growth and the appearance of welfare institutions. On the thorny question of truancy and high levels of peasant illiteracy, one writer argues that the increasing need to supplement family incomes, together with pitiful education facilities, led parents to keep their children away from school. In addition, an impoverished state made little provision for the education of girls. Overall, this pioneering work reflects the beginnings of a real debate on the standard of living in rural Spain in its widest sense. It also contains a useful statistical appendix on agricultural wages by province and an exhaustive bibliography.

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JESÚS IZQUIERDO MARTÍN, *El rostro de la comunidad. La identidad del campesino en la Castilla del Antiguo Régimen* (Consejo Económico y Social, Comunidad de Madrid, 2001). 795 pp. €9.

Jesús Izquierdo Martín's well researched monograph on the history of rural Castile from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries focuses on the peasant community of Spain's northern meseta. In particular, he is concerned with the question of peasant identity and for this purpose uses the tools of sociology and social anthropology. What started off as a study of the monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial was later widened to incorporate ninety-two small communities in the provinces of Madrid, Avila, Segovia, Guadalajara and Toledo. Most of these communities, though far from stagnant, maintained a population of less than 250 inhabitants throughout the three-century period, while their economic stability was closely linked to the preservation of communal lands. What should be of most interest to readers of the *Review*

are the more empirical sections of the book. Not least, Izquierdo stresses the low esteem which the peasant community of rural Castile continually attached to technological innovation. This negative attitude was mostly based on the survival of traditional values that placed an enormous emphasis on the practices of one's ancestors in a world where time immemorial seemed vastly more important than an uncertain future. In the social sphere, he argues, the peasantry's strong sense of belonging to a local community took clear precedence over such matters as class. Competition was rife between neighbouring towns and villages. Yet, within the same community different classes or factions generally co-operated with one another, even if most people could be classified as peasants (*campesinos*). Among the consequences of this localism was that outsiders were often denied access to markets of which they were not considered to be members, thereby severely limiting the possibilities of social change in early-modern Castile. At the same time, the evidence reveals a constant struggle for recognition within particular groups – an indication that these small peasant communities were by no means static or self-stabilizing. During the nineteenth century, the triumph of liberal individualism placed these communities on the defensive. Many local communities began to fragment after the 1850s. Even so, not until after the Spanish Civil War – and the imposition of urban values by the Francoist New Order – did real change occur in rural Castile, as resources finally became available for the 'systematic conversion of peasants into citizens'. Once converted into citizens, in the 1950s and 1960s, these men and women whose ancestors had once proudly proclaimed the sovereignty of their villages in the face of urban civilization set off on a one-way journey to the big cities. With its detailed archival research and extensive bibliography, this pioneering volume enhances our understanding of rural life under the Old Order in early-modern Castile.

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KARL DITT, RITA GUDERMANN and NORWICH RÜSSE (eds), *Agrarmodernisierung und ökologische Folgen: Westfalen vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001). 812 pp. €67.40.

In the agricultural history of Germany, as in that of Britain, the study of the interaction between agriculture and the natural environment is still only an emerging area of interest. On that ground alone a volume actually devoted to the theme of agriculture and ecology in Westphalia, a region of north-western Germany, would be most welcome. Unfortunately, very little space is given here to that subject. Some of the introductory essays to

the lavishly illustrated tome reflect older preoccupations in the discipline from a national perspective. Rolf Gehrmann looks at demographic theory and agricultural development and Rita Gudermann is concerned with the location and impact of a supposed 'take-off' in nineteenth-century German agriculture. Karl Ditt on twentieth-century agriculture, agricultural policy and environmental protection and Jürgen Büschenfeld on the adoption of pesticides/herbicides since 1945 barely mention Westphalia. As a conclusion, Verena Winiwarter presents a general 'model' of the changing interaction of agricultural change, nature and rural society that is little more than a synthesized general depiction of the process. Norwich Büsse offers the national policy of the Green Party (*Die Grüne*) on agriculture and the environment.

There are several contributions on aspects of Westphalian agriculture: Friedrich Becks on the spatial development of agriculture from the 1970s, with superficial reference to the ecological consequences; Hansjörg Küster's very short overview of the impact of agricultural change on vegetation and landscape; Willi Obermann on the consolidation of holdings from the 1950s, ostensibly from the viewpoint of the nature protectionist; Burkhard Theine's essay on agricultural mechanization from the 1920s – which is otherwise little more than a disaggregation of the Westphalian from the national statistics; Paul Walter on land consolidation (of the medieval strips) in Westphalia, principally the legislation of 1953 and 1976 – with little space devoted to the environmental impact; Michael Kopsidis's application to Westphalia of Thünens 'isolated state' theory of proximity to the market as the determinant of the degree of intensification in agriculture – which merely mentions the natural environment; and Bernd Tenbergen's longer-term analysis of the period from the early nineteenth century, with local examples and including landscape change.

The really outstanding contributions to the volume are among the regional and local studies. Bernward Selter provides a superb analysis of the nineteenth-century transformation of the forest economy of south-west Westphalia. This involved the replacement to a large extent of mixed deciduous forested areas, which were integral elements of the agricultural economy, by monocultural coniferous forests of trees of uniform height, that came paradoxically to be protected under nature conservation laws. Georg Fertig contributes an excellent detailed study of the division of the commons in one village (although he is more concerned with the demographic impact rather than the direct environmental consequences). Similarly, Volker Lünemann presents what is essentially a demographic study of two villages in different soil areas, which contrasts their reactions to the hunger crises of the period 1800 to 1850.

Some of the local studies are only indirectly concerned with agriculture. They include the well-researched essay on the development of sewage farms by Andreas Dix. Unlike those of the cities, where the impulse to create them stemmed only from a rapidly growing volume of effluent, in rural Westphalia they were inspired by the urge to fertilize land and were associated with water meadows. Now almost all closed down, this early effort in recycling waste has left a legacy of land polluted by heavy metals. Curriculum change from the 1920s at Westphalian agricultural colleges, which also functioned as farm advisory centres, is covered in Peter Exner's contribution. The teaching programme in the Nazi era was characterized by a strange combination of emphasis upon farm technology and the 'museumalization' (*Musealisierung*) of peasant culture, with more time devoted to paramilitary sports and shooting practice. (The acquisition of milking machines was discouraged by the Nazis on ideological grounds – the sexual division of labour – and for employment-creation reasons.) After 1945, the time left vacant in the curriculum was principally occupied by commercial subjects (farm management and accounting). The contribution of Gefion Apple and Jan Carstensen is a description of the open-air museum at Detmold. Ulich Bangert focuses on nature conservation in respect of an area of less than seven square kilometres. Ulrich Harteisen's otherwise interesting study of the Senne area of east Westphalia has little to report on agriculture, let alone its impact on the environment. An area of extremely marginal sandy heath, historically the habitat of the hardy semi-feral Senne breed of horses, it was otherwise used by peasants of surrounding villages as a source of heather litter for cowsheds and some extensive grazing. From the later nineteenth century most of it became an army exercise ground. Agricultural change is irrelevant in Matthias Frese's otherwise interesting essay on tourism and the landscape in Westphalia, which is actually almost entirely an historical account of the promotion of tourism in the area. Similarly with Rolf Spittler's offering, supposedly on the demands of landscape-oriented tourism on the future of agriculture in Westphalia. The obvious point is made that tourists are not attracted by modern intensive agriculture, especially on the generally flat landscape of Westphalia. Otherwise, there is no discussion of the impact of tourism or agriculture on the environment and more material refers to the island of Rügen in the Baltic than to Westphalia. The joint contribution by Ulrich Hüpke and Jörg Haafke is on nature conservation in the Ruhr, the industrial and coal mining region partly in Westphalia, where retreating agriculture merely serves as the conservationist backdrop to the devastation inflicted by industrial pollution. The same applies with the

contribution by Ulrike Gilhaus on the withdrawal of the state between 1870 and 1900 from the administrative protection of agriculture from industrial pollution, ostensibly in Westphalia but actually in the Siegerland and Sauerland districts.

In spite of the obvious faults of the volume, the relevant essays do represent contributions to a new direction in German agricultural history, towards the study of the environmental and ecological impact of agricultural change in the past. The pity is that so many of the essays are so influenced by the old and now somewhat antiquated paradigms of climacterics, legislative enactments, land occupancy laws and customs, and Malthusianism.

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WILLIAM R. LEONARD and MICHAEL H. CRAWFORD (eds), *Human biology of pastoral populations* (CUP, 2002). xi + 314 pp. 38 tables; 66 figs. £55.

Nomadic pastoralism forms a basis for colourful and distinctive societies found in widely separated niches around the world: the Evenki reindeer herders of Siberia, the Sámi of Finland, Basque herders of northern Spain, the Kurds of northern Iraq, the Phala of Tibet, Turkana and other groups in East Africa and the Herero of Botswana and Namibia are examples discussed in this book. Such populations tend to be relatively well bounded and small, ideal laboratories for seeing the diversity of patterns of demography, disease, and genetic distinctiveness.

The difficulty, of course, is that each society is enormously complex and it is difficult to isolate the topics of a single paper. Michael Little's paper 'Human biology, health and ecology of nomadic Turkana pastoralists' is a striking example. The paper covers climate, ecology, food production, diet and nutrition, growth, health, activity, and morbidity and causes of death – all in thirty pages. Clearly the material requires a monograph for full presentation.

Similarly William Irons' paper, on Yomut family organization and demography, integrates ethnography, economic studies and a brief but clear review of the history of the Turkoman, focusing his understanding of all these aspects of the society on the status of women and the details of their lives as they contribute to mortality rates. The article by E. Kobylansky and I. Hershkovitz on 'History, demography, marital patterns and immigration rate in south Sinai bedouins' is an interesting account of the intersection of social structure and demography within an isolated set of small intermarrying populations. Goldstein and Beall's article on Tibetan nomadic pastoralism also makes good use of ethnographic materials. In general, the links between demography and social structure are well illustrated in this collection of essays.

Some of the other essays are on a totally different level of abstraction: Crawford *et al.* shift from lists of genetic alleles in very small groups to worldwide genetic distance analyses. Calderon uses current genetic analysis as an entry to inferential population history of the Basques. In both cases those particular local facts are used to produce very high level generalizations while many other known aspects of the populations are ignored.

Other articles focus more narrowly on health issues and are hard to integrate into a pattern. It is interesting to see that Sámi herders are approaching the health standards of the general Finnish population without giving up their distinctive way of life. Leonard and colleagues report very detailed data on food consumption of Evenki herders of Siberia, but do not expand the discussion into their overall health status, so that the importance of diet is not clear. Pennington finds that children in poor Herero households are taller, heavier and apparently better fed than those from cattle-rich households. Overall, the Herero children are no taller or fatter than the neighbouring !Kung hunter-gatherer children under age ten, although Herero adults are much taller than !Kung, and often obese. The findings are unexpected and unexplained.

The editors start the volume with a quote from Spooner (p. 2): 'there are no features of cultural or social organization common to all nomads or even that occur exclusively among nomads'. Each of the societies included in this book could usefully support a whole volume on their population and health: it overloads this volume to try to present enough description to make comparisons worthwhile. Hence, this volume of high-quality papers will be of most interest and reward to the specialists in nomadic pastoral societies who already have a lot of factual knowledge about these societies.

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PETER H. LINDERT, *Shifting ground. The changing agricultural soils of China and Indonesia* (MIT Press, 2000). xii + 351 pp. 49 tables; 23 figs. £30.95.

Lindert suggests that the cultivation of cropland soils in China and Indonesia has not been decreasing soil quality, except for reducing some nitrogen and soil organic matter. His arguments rest generally on the facts that the total number of hectares under cultivation in China and Indonesia have not declined over time and that phosphorus and potassium nutrients have increased in some soils. Several of the tables lacked sources and this was disappointing.

Although the net area under cultivation may remain the same in China and Indonesia, this conceals changes in the land used for crops from one year to the next. In

China, more and more forest land and grassland have been cleared and converted into cropland in recent decades. Soil scientists have reported that in northeast China soil erosion is serious on about 13.3 million ha. Fu Dexin and Tang Defu estimate soil erosion rates in the rolling land area of Songhua Jiang-Nenjiang plain, with 2 million ha of cropland, at 50 to 70 t/ha/yr. In this region of rich soils, farmed for only sixty to seventy years, 60 to 70 cm of thick black soil has been reduced to 20 to 30 cm. Further evidence of soil erosion in China is the soil deposited on Hawaii during Chinese spring cultivations each year (see Parrington *et al. Science* 264 (1983), pp. 195–7). In contrast to dryland crop production in China and Indonesia, the production of paddy rice suffers little or no soil erosion because the land is flat and covered by water for most of the time. In these circumstances, wind and rainfall energy have little or no effect on the soil.

Lindert's view that there has been little or no degradation of cropland soil in China is therefore at odds with the assessments of many soil scientists. Wen and Pimentel (in Tao *et al.* (eds), *Agriculture in China* (1998)) estimate that China loses about 5.5 billion tonnes of soil each year, while Zhang and others (*Land Degradation and Development* 8 (1997) pp. 1–16) report that the Yellow River transports approximately two billion tonnes of soil per year to the sea. Loss of vegetative cover is widespread in China, Indonesia, and other developing countries. With high population densities and shortages of forests to provide fuelwood, people are turning more to crop residues for cooking and heating. Wen (in Pimentel (ed.), *Soil erosion and conservation* (1993)) estimates that about sixty per cent of the crop residues in China are stripped from the land and burned for fuel. In areas where fuel wood and biomass are scarce, such as northwestern China, even the roots of grasses

and shrubs are collected and burned, thus intensifying soil erosion.

Lindert reports that nitrogen and soil organic matter have declined in some soils in China and Indonesia but that total phosphorus and potassium generally increased from 1950 to about 1985. In both countries, fertilizer use has increased significantly since the 1950s in an effort to feed rapidly growing populations. In China, cereal grain production doubled between 1965 and 1983. To achieve this increase in crop yields, fertilizer inputs increased 7.5 fold, insecticide use increased two fold, diesel fuel use six fold, and electricity inputs eleven fold. In China, yields per hectare for several crops are now higher than in the United States, but so too are inputs of fertilizer, pesticides, and irrigation water.

The loss of soil organic matter and the loss of soil nutrients due to soil erosion in China, Indonesia, and other nations is serious. Soil loss and degradation are of concern to everyone because more than 99.7 per cent of world food comes from the land and less than 0.3 per cent from the oceans and other aquatic ecosystems. The loss of soil and land degradation due to erosion are having a negative impact on world food supplies. In 2000, the World Health Organization reported that more than three billion people are malnourished worldwide. This is the largest number of malnourished people ever in history.

Lindert is to be complimented for examining the issue of soil loss and degradation in China and Indonesia, even though his conclusions appear to differ from those of soil scientists in China, Indonesia, and elsewhere. *Shifting ground* is well written and carefully illustrated. Economists, agronomists, soil scientists, biologists, engineers, and environmentalists should find the book interesting reading.

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Conference Report: The Society's Winter Conference

2002

by Jeremy Burchardt

The Society's annual Winter conference, entitled 'Popular Politics in Rural England', was organised by Jane Whittle and John Broad and held, as usual, on the first Saturday in December at the Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, London. Stalwarts of previous winter conferences expressed some dismay at the drastic modifications made to the English Local History Room since last year but this was more than made up for by the quality of the papers which followed.

The first paper was by Dr Miriam Muller (University of Birmingham), who spoke on 'Freedom through the court of law: peasant protest and ancient demesne in a fourteenth-century Wiltshire manor'. Dr Muller's main concern was to explore the methods and motives of peasants who resisted lordly oppression by legal means, as opposed to those who engaged in acts of outright defiance. One of the most familiar strategies of peasants who wished to remain within the law was to claim that their manor was ancient demesne of the crown. This was what the tenants of the Wiltshire manor of Badbury did in 1348 when they proceeded against their lord, the Abbot of Glastonbury, in the Court of Exchequer. Such a peasant conspiracy clearly required a high degree of community solidarity and trust, although interestingly some of the Badbury tenants had pleaded against each other in the manorial court prior to 1348. It also required effective leadership, knowledge of the law and experience in handling money. A key figure here was John Stephenes, a large tenant and brewer who acted as treasurer to the conspirators. Although able to keep tally, Stephenes was probably illiterate. He had a good record of abiding by the law, which may have made him a suitable choice as treasurer. Furthermore, having served as reeve Stephenes possessed detailed knowledge of the manorial community. Despite the common perception of local officials as oppressive, Stephenes was not in fact unusual in siding with the peasantry: many local officials, for example, took part in the Peasants Revolt.

Like most other peasant attempts to claim ancient demesne status, the Badbury action failed. Why was it

that peasants so often made such claims when, in the event, it turned out that Domesday Book provided no support for them? Perhaps popular memory was harkening back to pre-Conquest ownership, when Badbury at least had been a royal manor. But there was little in Badbury that ancient demesne status could have remedied. Admittedly, entry fines fluctuated wildly, heriots caused discontent and the lord of the manor sometimes took tenants' animals in distraint. But rents were fixed and labour services were minimal. Perhaps the claim to ancient demesne status was really a claim to freedom and should be understood in terms of myth and popular aspiration rather than pragmatic economic goals.

Prof. Richard Hoyle, standing in at very short notice for the indisposed Andy Wood, then spoke on 'Popular politics and manorial custom in sixteenth-century England'. For many people in the sixteenth century, the defence of manorial custom and popular politics were one and the same thing. The importance of manorial custom varied with time: it was less important in the fifteenth century, when land was readily available. Some manors moved towards leasehold in this period. Those lords whose tenants were still copyholders were at a significant disadvantage during and after the inflation of the 1540s.

Customs might be recorded in one of four ways. Firstly, tenants might create customnals for their own defence. Secondly, the lord might draw together a jury of the manor and charge them to record their customs. But it is questionable whether documents arising in this way accurately record custom: stewards were anxious not to record anything which would be disadvantageous to the lord. Thirdly, customs were sometimes written down and ratified after having been negotiated between lord and tenant. Fourthly, custom was sometimes recorded in evidence in law suits.

From the point of view of the peasantry, custom was collective memory. In the sixteenth century, custom in this sense appears to have been chronologically shallow, rarely reaching back further than thirty or forty years.

This may have been because the fifteenth century witnessed such disruption to customary norms. For lords, however, custom was what was recorded in the court rolls. This is why tenants were so concerned about where the court rolls were kept and who had access to them.

Custom, Professor Hoyle argued, formed a rough-and-ready system of peasant equity but it was difficult to make it the basis of a generalized peasant politics because jurists insisted that there was no such thing as general custom, only the custom of individual manors. Despite this, custom did not in fact differ very greatly from manor to manor because tenants were by no means totally isolated from each other (they met at market places, inns, etc.). However, there were interesting regional variations in custom at least in the sixteenth century. West of a line from Reading through Oxford to Banbury, disputes were about trying to establish (or deny) a right of inheritance. In the east of England, the right of inheritance had been established much earlier and the main issue was the rate of fines and the right of tenants to use the assets of the manor as they wished. These concerns come through particularly clearly in 1549. The key demands of the peasants were that rents and fines should be reduced to the level they were at forty years earlier. They also wanted tenants to have the right to cut timber on their property and to 'make waste', i.e. to take down buildings. Strikingly, the peasants sought to exclude the gentry and clergy from their world, asking for example that landlords' animals should be excluded from commons.

Custom in the sixteenth century therefore provided in effect a peasant concept of property rights, one which could be defended by petitions and by individual legal actions. After 1548/9, however, there were no further general attempts to rally this peasant consciousness. This may have been because the attack on peasant customs occurred manor by manor, tenant by tenant. It was probably also the case that 1549 was a shattering defeat – many peasants were killed. After the mid-sixteenth century, the relationship between lord and peasant ceased at least in many places to be a major element of popular politics in England until the nineteenth century.

After lunch, Dr Jane Pearson spoke on 'Conflict and Community in eighteenth-century Essex: the case of Great Tey'. In 1727, a group of young men trampled down a crop of oats belonging to John Ley on the village play field in Great Tey and threw fireworks into an adjacent property also owned by Ley. Ley had indicted the men for riot but they insisted that they had not been rioting and were eventually found not guilty. But what lies behind this bare outline of events? Great Tey had experienced significant economic change in the early eighteenth century as wealthier landowners increased the size of their holdings and let a higher proportion of their

land in leasehold. The remaining copyhold tenancies were held predominantly by small farmers. Tenurial divisions therefore corresponded to and reinforced social divisions.

Ley was especially active in the land market in Great Tey in the years leading up to 1727 and appears to have been challenging the traditional manorial system. The day of the riot was in fact the first time he had appeared in the manorial court homage. By then he owned and tenanted more than 300 acres in Great Tey. The value of the single acre of oats destroyed in the play field 'riot' would hardly have been important to a man farming on such a scale. It seems more plausible to see Ley's indictment of the young men as part of a wider struggle between him and the small farmers and labourers of the village. Certainly Ley was an objectionable neighbour. Not only had he refused to enter into dialogue with the young men over the play field before the 'riot', but he seems also not to have maintained his ditches and hedges properly, allowing animals to stray onto the land of other farmers, and to have underpaid his workers. Potentially, Ley was vulnerable to popular pressure, in that the large acreage of land he had assembled locally required a correspondingly large labour force. On the other hand, the high density of population in and around Great Tey weakened manorial control and put Ley in a stronger position than he would otherwise have enjoyed.

Ley's decision to plant oats on the play field, the only public space in the village apart from the guildhall and the church, seems to have been designed to precipitate a conflict over custom. If so, Ley may have underestimated the strength of the forces he was pitching himself against. The witnesses produced by the defendants were a cross-section of the Great Tey community, ranging from gentleman to clergyman, yeoman, village builder and labourer. Ley was evidently taking on the village community as a whole in order to break down custom in pursuit of his own financial interest. Perhaps belatedly recognising the extent of opposition his actions had generated, Ley apparently offered to withdraw his prosecution of the young men if the parish agreed not to raise his poor rates, an offer which was rejected. Ley's subsequent legal defeat at the hands of the village community of Great Tey demonstrates the capacity of eighteenth-century farmers and smallholders to organize in defence of custom at a local level.

Prof. Alun Howkins then gave the final paper of the day, with the title 'The fight for the Headington Magdalens 1850–1900: work in progress'. Prof. Howkins explained that his title was chosen advisedly. He had begun research on the Headington Magdalens with Raphael Samuel in 1968. This was to form part of a collaborative project on 'proletarian Oxfordshire'.

Historians have agreed on one aspect of enclosure more than any other, Prof. Howkins argued. This is the slightness of opposition to it. Insofar as opposition has been acknowledged, it has been largely the middle-class activism of the Commons Preservation Society (CPS). Whilst the achievement of the CPS should not be underestimated, it was not unproblematic: many of the rural poor objected to having productive waste turned into unproductive park. The Headington Magdalens, an area of open scrub let as part of Wood Farm, near Oxford, by Magdalen College, were not commonable but the villagers of Headington Quarry were nevertheless quite clear that they had the right to extract resources from the land. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century this brought them into conflict with Richard Pether, the new tenant of Wood Farm. Pether brought court cases against villagers trying to exercise common rights. In 1862 he fenced the Open Magdalens and in 1869 began to cultivate them, planting them with oats. In response, the poor of Headington broke down the gates and amid scenes of celebration and festivity trampled half a field of oats and took potatoes and peas. Five people were arrested. The aftermath highlighted a division between the small proprietors and the poor of Headington: the former urged the latter not to go back onto the land until the trial of the five arrested men had been completed. In the event, the magistrates concluded that no common rights existed over the Open Magdalens, but levied only a very small fine. Henceforth the small proprietors attempted to work through the courts, but the poor continued to take direct action, moving back onto the land

on the day after the verdict had been announced. The small proprietors turned their animals onto the Open Magdalens throughout 1872 but Magdalen College then threatened to take the case to Chancery. It is unclear if it ever reached the court but in 1877 the college gave the parish of Headington four acres of land in exchange for a piece of land in the Slade. It seems possible that this exchange of land formed part of an out-of-court settlement between the college and the small proprietors. Whether this was so or not, however, it did not stop the poor of Headington from continuing to gather wood, nuts and so forth from the Open Magdalens, and being prosecuted for doing so. In 1878–9, a very bad winter, there were many prosecutions for wood stealing and disturbances reached a new pitch. Pether impounded cattle turned out onto the Magdalens and in 1880 there were fires on the Magdalens. On the last occasion a huge crowd of about 2000 people gathered. The Open Magdalens were again burnt by the poor of Headington in 1889 and 1892, presumably as a manifestation of the ill-feeling engendered by Magdalen College and Richard Pether's attempts to prevent popular usage of the land. Prosecutions for wood stealing continued until at least 1895, but the use of the Headington Magdalens by Quarry villagers went on much longer than that: even in the late 1960s older people in the Quarry continued to take wood, nuts and rabbits from the land, which still remained barren waste.

The day's proceedings closed with thanks expressed to all the speakers and to John Broad and Jane Whittle for organising a stimulating and successful conference.

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Forthcoming conferences, 2003–4

British Agricultural History Society
and
Institute of British Geographers Historical Geography Research Group

2003 Winter Conference – Saturday 6 December 2003

Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, Malet St, London

Retailing agricultural produce

Dr James Davis, 'Middlemen, markets and the movement of agricultural produce, 1200–1500'

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The Society's Spring Conference 2004

The Society's 2004 Spring Conference will be held at the Pollock Halls of the University of Edinburgh from 5–7 April 2004. Speakers include Prof. Jan Bieleman of the Rural History Group at Wageningen University, Netherlands, Prof. Chris Smout of the University of St Andrews and Prof. Robert Dodgshon of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. There will be a new researchers' session and an excursion to look at the evidence of high farming in the Lothians.

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The technology of medieval sheep farming: some evidence from Crawley, Hampshire, 1208–1349

by Mark Page

Abstract

Sheep farming was a profitable business for the bishops of Winchester before the Black Death. Evidence from the manor of Crawley demonstrates that investment in the management of the flock peaked in the early fourteenth century. Elsewhere on the estate, improvements in the provision of sires, housing, feeding, medicaments and the labour supply have been shown to impact favourably upon fertility and mortality rates. However, this was not the case at Crawley. Instead, this paper confirms Stone's view that productivity was determined by conscious decisions taken by demesne managers and argues that their concern in this period was to raise fleece weights.

The pessimism which for so long pervaded historical writing about the performance of medieval agriculture has now almost entirely evaporated to be replaced by a much greater appreciation of its achievements. In particular, the ability of medieval farmers to feed a population of about six million in England at the beginning of the fourteenth century, of which perhaps 15 or even 20 per cent lived in towns, has been acknowledged to be an impressive demonstration of the effectiveness of agricultural production and distribution at this time.¹ This more optimistic assessment of English agriculture in the century or so before the Black Death of 1348–9 has come about largely as a result of a sustained assault upon the influential ideas of M. M. Postan. The 'Postan Thesis', put briefly, states that as the population grew in the thirteenth century, so grain yields were undermined by an extension of cultivation onto poorer 'marginal soils', and through a reduction in animal numbers and manure supplies as permanent pasture was converted into ploughland.² Furthermore, Postan held that the possibility of technological change in this period was so limited that the likelihood of improving grain yields was still further reduced.³

In more recent years, the work of a number of historians, in particular B. M. S. Campbell, has demonstrated conclusively that, contrary to Postan's belief, grain productivity was raised substantially in various parts of the country in the decades prior to the Black Death.⁴ Moreover, this was achieved in part because of the introduction of new agricultural techniques. Our understanding of agrarian innovation and technological advance has witnessed a considerable

¹ B. M. S. Campbell, *English seigniorial agriculture, 1250–1450* (2000), pp. 20–1.

² M. M. Postan, *The medieval economy and society* (1972), pp. 20–6, 63–70; C. Thornton, 'Efficiency in medieval livestock farming: the fertility and mortality of

herds and flocks at Rimpton, Somerset, 1208–1349', in P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (eds), *Thirteenth-century England IV* (1992), p. 25.

³ Postan, *Medieval economy and society*, p. 49.

⁴ Campbell, *English seigniorial agriculture*, ch. 7.

shift in emphasis over recent years. No longer is it thought necessary to equate technological change with such revolutionary advances as the widespread adoption of the mouldboard plough before the end of the tenth century or the introduction of new fodder crops such as turnips and clover in the sixteenth century. Certainly no such comparable advance occurred during the later Middle Ages. Instead, attention has been focused on 'a host of minor technological adjustments', the individual significance of which was less important than their interaction with other practices in what has been described as the overall 'technological package' or 'complex'.⁵ In the light of this new, more evolutionary model of agrarian innovation, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries can be regarded as an era of significant progress and development.

Discussions of agricultural technology in the Middle Ages have tended to concentrate on the productivity of arable farming and the methods employed to improve it. Much less attention has been paid to developments in livestock farming and the techniques used to care for the flocks and herds which formed such a vital part of both the demesne and the peasant economy. In part this is a reflection of the dominant role played by arable farming on most of the estates for which records survive in the century or so before the Black Death. In terms of the amount of land under cultivation, the profitability to both large- and small-scale farmers of producing grain for the market, and the importance of those grain sales for the feeding of the population of England, arable husbandry clearly occupied a pre-eminent place in the national economy. By contrast, livestock farming was a sector of much less significance. Even on the estate of the bishopric of Winchester, which, as we shall see, adopted methods of farming certain to raise the profile of livestock, particularly sheep, the profits derived from grain production outstripped all other sources of manorial revenue during the period 1208–1349, rarely falling below 30 per cent of total receipts. By contrast, income from the sale of wool, the single most valuable animal product, hardly ever reached even 10 per cent of total receipts, and was at best only equal to other profits from animal farming.⁶

Another reason for the historiographical tendency to concentrate on the technology of arable farming is that the areas most receptive to innovation were also the areas of most intensive arable production, where livestock husbandry, including sheep farming, was relatively insignificant. Thus, in Norfolk before the Black Death, demesnes consistently stocked sheep at a density per sown acre well below the national average.⁷ In other parts of the country, where more extensive systems of production were practised, sheep farming assumed a role of much greater significance in the manorial economy. This was certainly the case on the estate of the bishopric of Winchester, where, in the early thirteenth century, the sales of cheese and wool were sufficient on some manors to cushion the bishop's need to maximize income in the cereal sector. Instead, the harvested grain was largely consumed by the episcopal household and manorial servants, with relatively little reaching the market.⁸ On these manors the incentive to intensify arable

⁵ Ibid., p. 15; C. Dyer, 'Medieval farming and technology: conclusion', in G. Astill and J. Langdon (eds), *Medieval farming and technology: the impact of agricultural change in northwest Europe* (1997), pp. 293–4.

⁶ J. Z. Titow, 'Land and population on the estates of the bishops of Winchester, 1209–1350' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1962), pp. 54, 57.

⁷ Campbell, *English seigniorial agriculture*, pp. 136, 159,

423–4.

⁸ K. Biddick (with C. C. J. H. Bijleveld), 'Agrarian productivity on the estates of the bishopric of Winchester in the early thirteenth century: a managerial perspective', in B. M. S. Campbell and M. Overton (eds), *Land, labour and livestock: historical studies in European agricultural productivity* (1991), p. 120.

production and introduce technological change was much less strong than in areas of high commercial demand for grain or on manors which lay outside the consumption network of the estate. Nevertheless, the bishops of Winchester were able to cultivate their lands profitably, without maximizing grain yields, in a businesslike and flexible manner, and may be expected to have paid particular attention to the management of their sheep flocks, the source of their lucrative supplies of cheese and wool.

I

The technology of medieval sheep farming has received some attention in recent years, most notably in a wide-ranging essay by David Stone on the productivity of sheep farming after the Black Death.⁹ In addition, Christopher Dyer's study of sheepcotes in Gloucestershire emphasized the important role played by these buildings in the careful husbandry of sheep in the Middle Ages. Farmers invested heavily in their construction in order to keep their animals warm, healthy, and well fed.¹⁰ The building of sheepcotes also figures in Christopher Thornton's detailed analysis of livestock farming on the bishop of Winchester's manor of Rimpton in Somerset. Thornton argued that the fertility and mortality of Rimpton's herds and flocks improved markedly over the course of the period 1208–1349 as the result of 'considered investment in new sires, housing, feeding, the labour supply, the management system and administrative change'.¹¹ Rimpton's sheep flock in the thirteenth century was relatively small, comprising about 250 ewes, wethers and young stock. Furthermore, after 1266 the local flock disappeared altogether, the manor's grazings being used instead for sheep brought from other more important sheep-raising manors of the bishopric or leased to the villagers for their flocks.¹² Rimpton may thus not be typical of sheep farming on the bishopric estate, where manorial flocks in excess of 1000 sheep were regularly found on the Hampshire and Wiltshire downlands.

This paper focuses on the bishop's Hampshire manor of Crawley, one of those identified by Biddick as operating a strategy of grain production more influenced by the requirements of consumption than the demands of the market. The manor also intensified its pastoral production during the years 1209–37, at a time when Rimpton increased its arable acreage.¹³ Crawley lies a little under five miles to the north-west of Winchester, on land made up of undulating chalk hills. The medieval manor lacked a natural supply of water, making it ill-suited to the needs of cattle farming but ideal for sheep, which pastured on the grass growing on the downs.¹⁴ Crawley was chosen for study for two main reasons. First, it was one of the largest of the bishop's sheep farming manors, along with Downton and East Knoyle in Wiltshire, and East Meon and Twyford in Hampshire. Secondly, Crawley has been the subject of a classic investigation by N. S. B. and E. C. Gras, who printed some of the figures needed to study the efficiency

⁹ D. Stone, 'The productivity and management of sheep in late medieval England', *AgHR* 51 (2003), pp. 1–22.

¹⁰ C. Dyer, 'Sheepcotes: evidence for medieval sheep-farming', *Medieval Arch.* 39 (1995), pp. 136–64.

¹¹ Thornton, 'Efficiency in medieval livestock farming', p. 43.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 31–2.

¹³ Biddick, 'Agrarian productivity', pp. 112–13, 118–19.

¹⁴ N. S. B. and E. C. Gras, *The economic and social history of an English village (Crawley, Hampshire), AD 909–1928* (1930), pp. 4, 40–1; Campbell, *English seigniorial agriculture*, p. 162.

of medieval sheep farming on this manor. Nevertheless, it has been necessary to consult all 100 relevant surviving account rolls for the period 1208–1349 to find further information about the methods employed to manage Crawley's sheep flock.¹⁵

The Winchester pipe rolls provide sufficient data to allow an examination of five areas of policy associated with medieval sheep farming. These are the provision of sires; the construction and maintenance of sheepcotes; the supply of feed to the sheep; the supply of medicaments and veterinary expertise; and the supply of labour devoted to the care and well-being of the flock. It is relatively straightforward to identify change in these practices over time and a decision to innovate or invest in one or all of them may be considered to represent the only form of technology available to the demesne managers. It is more difficult, however, to assess the impact of any such changes on the health or productivity of the sheep. It has been argued that little productivity response has been detected in medieval wool and milk yields because few advances were made, especially before the Black Death, in breeding techniques and levels of nutrition. Instead, farmers were more likely to have an effect on the general health and reproductive capacity of the flock.¹⁶ This may be true, but improvements in the fertility of ewes or the survival rate of lambs may not always have been the priority of the administrators who introduced new methods of managing a manor's sheep. The products of medieval sheep farming were many and varied: wool, milk for making cheese and butter, manure for spreading on the arable fields, meat, and skins. An attempt to improve the yields of milk or wool would not necessarily impact favourably on rates of fertility and mortality. Milking, especially, adversely affected the ability of ewes to breed.¹⁷ The hardest question of all to answer, therefore, is what the demesne managers were hoping to achieve when they made the decision to intervene in the management of the flock.

The principal aim of this paper is to identify changes in the provision of sires, housing, feeding, medicaments and the labour supply dedicated to the care of the sheep flock at Crawley between 1208 and 1349. Any examples of innovation in these practices are related to the fluctuating rates of fertility of the manor's ewes and the mortality of lambs in their first year in an attempt to discern a connection between them. In the absence of any such connection, an alternative explanation is sought for the introduction of new techniques and methods of management. Before entering this discussion, however, it is necessary to establish the size of the sheep flock at Crawley in the 140 years prior to the Black Death and its relationship with the flock on the bishop of Winchester's estate as a whole.

II

Figure 1 reveals that the size of the sheep flock at Crawley showed a tendency to decline over the course of the period 1208–1349, from an average of 1326 sheep under Peter des Roches (1205–38) and 1465 sheep under Aymer de Valence (1250–60) to an average of 974 sheep under John Stratford (1323–33) and 805 sheep under Adam Orleton (1333–45) (Table 1). This reflects

¹⁵ Hampshire RO, 11M59/B1/1–101. The pipe roll for 1269–70 (B1/34) does not include an account for Crawley.

¹⁶ Thornton, 'Efficiency in medieval livestock farming', pp. 26–8.

¹⁷ Stone, 'Productivity and management of sheep', pp. 14–16.

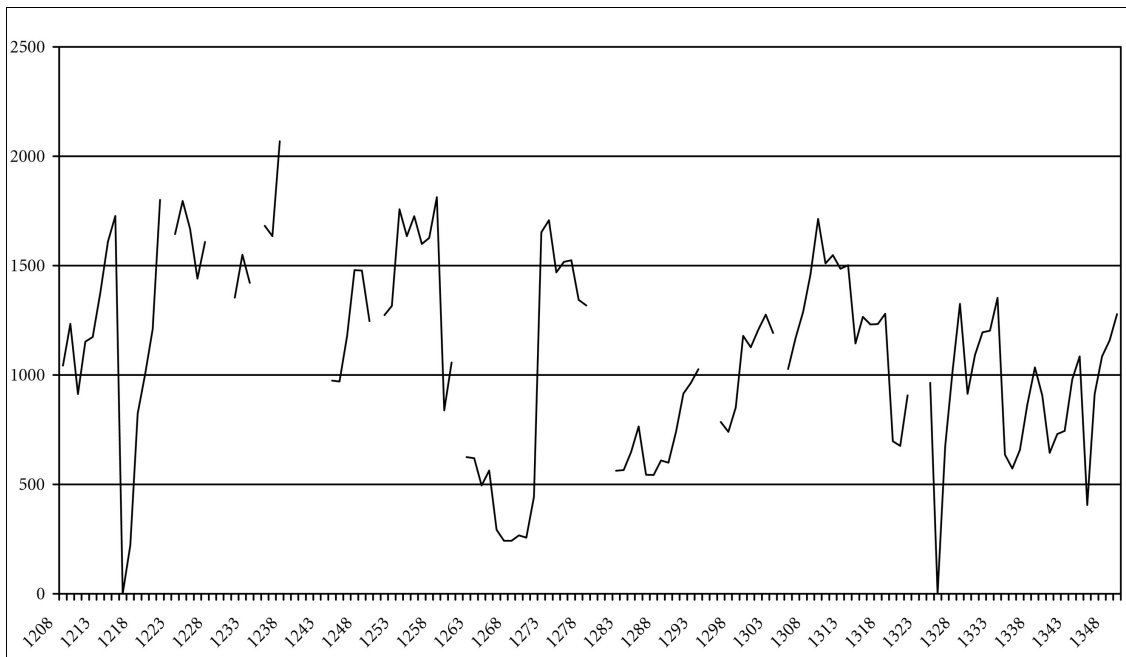


FIGURE 1. Total number of sheep at Crawley, 1208–1349.

Source: Titow, 'Land and population', Table 4.

what was happening on the Winchester estate as a whole during this time. Before 1280 the estate's flock regularly exceeded 20,000 sheep and peaked at around 30,000 sheep in 1258 and 1273. After 1280 the flock was, with the exception of a few years only, kept well below the 20,000 mark.¹⁸ This fall in numbers has not been adequately explained. It was partly the result of the onset of sheep scab from about 1275, which not only led to a great increase in the mortality of sheep but also caused a steep decline in both fleece quality and weight.¹⁹ The susceptibility of sheep to disease, which was particularly marked in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, may have led to an increased awareness among demesne managers that sheep were potentially a risky investment. Nevertheless, at Crawley, expenditure on sheep farming peaked in the first quarter of the fourteenth century, and there do not appear to have been any financial constraints preventing the flock being restocked at a higher level.

Certainly the suggestion by Titow, that falling income from sales of grain after 1283 led to a reluctance among demesne managers to divert money towards sheep farming and away from maintaining payments to the bishop's exchequer at a familiar level, sits uncomfortably with the amounts of money spent at Crawley on the early fourteenth-century flock (Table 5).²⁰ The contraction of arable farming on the Winchester estate from the late thirteenth century onwards may have meant that fewer animals were required to maintain an adequate supply of manure.

¹⁸ Titow, 'Land and population', p. 50; M. J. Stephenson, 'Wool yields in the medieval economy', *ECHR* 41 (1988), pp. 385–6.

¹⁹ Stephenson, 'Wool yields', p. 381; D. L. Farmer, 'Mar-

keting the produce of the countryside, 1200–1500', in E. Miller (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, III, 1348–1500 (1991), p. 400.

²⁰ Titow, 'Land and population', p. 47, n. 1.

TABLE 1. The size of the sheep flock at Crawley, 1208–1349

<i>Episcopate</i>	<i>Number of sheep in first year of episcopate</i>	<i>Number of sheep in last year of episcopate</i>	<i>Total number of sheep in episcopate</i>	<i>Relevant accounts surviving</i>	<i>Mean number of sheep</i>
Peter des Roches (1205–1238)	1043 (1208)	2068 (1237)	33,155	25	1326
William Raleigh (1242–1250)	974 (1244)	1246 (1249)	7328	6	1221
Aymer de Valence (1250–1260)	1274 (1251)	1058 (1260)	14,645	10	1465
John Gervais (1262–1268)	625 (1262)	243 (1268)	3081	7	440
Nicholas of Ely (1268–1280)	267 (1269)	1318 (1278)	11,501	10	1150
John of Pontoise (1282–1304)	562 (1282)	1192 (1303)	16,836	20	842
Henry Woodlock (1305–1316)	1028 (1305)	1266 (1315)	15,113	11	1374
John Sandale (1316–1319)	1231 (1316)	697 (1319)	4441	4	1110
Rigaud of Assier (1319–1323)	676 (1320)	907 (1321)	1583	2	792
John Stratford (1323–1333)	964 (1324)	1353 (1333)	9736	10	974
Adam Orleton (1333–1345)	636 (1334)	1085 (1344)	8857	11	805
William Edington (1345–1366)	406 (1345)	1278 (1349)	4840	5	968
1208–1349	—	—	131,116	121	1084

Source: Titow, 'Land and population', Table 4.

Note: The figures refer to the number of sheep at the end of the year of account. The number of sheep recorded at the beginning of the year of account have been used to supply figures for those years for which no account roll survives.

Moreover, although the amount of arable land was reduced, this did not necessarily lead to an increase in the availability of pasture. Much of the former demesne land was leased to tenants, and sales of pasture to tenants also rose sharply as the fourteenth century progressed.²¹ However, there was never a straightforward relationship on the Winchester estate between stocking densities and the demesne acreage sown. After the Black Death, the size of the sheep flock increased markedly while the decline of the arable continued apace.²² Pasture need not be sold to tenants if it was required by the bishop's stock.²³ Finally, the provision of manure may not

²¹ Ibid., pp. 46, 55; Stone, 'Productivity and management of sheep', pp. 10–11.

²² Stephenson, 'Wool yields', p. 386; M. Page (ed.), *The*

pipe roll of the bishopric of Winchester, 1409–10 (Hampshire Rec. Ser., 16, 1999), p. xx.

²³ Page (ed.), *Pipe roll, 1409–10*, p. 380.

always have been the primary purpose of the flock, in which case sheep numbers would not necessarily have followed fluctuations in the size of the demesne.²⁴

The effect of episcopal vacancies on numbers certainly needs to be taken into account (Table 1). Sheep, and other non-working animals, tended to be sold off at the end of an episcopate, either by the bishop's own officials or by those appointed by the king to manage the estate during the vacancy. Thus, the size of Crawley's flock fell steeply after the death of Peter des Roches in 1238, Aymer de Valence in 1260, Nicholas of Ely in 1280, John Sandale in 1319, and Adam Orleton in 1345. The translation of John Stratford to Canterbury in 1333 also led to a sharp fall in numbers. At the beginning of each episcopate, therefore, the new bishop was usually presented with a choice of whether or not to invest in a new flock. Some bishops built up their flocks relatively quickly. This was the case, at Crawley and on the estate as a whole, with William Raleigh (1242–50), Aymer de Valence (1250–60), Nicholas of Ely (1268–80), Henry Woodlock (1305–16), and William Edington (1345–66). Others were more cautious. John of Pontoise (1282–1304) became bishop at a time of falling wool prices and the size of the flock at Crawley, especially, grew only slowly. Adam Orleton (1333–45) too was not a major investor in sheep, perhaps because of the poor returns on the sale of wool which were experienced during his episcopate.²⁵

The price of wool may also explain the behaviour of the bishop who showed the most reluctance to purchase sheep, John Gervais (1262–8), whose flock at Crawley and across the estate, was much smaller than those of his immediate predecessor and successor. This may have been partly the result of the financial difficulties of the bishop, as well as a reaction to the fall in the price of sheep and wool which occurred during the 1250s.²⁶ In particular, the price of wool was low compared with that of wheat and John Gervais may have decided to invest in arable farming rather than sheep husbandry to take advantage of this trend. Certainly the acreage of the demesne showed some modest signs of increase during the first years of his episcopate.²⁷

By contrast, between 1305 and 1309 the price of wool rose quickly, encouraging the rapid expansion of the flock by the new bishop, Henry Woodlock, through the purchase of mostly younger sheep, especially lambs, from other episcopal manors and from neighbouring land-owners, such as the rector of Chilbolton.²⁸ These purchases slowed considerably and many sheep were sold when wool prices faltered after 1310, suggesting that demesne managers were sensitive to price fluctuations. At other times too sheep were purchased when wool prices rose; for example, in 1289–90 and 1298–9 when there were sudden increases in prices after several years of slump in the wool market.²⁹ As a rule of thumb, therefore, it may be concluded that the flock at Crawley was increased by purchase when wool prices were high and by breeding when they were low.

²⁴ C. Thornton, 'The determinants of land productivity on the bishop of Winchester's demesne of Rimpleton, 1208 to 1403', in Campbell and Overton (eds), *Land, labour and livestock*, p. 200.

²⁵ D. L. Farmer, 'Prices and wages', in H. E. Hallam (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales*, II, 1042–1350 (1988), p. 756.

²⁶ M. J. Stephenson, 'The productivity of medieval sheep on the great estates, 1100–1500' (unpublished PhD

thesis, University of Cambridge, 1986), p. 272; Farmer, 'Prices and wages', p. 754; T. H. Lloyd, *The movement of wool prices in medieval England* (EcHR, Supplement 6, 1973), pp. 38–9, 65.

²⁷ Titow, 'Land and population', p. 21a.

²⁸ Lloyd, 'Wool prices', pp. 17, 40; Gras, *English village*, pp. 246, 256, 411–12.

²⁹ Lloyd, 'Wool prices', pp. 16–17, 39–40; Gras, *English village*, pp. 399, 405.

TABLE 2. Fertility of the sheep flock at Crawley, 1208–1349

<i>Period</i>	<i>Relevant accounts surviving</i>	<i>Total ewes</i>	<i>Total lambs</i>	<i>Lambs per ewe</i>
1209–1224	10	5146	4873	0.947
1225–1249	12	7966	7390	0.928
1250–1274	15	7378	6894	0.934
1275–1299	17	5602	5184	0.925
1300–1324	20	10,003	8411	0.841
1325–1349	22	8080	7127	0.882
1209–1349	96	44,175	39,879	0.903

Source: HRO, 11M59/B1/1–101.

III

Thornton has argued that an analysis of livestock fertility and mortality rates may offer a useful measure of the performance of medieval demesne managers and their techniques of pastoral husbandry.³⁰ Table 2 reveals that the fertility of Crawley's ewes was generally high throughout the period 1209–1349, although there appears to have been a slight downturn after 1300. Similar lambing rates were experienced on the bishop's manor of Rimpton in the thirteenth century and also by seventeenth-century farmers.³¹ These figures are based on the assumption that each ewe bore only one lamb a year.³² The number of ewes able to breed is assumed to be that recorded at the beginning of the year of account minus those which were sold or died before lambing. Those ewes added to the flock during the year are assumed not to lamb. Indeed, the accounts seem to record any instances of lambing by gimmers, of which there were three in 1208–9.³³ The number of breeding ewes always agrees with the number of new-born lambs recorded plus those ewes said to have been sterile or which aborted. The accuracy of these final figures depended to some extent on the honesty of the reeves and the vigilance of the auditors who examined their accounts. The mortality of lambs in their first year was more variable, with the best results being achieved at the very beginning and end of the period under discussion (Table 3). These figures are somewhat poorer than those achieved at Rimpton, although still not unimpressive.³⁴ Again, it is assumed that reeves were being honest in the number of deaths they recorded.

IV

Were these fluctuating rates of sheep fertility and mortality at Crawley influenced by the provision of sires, housing, feeding, medicaments and the labour supply on the part of demesne managers? Throughout the thirteenth century Crawley had no manorial rams, suggesting that

³⁰ Thornton, 'Efficiency in medieval livestock farming', p. 28.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 45.

³² R. Trow-Smith, *A history of British livestock*

husbandry to 1700 (1957), p. 151.

³³ Gras, *English village*, p. 191.

³⁴ Thornton, 'Efficiency in medieval livestock farming', pp. 36, 46.

TABLE 3. Mortality of lambs in first year at Crawley, 1208–1349

<i>Period</i>	<i>Relevant accounts surviving</i>	<i>Total lambs</i>	<i>Deaths</i>	<i>Survival rate (%)</i>
1209–1224	10	5728	1198	79.1
1225–1249	12	7516	3188	57.6
1250–1274	15	7245	3235	55.4
1275–1299	17	5340	2044	61.7
1300–1324	21	9409	2576	72.6
1325–1349	22	8962	1916	78.6
1209–1349	97	44,200	14,157	68.0

Source: Gras, *English village*, pp. 410–13.

the sheep flock had to rely upon communal sires or those brought in from outside.³⁵ Apart from the occasional year in the 1240s and 1290s, the manorial livestock account did not record any rams until 1305–6, at the beginning of the episcopate of Henry Woodlock (1305–16).³⁶ Some mention, however, was made of rams in the pipe rolls. Thus, in 1218–19 five rams were sent to Crawley as a gift from the abbess of Wherwell. In 1220–1 40 rams were sent from the bishop's manor of Fareham.³⁷ This last may provide some evidence of selection of stock for breeding. In general it is not clear from where Crawley's rams were sourced until the introduction of a manorial flock in the early fourteenth century. Few rams were purchased from outside the manor after 1305–6, the supply of rams depending largely on the addition of young males from the stock, and it is noticeable that the fertility of Crawley's ewes begins to fall at much the same time. Whether there is a link between these two occurrences is unclear. The opportunities of selecting stock for breeding may thus have been limited, adversely affecting the health of the flock.

It is possible that the demesne managers were aware of this problem. Certainly, in the mid-1320s, at the beginning of John Stratford's episcopate, the whole of Crawley's sheep flock was sent to the nearby manor of Twyford, to be replaced by sheep from Merdon, Twyford, and other bishopric manors.³⁸ This movement of animals between manors was by no means unique, although this case was exceptional in that the entire flock was involved. No explanation is given in the accounts, but the search for new breeding stock may provide a reason. The proportion of rams to ewes varied considerably (Table 4), but was generally quite high.³⁹ During the 1310s there was one ram for about every 22 ewes. This proportion fell to one ram for about every 41 ewes during the 1330s. There was little difference in the fertility of the ewes between these two periods, the 1330s showing in fact a slight improvement over the period 1310–19. Nor does the rise in the proportion of rams to ewes in the 1340s seem to have affected fertility. In short, there is little unequivocal evidence from Crawley to suggest that the provision of sires radically

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³⁶ Gras, *English village*, p. 416.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 41–2, where 'Wherwell' is mistaken for 'Harwell'.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 400, 406, 416.

³⁹ Trow-Smith, *History of British livestock husbandry*, p. 150; Thornton, 'Efficiency in medieval livestock farming', p. 37.

TABLE 4. Number of rams at Crawley, 1305–1349

<i>Period</i>	<i>Total rams</i>	<i>Total ewes</i>	<i>Ratio of rams to ewes</i>	<i>Fertility of ewes</i>
1306–1309	47	2486	1:52.9	0.85
1310–1319	236	5268	1:22.3	0.84
1320–1329	79	2314	1:29.3	0.90
1330–1339	88	3643	1:41.4	0.88
1340–1349	106	2944	1:27.8	0.87
1306–1349	556	16,655	1:30.0	0.87

Source: Gras, *English village*, pp. 406–7, 416–17.

Note: The figures refer to the number of sheep at the end of the year of account. Only those years for which figures survive for both rams and ewes have been included.

affected the fertility of the ewes there during the early fourteenth century. They may instead have been introduced for some other quality, such as the nature of their fleece. For instance, this was the most likely reason for the introduction of Lincoln or Lindsey rams on some Winchester manors in the early thirteenth century.⁴⁰

V

Sheepcotes are mentioned in the accounts for Crawley from 1208–9 onwards. In this year only one sheepcote was recorded, around which a ditch was dug measuring 60 perches in length (just over 300m assuming a standard perch of 16½ feet) and a fence or hedge constructed.⁴¹ The accounts for Crawley show that in the second half of the thirteenth century separate sheepcotes were built for wethers, ewes and hogs. However, it is not clear whether this practice was already in operation at the beginning of the thirteenth century because the early pipe rolls do not identify individual sheepcotes by their function. By 1219–20, though, at least two sheepcotes were being used at Crawley, for 2s. 4d. was spent repairing their roofs. In the following year these two sheepcotes were again roofed and in addition £1 4s. 4d. was spent rebuilding a sheepcote on the orders of the estate's steward. In 1224–5 one of the sheepcotes was enlarged at a cost of 7s. 3d., reflecting the peak in the number of sheep kept at Crawley at this time. Similar work was carried out in 1247–8 at a time when the number of sheep was rising during the episcopate of William Raleigh, and in 1257–8 when the size of the flock peaked under Aymer de Valence.⁴² In 1264–5 three sheepcotes were mentioned for the first time, just when the size of the flock at Crawley was declining under John Gervais. If this was an innovation of this period, it is perhaps more likely to have been introduced at the end of Aymer de Valence's episcopate, for which the pipe rolls do not survive. The identification of the different sheepcotes according to the type of sheep they accommodated began in 1268–9 when the sills of the wether-house were repaired.

The amount of money spent on sheepcotes averaged about 5s. a year before 1300, although

⁴⁰ Stephenson, 'Productivity of medieval sheep', pp. 35–6.

⁴¹ Gras, *English village*, p. 190.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 225.

TABLE 5. Amount spent on sheepcotes, hay and medicaments at Crawley, 1208–1349

<i>Period</i>	<i>Average amount spent on sheepcotes (d.)</i>	<i>Average amount spent on hay (d.)</i>	<i>Average amount spent on medicaments (d.)</i>
1209–1224	73.9	52.4	2.7
1225–1249	47.8	139.5	6.2
1250–1274	55.3	212.1	0.7
1275–1299	66.4	253.1	319.5
1300–1324	165.1	837.7	1412.0
1325–1349	113.3	614.6	284.1
1209–1349	96.2	422.3	434.3

Source: HRO, 11M59/B1/1–101.

there was considerable variation within this period (Table 5). During John Gervais's episcopate, for instance, expenditure averaged just 2s. a year, while under Nicholas of Ely it was closer to the 5s. average, reflecting the movements in the size of the flock. Under Henry Woodlock (1305–16) annual expenditure rose to an average of just short of a pound (238*d.*) again reflecting a growth in the size of the flock. The scale of the investment was so great at this time because large sums were spent on enlarging the ewe-house by eight pairs of crucks in 1307–8 and also because a ditch was constructed and a hedge planted around the three sheepcotes.⁴³ Although ditches had been dug around individual sheepcotes from the time of the earliest pipe roll in 1208–9, this new ditch appears to have been an innovation because it surrounded all three sheepcotes. The evidence for this is not entirely unambiguous, but the records of Henry Woodlock's expenditure seem to make a distinction between the ditches and hedges surrounding each individual sheepcote and this much larger enclosure called a barton. Thus, in 1305–6 62 perches (about 312m) of ditch were dug around the hogg-house and planted with a hedge, while in 1307–8 a ditch measuring 261 perches (over 1.3km) was constructed around the wether-house, ewe-house and hogg-house which was also hedged.⁴⁴ The purpose of these enclosures is not entirely clear. However, it may be worth pointing to the coincidence of the construction of the barton and the introduction of a manorial flock of rams. Was it to facilitate mating by penning the sheep in a restricted area? The barton certainly represented a substantial investment. Its construction cost Woodlock over £2 3s. in 1307–8, which was maintained in future years both by him and his successors.

The rise in the amount of money spent on sheepcotes in the early fourteenth century may have contributed to the improvement in the mortality figures experienced at this time, although there is no clear evidence to suggest that the houses in which the sheep sheltered were any more effective in protecting the lambs on the eve of the Black Death than they were 150 years before. Were the sheepcotes maintained to a higher standard? The fourteenth-century accounts give much more detailed descriptions of the work involved in building and repairing the sheepcotes compared with the rather terse records of the thirteenth century. Thus, we learn more at this

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 243, 262.

later time than earlier about the bays, doors, groundsills, partitions, roofs and walls of the sheepcotes, and the materials used in their construction. However, there is little to suggest that any new techniques in building were introduced in the fourteenth century, or that particular improvements were made which had a direct impact on the mortality figures achieved at this time.

VI

Hay was bought to support the manor's flock over winter from 1210–11 onwards, although payments specifically for this purpose do not become regular until the 1220s.⁴⁵ The amount spent clearly depended on the price of hay at the time, the size of the flock, and the manor's own resources. The reeve made relatively few comments in the accounts about the price of hay, an exception occurring in 1273–4 when £1 13s. 6d. was spent 'and so much this year because the hay was much reduced last year'. A similar amount was spent the following year on account of the harsh weather. Likewise, in 1291–2 the great length of the winter was used to justify spending £1 8s. 3d. on hay. A change occurs in 1306–7 (once again in the episcopate of Henry Woodlock) when a quarter of vetches was given to the ewes in winter. This appears to have been an innovation and one that was continued for much of the first half of the fourteenth century. Indeed, the quantity of vetches given to the sheep rose during the early part of the century, to 2 quarters in 1308–9, 2½ quarters in 1309–10, 3 quarters 6 bushels in 1313–14, and 4 quarters 2 bushels in 1314–15. Vetches were not given to the sheep in every year, but the practice became more regular as the century progressed.⁴⁶ After 1329–30 oats and beans too might be given to the ewes at lambing-time, as well as peas and vetches.

As with the money spent on sheepcotes, there appears to have been a significant increase in the expenditure on hay during the episcopate of Henry Woodlock (1305–16). This was at least partly because the demesne managers began to purchase hay not only for the current year but also for the following year. This was certainly a change of practice and one which cost very significant sums of money. In 1310–11, for example, £1 6s. 8d. was spent on hay bought for the winter and a further £5 15s. 3d. to support the sheep the following year. These two developments, of feeding the sheep with pulses and oats and purchasing large quantities of hay for fodder, may have contributed to the improved survival rate of lambs in the fourteenth century. Certainly demesne managers appear to have become aware of the value of feeding grain and pulses, both to the ewes and their young, at lambing-time, although in general hay was more nutritious.⁴⁷ In 1334–5 an additional 10 gallons of milk were also bought to feed the lambs prior to weaning.

VII

Very little money was spent on medicaments to treat the sheep of Crawley until the beginning of John of Pontoise's episcopate in 1282 (Table 5). This was after the onset of sheep scab, which Stephenson has identified as becoming particularly virulent from about 1275.⁴⁸ At the beginning

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 198, 326.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 255, 369–70.

⁴⁷ Trow-Smith, *History of British livestock husbandry*, p. 158; Thornton, 'Efficiency in medieval livestock

farming', p. 40; Stone, 'Productivity and management of sheep', pp. 8–9.

⁴⁸ Stephenson, 'Wool yields', p. 381.

of the thirteenth century, the treatment applied to sheep as recorded in the pipe rolls is not very specific. In 1211–12, for instance, 2½*d.* was spent on the treatment of sheep and a further 12*d.* was given to the man who administered the treatment. Remedies which may have had more ancient precedents were also tried during these years. In 1220–1 a lamb was given to St Frideswide by order of the steward in order to combat the murrain then prevailing. Similarly, in 1225–6 a ewe was given to St Mary Magdalene before lambing to try to stem the number of deaths occurring among the flock. Divine intervention may also have been the intended outcome of the 8*d.* paid to a certain friar to visit the sheep in 1231–2. The following year Friar William visited the sheep, as he did again in 1235–6 and 1236–7, the last time such a practice was adopted on Crawley manor.⁴⁹

It is not until 1282–3 that the pipe rolls begin to record in detail the types of treatment used on the flock. In this year pigs' fat, ointment, copperas and mercury were purchased, almost certainly in an attempt to combat scab. In the following year fat, copperas, verdigris, mercury and butter were tried. Similar combinations of substances were bought for the remainder of the thirteenth century, with the exception of butter, and it is probable that the demesne managers had a fairly good idea of what was required without the need to test things by trial and error. If there was any innovation in the treatment of sheep it came during the episcopate of Henry Woodlock. Not only did Woodlock buy the traditional medicaments in very large quantities, but he also began to buy tar with which to coat the sheep. This became the standard treatment for scab into modern times.⁵⁰ Tar did not immediately replace the large quantities of grease, copperas and mercury which continued to be bought, but by the mid-1320s increasing quantities of tar were beginning to be purchased.

The medicaments applied to the flock at Crawley may have served to ease the symptoms of scab and other outbreaks of disease. Sheep pox (*verola*), for example, was identified on the manor in 1245–6, 1251–2 and 1314–15. However, these treatments were a palliative rather than a cure and it may be doubted whether the improved survival rate of lambs in the fourteenth century was in a direct way the result of the increase in spending on medicaments made by Henry Woodlock and his successors. Nor is it certain that the tar, grease and other unguents purchased were solely in order to combat disease. Demesne managers may have become aware that fleeces rubbed with a combination of tar and grease softened the wool and improved its quality prior to sale.⁵¹

VIII

Discussions of agricultural productivity usually place great emphasis on the amount of labour employed. The high grain yields achieved on the bishop of Winchester's demesne at Rimpton and on many manors in East Anglia were at least partly the result of the intensive use of manpower in ploughing, weeding, marling and other tasks involved in arable cultivation.⁵² Did the amount of labour devoted to sheep farming make a difference to the well-being of the flock,

⁴⁹ Gras, *English village*, pp. 203, 209.

⁵⁰ Trow-Smith, *History of British livestock husbandry*, p. 156.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 168–9.

⁵² Thornton, 'Determinants of land productivity',

pp. 204–9; B. M. S. Campbell, 'Land, labour, livestock, and productivity trends in English seignorial agriculture, 1208–1450', in Campbell and Overton (eds), *Land, labour and livestock*, pp. 144–82.

or was this branch of husbandry relatively unaffected by the intensification of labour inputs?⁵³ At the beginning of the thirteenth century two full-time shepherds were employed at Crawley, who each received a cancellation of their rent in return for service. A keeper of lambs was also employed for at least part of the year.⁵⁴ The number of full-time shepherds was increased to three in 1215–16, rising to four in 1223–4 and remaining at that figure for the remainder of the episcopate of Peter des Roches, during which time the size of the flock reached its peak.

William Raleigh (1242–50) and Aymer de Valence (1250–60) generally employed three full-time shepherds, while between 1262–3 and 1287–8 two shepherds were employed for the whole year and a keeper of lambs for half a year. Thereafter the employment of shepherds begins to become more flexible. In 1288–9, the two shepherds who received a cancellation of their rent, and who were responsible for the ewes and wethers, were joined by a stipendiary keeper of hogs and lambs. An additional keeper of ewes followed in 1290–1, who was given an allowance of grain. These were both full-time positions, but were discontinued in the mid-1290s. Under Henry Woodlock, the two service *famuli* remained in post, but there was much more variation in the number of stipendiaries employed and the length of their service during the year. The keeper of hogs and lambs was usually paid for a whole year, but was joined by an assortment of assistants at lambing-time or for a certain number of weeks. For example, in 1310–11, the shepherd of ewes received one assistant at lambing-time, while another assistant helped to grease the ewes and hogs for eight weeks during the winter. The following year this period was reduced to six weeks, although an additional keeper of sick wethers (kebbs) was employed for eight weeks. The number of assistants and the length of time they served tended to change according to need, so that under Woodlock and his immediate successor there could be anything between three and nine people working with the sheep.

This change in policy perhaps indicates the willingness of the administration to take advantage of the abundant labour and depressed wages prevalent at this time in order to improve output.⁵⁵ There may well have been an assumption among demesne managers that there were gains to be had by employing assistants at various points during the year for relatively short periods, for which the only payment was a few bushels of grain. This practice had been tried before Woodlock became bishop but was used much more regularly by him and his successors. The effectiveness of this additional labour is difficult to measure, but was presumably regarded as valuable because these assistants continued to be employed even as the size of the manor's flock declined in the decades immediately prior to the Black Death. Most of the assistants either helped out at lambing-time or looked after the sick animals separated from the rest of the flock. The improved survival rate of lambs in the fourteenth century may, therefore, have owed something to the increased supply of labour devoted to the flock.

IX

A clear pattern of increased expenditure and innovation has emerged from this discussion of the management of Crawley's sheep flock between 1208 and 1349. In terms of the provision of sires,

⁵³ Campbell, *English seigniorial agriculture*, p. 156.

⁵⁴ Gras, *English village*, pp. 188, 191.

⁵⁵ Thornton, 'Efficiency in medieval livestock farming', p. 41.

sheepcotes, feed, medicaments and labour, the episcopate of Henry Woodlock (1305–16) appears to mark a turning-point. Not only does the size of the flock at Crawley reach its early fourteenth-century peak under Woodlock but expenditure on sheep farming also rises considerably. The manor begins to keep a permanent flock of rams for the first time, a new barton appears to be constructed around the sheepcotes, vetches and other pulses are added to the feed, tar is used for the first time to treat scab, and the shepherds receive additional help at lambing-time. All this suggests that Woodlock had some intelligent demesne managers looking after the flock at Crawley and perhaps too on the other manors of the estate. But what were they hoping to achieve by introducing these changes?

If the goal was an improvement in the fertility of the manor's ewes, then the administration must be considered to have failed. The figures suggest a decline in fertility in the first quarter of the fourteenth century. By contrast, the survival rate of lambs improved during the same period, although not to the extent of matching the figures achieved under Peter des Roches at the beginning of the thirteenth century. It is possible, however, that under Woodlock the managers at Crawley were not unduly concerned with the health or reproductive capacity of the manor's flock. They may have been much more interested in the end products of sheep farming, particularly wool. The price of wool peaked in the early fourteenth century,⁵⁶ and it might be expected that the bishop of Winchester, with a flock of around 20,000 sheep, would seek to take advantage of this trend by improving the size and quality of the fleeces produced on his estate. But how might such an improvement be effected?

All of the changes discussed in this paper, in terms of sires, housing, feeding, medicaments and labour, were potentially as likely to enhance the yield of wool as to improve the general health of the flock.⁵⁷ Certainly medieval sheepfarmers were aware that the quality of the fleece was affected by breeding and that 'a ram with good wool should run with the ewes'.⁵⁸ Similarly, well-maintained housing and an abundance of food was likely not only to impact on rates of fertility and mortality but also on the wool produced by the sheep.⁵⁹ It has been suggested already that the application of ointments to the fleece improved its texture, and in the fourteenth century assistants to the shepherds were specifically employed to grease the sheep during the winter months. This was not only intended to protect the flock from lice and scab but was also believed to insulate the sheep from the cold weather.⁶⁰ In addition, men were employed to look after those animals separated from the rest of the flock, in an attempt both to prevent the spread of disease and to draft out the old and weak whose wool was not of the standard required. In this way the demesne managers helped to ensure that average fleece weights rose on the Winchester estate in the early fourteenth century.⁶¹

Fleece weights at Crawley rose from an average of 1.47 lb in the period 1275–99 to 1.60 lb during the years 1300–24.⁶² Stephenson argued that exogenous factors, in particular disease and climate, were primarily responsible for the wool yields achieved by sheepfarmers in the Middle

⁵⁶ Farmer, 'Prices and wages', pp. 754, 756–7; Campbell, *English seigniorial agriculture*, p. 158.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 156.

⁵⁸ Trow-Smith, *History of British livestock husbandry*, p. 160.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 161; Stone, 'Productivity and management

of sheep', pp. 7–12.

⁶⁰ Trow-Smith, *History of British livestock husbandry*, p. 169; Stephenson, 'Productivity of medieval sheep', p. 45.

⁶¹ Stephenson, 'Wool yields', p. 377.

⁶² Gras, *English village*, pp. 421–2.

TABLE 6. Amount spent on hay and average fleece weights at Crawley, 1304–15

<i>Year</i>	<i>Average amount spent on hay per sheep (d.)</i>	<i>Annual average fleece weight (in lb)</i>
1304–5	0.526	0.859
1305–6	1.324	1.180
1306–7	0.626	1.231
1307–8	0.835	1.382
1308–9	0.446	1.689
1309–10	0.814	1.808
1310–11	1.422	1.649
1311–12	0.885	1.736
1312–13	1.163	1.648
1313–14	1.910	1.559
1314–15	1.515	1.556

Source: HRO, 11M59/B1/60–70.

Ages. Thornton too expressed scepticism that late medieval farmers had the technical ability to improve yields of wool.⁶³ In his reevaluation of post-Black Death sheep farming, however, Stone has emphasized the importance of decisions taken by demesne officials for the productivity of the flock. In particular, he stressed the vital role played by fodder.⁶⁴ Can the increased expenditure at Crawley on fodder be shown to have affected yields of wool? An analysis of fleece weights at the beginning of the fourteenth century suggests that the greater provision of hay during Henry Woodlock's episcopate may well have been one of the factors contributing to the improvement in wool yields experienced at this time, although part of the hay bought in one year was often reserved for use in the next (Table 6). Moreover, the quality of the fleeces was probably the main concern of the estate's steward, who had recently resumed his former responsibility for collecting and arranging the sale of the estate's wool centrally at Wolvesey Palace.⁶⁵

Many of the policies implemented at Crawley may have reflected the priorities of the central administration and were undoubtedly sanctioned at the highest level. Thus, in 1309–10 the steward and bailiff intervened on the manor to ensure that assistants were employed to look after the ewes during a particularly high incidence of sickness. Similarly, a payment of 3*d.* to the shepherd of ewes in 1341–2 was made by order of the steward. Reeves and shepherds may have had responsibility for the day-to-day management of the flock, and may have become skilled and knowledgeable workers, but it is likely that they were subject to quite close supervision by the central administration.⁶⁶ This was not, in itself, a change of policy introduced in the fourteenth century. The steward can be found issuing orders as early as 1220–1, to rebuild

⁶³ Stephenson, 'Wool yields', pp. 378, 381; Thornton, 'Efficiency in medieval livestock farming', pp. 26–8.

⁶⁴ Stone, 'Productivity and management of sheep', pp. 7–12.

⁶⁵ Gras, *English village*, pp. 421–2; Farmer, 'Marketing the produce', p. 397.

⁶⁶ Thornton, 'Efficiency in medieval livestock farming', pp. 41–2.

a sheepcote, to employ an extra shepherd and to offer a lamb to St Frideswide. The bailiff too almost certainly kept a close check on the shepherds' activities, one of whom was punished for his poor custodianship in 1268–9.

Unlike at Rimpton, there was no general improvement in the fertility and mortality rates of the sheep flock at Crawley. Instead, the best results were achieved in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, during the episcopate of Peter des Roches. It is particularly difficult to account for the overall decline in fertility. For example, it does not appear to reflect the more intensive milking of the ewes in the fourteenth century, a practice which was understood by contemporaries to affect adversely the breeding potential of the flock.⁶⁷ Indeed, the ewes were milked for slightly longer in 1208–9 (5 April to 27 September) than they were in 1307–8 (11 April to 29 September).⁶⁸ Milk production was of the utmost importance to the bishop of Winchester in the early thirteenth century. Indeed, Biddick has calculated that, under des Roches, several of the bishop's demesnes produced more cheese per cultivated acre than wool, and that dairy income per ewe varied between 66 and 100 per cent of the wool income per ewe and wether of the sheep flock.⁶⁹ At this time most of the Winchester cheese was made from the milk of sheep, not cows. In the early fourteenth century, by contrast, the prevalence of scab and other diseases ensured that cows' milk became a much more important component of cheese production on the episcopal estate, although apparently not to any noticeable degree at Crawley.⁷⁰

As a result of this development in cheese-making, the emphasis of sheep farming on the Winchester estate as a whole may have shifted more towards wool production, the needs of which demanded more wethers rather than ewes. Even at Crawley, where dairy production remained important, the proportion of wethers increased in the second half of the period under discussion, from an average of 1.63 ewes per wether during the years 1209–74 to 1.27 ewes per wether between 1275 and 1349. Wethers carried heavier fleeces than other sheep and were thus more suitable for manors geared to the wool market than those concerned with dairy production.⁷¹ More attention also seems to have been paid to the culling and separation of weak and sick sheep from the rest of the flock. For example, in 1312–13 a shepherd was employed for 16 weeks to look after those wethers and ewes described as kebbs. While it is unclear whether this policy aimed to reduce the spread of disease or to improve the breeding stock, it may well have resulted in the selection of sheep according to the quality of their wool. One of the signs of sheep regarded as weak (*debilis*), such as the wethers and hoggs separated from their betters in 1346–7, is likely to have been a relatively poor fleece.⁷²

X

This paper began by suggesting that innovation and technological change in farming practices, albeit on a small scale, can be detected in England during the thirteenth and fourteenth

⁶⁷ Stone, 'Productivity and management of sheep', pp. 14–16.

⁶⁸ Gras, *English village*, pp. 191, 195, 267.

⁶⁹ Biddick, 'Agrarian productivity', p. 116; Campbell, *English seigniorial agriculture*, p. 154.

⁷⁰ Farmer, 'Marketing the produce', pp. 401–2;

Farmer, 'Prices and wages', p. 758.

⁷¹ J. P. Bischoff, '“I cannot do't without counters”: fleece weights and sheep breeds in late thirteenth and early fourteenth century England', *Agricultural Hist.* 57 (1983), pp. 148–9.

⁷² Stephenson, 'Productivity of medieval sheep', p. 47.

centuries, a period which has previously been characterized as one of inertia.⁷³ Evidence has been presented, from the bishop of Winchester's Hampshire manor of Crawley, which reveals that a number of policy changes were instituted, especially in the early fourteenth century, in the management of the manorial sheep flock. In particular, new practices were adopted relating to the provision of sires, housing, feeding, medicaments and the labour supply. Elsewhere on the episcopal estate, similar developments have been used to explain an improvement in rates of fertility and mortality of the herds and flocks of demesne livestock.⁷⁴ At Crawley, by contrast, no such clear connection can be discerned between the principal examples of innovation and the fluctuating rates of fertility of the manor's ewes and the mortality of lambs in their first year.

However, all of the changes introduced at Crawley in the early fourteenth century can be explained in terms of their likely beneficial impact on fleece weights, and it was at this time that yields of wool peaked on the Winchester estate. Previous studies have suggested that exogenous factors, in particular disease and climate, were primarily responsible for the wool yields achieved by sheepfarmers in the Middle Ages.⁷⁵ This paper supports the view that conscious decisions taken by manorial officials had an important effect upon the productivity of sheep farming.

⁷³ Postan, *Medieval economy and society*, p. 49.

⁷⁴ Thornton, 'Efficiency in medieval livestock farm-

ing', p. 43.

⁷⁵ Stephenson, 'Wool yields', pp. 378, 381.

The origins of water meadows in England^{*}

by Hadrian Cook, Kathy Stearne and Tom Williamson

Abstract

It is usually assumed that the 'floating' or artificial irrigation of water meadows was an innovation of the early modern period. Indeed, many authorities still attribute the technique to the late sixteenth-century improver Rowland Vaughan. There is, however, good evidence that irrigation was already understood and practised on at least a limited scale by the start of the sixteenth century. It is probable that early irrigation systems normally took the form of catchworks: the key development of the post-medieval centuries was the creation of more sophisticated bedwork systems, which allowed the widespread adoption of floating on the chalklands of southern England.

The artificial irrigation or 'floating' of water meadows was a major feature of post-medieval agriculture in many parts of England. In its fully-developed form, floating involved the inundation, during the winter months, of low-lying meadows so that a thin layer (ideally around an inch) of moving water passed through the lower stems of the grass sward. This encouraged the early growth of the grass in the spring, thus providing an early 'bite' for livestock. Watering usually began before Christmas and continued until March. Sheep, more rarely cattle, were then put on the meadows and remained there until May, when they were removed to other pastures. The meadows were then irrigated again, so that a large hay crop could be taken in June. In some cases, a further period of irrigation allowed a second or even third hay crop to be taken in late summer. Together, these benefits ensured that larger numbers of livestock could be kept through the winter months, and this in turn meant that more manure was available to fertilise the arable land on which the flocks were folded by night: water meadows were, for the most part, associated with primarily arable, 'sheep-corn' husbandry systems, especially in the Wessex chalklands.¹

Modern experiments suggest that irrigation water raises the temperature of the soil above 5°C, the point at which germination and growth commences, while oxygenation and protection from frost damage are also significant benefits. The effects of floating on summer hay production are more straightforward: irrigation simply stimulates grass growth by compensating for any soil water deficit. Other possible benefits to the quality of meadows include the control of

^{*} The authors would like to thank Dr Joe Bettey, Dr Glyn Coppack, Dr Roger Cutting, Prof. C. Hugh Lawrence, and Dr Pauline Matarasso for advice and information.

¹ E. Kerridge, *The Agricultural Revolution* (1967), pp. 251–67; *id.*, 'The floating of the Wiltshire water meadows', *Wilts. Arch. and Nat. Hist. Mag.* 55 (1953), pp. 105–18; *id.*, 'The sheepfold in Wiltshire and the floating of the water-meadows', *EcHR* 6 (1954), pp. 282–9; J. H. Bettey, 'The development of water meadows in Dorset during the seventeenth century', *AgHR* 25 (1977), pp. 37–43; G. G. S. Bowie, 'Water meadows in Wessex: a re-evaluation for the period 1640–1850', *AgHR* 35 (1987), pp. 151–8.

certain unpalatable species within the grass sward, and the dressing of the sward with nutrients, from solutes and from particles held in suspension – hence the preference expressed by various early writers for ‘dirty’ water in irrigation schemes.²

There were two main forms of floating. *Catchwork* systems involved the construction of leats, fed from a stream or from springs, which carried water sub-parallel to the contours: these then filled and overflowed. The water flowed down the slope, and was redistributed by arrangements of parallel ‘gutters’. Such systems were suitable for areas where there were abundant springs and/or hilly terrain with steep, narrow valleys. *Bedwork* systems in contrast were suited to more muted terrain, and in particular to wide alluvial valleys. Water was taken along a leat, leading off the stream or river higher up its course, and conducted to systems of parallel channels running along the tops of ridges (‘beds’ or ‘panes’), superficially resembling the ridge and furrow of former arable fields. The water flowed down the sides of the ridges and into drains, which returned the water – either directly or indirectly, via further ‘bedworks’ – to the river. Bedwork systems were more expensive to construct than catchworks but they were the only way to irrigate meadows where valleys had relatively wide, level floors: the majority of meadows in the chalklands of Wessex, the heartland of the practice, were of this type. Without ridges it would not have been possible to keep the water moving steadily across the surface, as the technique required: moving water dissolves oxygen but stagnant water creates anaerobic conditions, inimical to grass growth.³

I

According to some authorities, the technique of floating may have developed from the more primitive technique of ‘floating upwards’ – that is, simply flooding a meadow by controlling water at the point of exit.⁴ This practice continued sporadically into the eighteenth century in the Vale of Pewsey and certain Cotswold valleys. Marshall in 1796 thus condemned the ‘antient method’ by which water was simply ponded back behind some barrier, believing (correctly) that such a practice was potentially toxic to grass.⁵ Either way, most historians believe that true irrigation – with a moving film of water – was first developed in the post-medieval period, some attributing it specifically to the Herefordshire landowner Rowland Vaughan, whose book *Most approved and long experienced water workes* was published in 1610. Eric Kerridge, for example, while acknowledging that ‘previous efforts from about 1560 had made some progress’, firmly stated that ‘real floating was invented by Rowland Vaughan ... in or about 1589’.⁶ Others place less emphasis on Vaughan, but nevertheless stress that the practice is first recorded in the valleys of Wessex in the early seventeenth century, where it was employed largely in the form of valley-floor bedworks.⁷ The spread of water meadows continued in the Wessex chalklands

² R. Cutting and I. Cummings, ‘Water meadows: their form, operation and plant ecology’, in H. Cook and T. Williamson (eds) *Water Management in the English landscape: field, marsh and meadow* (1999), pp. 157–178.

³ R. Cutting, H. Cook and I. Cummings, ‘Hydrologic conditions, oxygenation, temperatures and sediment relations of bedwork water meadows’, *Hydrological*

Processes (in press).

⁴ Kerridge, *Agricultural Revolution*, p. 254.

⁵ W. Marshall, *The rural economy of the Midland Counties* (1796), pp. 277–8.

⁶ E. Kerridge, *The Farmers of Old England* (1973), p. 110.

⁷ Bettey, ‘Water meadows in Dorset’, p. 37; S. Wade Martins, *Fields and Farms* (1995), pp. 67–8.

through the seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries, and from the late seventeenth century the practice spread into the neighbouring areas of Devon, Gloucestershire and Somerset. Here – because of the more hilly topography and the abundance of relatively narrow, steep-sided valleys – ‘catchworks’ were the most usual method of irrigation.⁸ Outside these southern and western heartlands floating was only ever sparingly adopted, and in some cases at least it was used primarily, or even solely, as a way of enhancing the summer hay crop, rather than for producing an early ‘bite’. In south-east England and East Anglia the construction of meadows, usually of bedwork form, peaked in the decades around 1800, when farming was particularly profitable; while in the early and middle nineteenth century catchworks were widely adopted in many upland areas of Britain, often as part of flamboyant schemes of ‘improvement’.⁹

Although most modern authorities seem happy to ascribe the invention of ‘true’ floating to the post-medieval period, and often to Rowland Vaughan, earlier generations were less certain. Marshall in 1796 thus speculated on the origins of the practice in the west of England and asserted that these ‘cannot be reached by memory’.¹⁰ Vaughan himself nowhere claims that the practice of irrigation was actually invented by him, and the real character of his method is debated. His text is unclear on the precise techniques involved, and indeed on practical matters generally, the author being more interested in advocating the general *principle* of grassland irrigation. Eric Kerridge asserted that the system created by Vaughan in the Golden Valley, which had been perfected by 1589, was of the catchwork variety but the remains of that part of the system which still survive around Turnstone indicate something rather different.¹¹ They suggest that his method involved running water from a ‘Trench Royal’ (the main carrier, fed from the river Dore) into a series of basins separated by low ridges. The flow of water through these was controlled by placing turfs in notches, and the water was caused to pause ‘long enough to feed the ground’.¹² Although Vaughan emphasised the importance of keeping the water moving, impounding it in this way (with its attendant risks) was clearly more akin to ‘floating upwards’ than it was to either catchworks or bedworks.

More importantly, it is evident that irrigation – apparently in its ‘normal’ forms – was being practised in the Wessex chalklands some years before the publication of Vaughan’s text in 1610. It is possible that this was due to the early spread of Vaughan’s ideas (in Wessex), before the publication of his book: Vaughan’s family had connections with the Herberts, Earls of Pembroke, who held many estates in the chalkland areas of Wiltshire. But there is no direct evidence that Vaughan’s ideas were transferred to Wessex in this way and the earliest generally agreed references to floating in the southern chalklands come not in fact from Pembroke manors but from Affpuddle in Dorset, where the manorial lord was the agricultural improver Sir Edward

⁸ J. H. Bettey, ‘The development of water meadows in the southern counties’, in Cook and Williamson (eds), *Water Management*, pp. 179–95; Kerridge, *Agricultural Revolution*, pp. 251–67.

⁹ S. Wade Martins and T. Williamson, ‘Inappropriate technology? The history of ‘floating’ in the north and east of England’, in Cook and Williamson (eds) *Water Management*, pp. 196–209; *id.*, ‘Floated water meadows in Norfolk: a misplaced innovation’, *AgHR* 42 (1994),

pp. 20–37.

¹⁰ W. Marshall, *The rural economy of the West of England* (1796), p. 206.

¹¹ Kerridge, *Agricultural Revolution*, p. 255; M. De-lorme, ‘A watery paradise: Rowland Vaughan and Herefordshire’s Golden Vale’, *History Today* 39 (July 1989), pp. 38–43.

¹² E. L. Wood (ed.) *Rowland Vaughan’s most approved and long-experienced waterworks ...* (1897), p. 83.

Lawrence. The manorial court book for 1605 refers to the construction of ditches and channels in the meadows beside the river Piddle, while in 1607 and 1608 there are references to disputes concerning the use of the water and its diversion from its old course. The court book entries for 1610 record the appointment of three men to oversee the watering of the meadows and the charges to be paid by the tenants benefiting from the operation.¹³

Yet by this time floating was perhaps already a technique familiar to some farmers in England. Folkingham in 1610 advocated the practice of running 'water participating of a slimie and muddy substance' from 'land floods and fatte rivers' across meadow land in the spring.¹⁴ But a much clearer description, and one more closely approximating to 'true' floating, was provided by John Fitzherbert in *The Boke of Surveying and Improvements*, published as early as 1523:

... yf there be any rynning water or lande flode that may be sette or brought to ronne ouer the medowes from the tyme that they be mowen vnto the begynning of May / and they will be moche bettr and it shall kille / drowne / and driue awaye the moldywarpes / and fyll vp the lowe places with sande & make the grounde euyn and good to mowe. All maner of waters be good / so that they stande nat styll vpon the grounde. But especially that water that cometh out of a towne from eury mannes mydding or donghyll is best / and will make the medowes moost rankest. And fro the begynning of May tyll ye medowes be mowen and the hay gotten in / the waters wolde be set by and ron another way.¹⁵

Fitzherbert appears to be describing an established, rather than an innovatory practice, and various references in local documents suggest that, by the start of the sixteenth century, some form of irrigation was common practice in certain districts of England. At Clent in Worcestershire, for example, in 1522 one Richard Sparry, a tenant of the abbot of Hales, was presented in the manorial court for building a dam in an area called Kings Meadow, which had led to the inundation of neighbouring land; he committed exactly the same offence in 1530. In both cases he was ordered to rectify matters, the court ruling that tenants could, by custom, divert water onto their own land for six days at a time between Pentecost (i.e., Whit Sunday, usually in May) and Michaelmas (29 September).¹⁶ As C. K. Currie has perceptively pointed out, this sounds remarkably like the later practice of meadow irrigation, albeit restricted to the improvement of the summer hay crop.¹⁷ Harry Thorpe noted in 1962 the evidence for a probable catchwork system constructed in the early sixteenth century near Wormleighton in Warwickshire as part of the agricultural improvements carried out by Sir John Spencer, who died in 1522. The catchwork was spring-fed, and formed part of a complex system of water management which included fishponds and ponds for watering livestock.¹⁸ We should also note that a number of field names which, by the later seventeenth century certainly, were used for irrigated meadows are recorded in documents predating the publication of Vaughan's text, such as *le Flote* at Kimbolton, Herefordshire, in 1610; and several names featuring the term 'floodgate' in Warwickshire, including *Fludgatemedow* (1490) and *le Floudyeat* (1544) although some of these may

¹³ Bettye, 'Development of water meadows', p. 180.

¹⁴ W. Folkingham, *Feudographica* (1610), p. 24.

¹⁵ J. Fitzherbert, *The boke of surveying and improvements* (1523), pp. 42–3.

¹⁶ J. Amphlett, *A short history of Clent* (1807), pp. 77–8.

¹⁷ C. K. Currie, 'Clent Hills, Worcestershire: an archaeological and historical survey', *Trans. Worcestershire Arch. Soc.*, third ser. 16 (1998), pp. 183–206.

¹⁸ H. Thorpe, 'The lord and the landscape', *Trans. Birmingham Arch. Soc.* 80 (1965), pp. 38–77.

have associations with mills or fishponds.¹⁹ The name 'Water Meadow' is itself frequently recorded in sixteenth-century documents. By the seventeenth century this term was usually used in the strict and correct sense, for a meadow intentionally irrigated with channels, sluices etc., rather than in the wider modern sense, of any area periodically overflowed by an adjacent watercourse without human assistance. When the term was used to name a specific piece of land – highlighting, as it were, something different or distinctive about it – it seems likely that it was being used in the narrow, technical sense.²⁰

II

There are thus good grounds for believing that the artificial irrigation of meadow land, with moving water at critical times of the year, was already a familiar practice in certain districts by the start of the sixteenth century, some time before Vaughan's Herefordshire experiments. But it may have a much longer history. Meadow irrigation was certainly known in medieval France. The 'Description of Clairvaux', written in the twelfth century by a monk of that abbey, includes an account of how water was extracted from the River Aube in order to supply the monastic complex and its fish ponds, and to irrigate both vegetable plots and grass – a typically complex example of monastic water management.²¹ An artificial channel carried half of the extracted water to the monastery, where sluice gates controlled the flow to a grain mill. After this the same water was used for the preparation of beverages, and was then conducted to the workshops and kitchens. Finally, according to the account, it 'carries the waste products away' (presumably flushing the reredorter latrines) before returning to the river.

But it is the other channel that is of particular interest in the present context:

Now that we have returned the stream to its bed, let us go back to those rills [or trenches] we left behind. They too are diverted from the river and meander placidly through the meadows, saturating the soil that it may germinate. And when, with the coming of the mild spring weather, the pregnant earth gives birth, they keep it watered too lest the springing grasses should wither for lack of moisture.²²

Irrigation also encouraged a bumper hay crop:

This meadow is refreshed by the floodwaters of the Aube, which runs though it, so that the grass, thanks to the moisture at its roots, can stand the summer heat. Its extent is great enough to tire the community for the space of twenty days when the sun has baked to hay its shorn grassy fleece. Nor is the haymaking left to the monks alone: alongside them a countless multitude of lay-brothers and voluntary and hired helpers gather the mown grass and comb the shorn ground with wide-toothed rakes.²³

No such clear documentary evidence has yet come to light in England, but given the close-knit nature of Cistercian houses, and the exchange of people and information between them, it would be surprising if something similar had not been attempted here. No claim is made here

¹⁹ J. Field, *A History of English Field Names* (1993), pp. 90–1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

²¹ P. Matarasso, *The Cistercian World: monastic*

writings of the twelfth century (1993), pp. 288–91.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 289–90.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

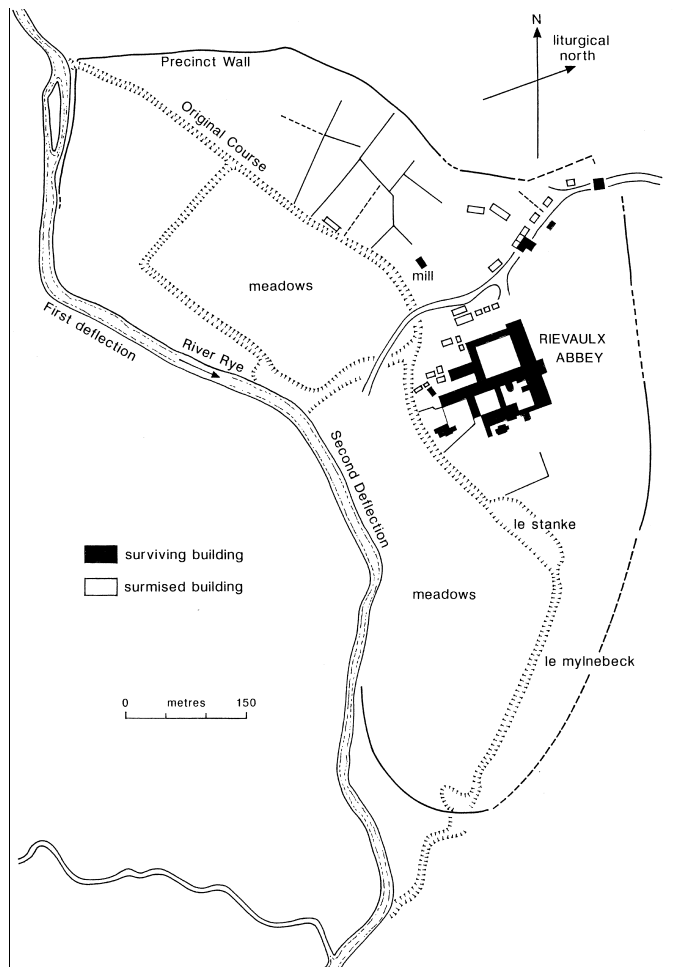


FIGURE 1. The precinct of Rievaulx Abbey in 1583, showing buildings, closes, meadows and river deflections. Source: adapted from Coppack, 'Some descriptions of Rievaulx Abbey'.

for the Cistercians as major agricultural innovators – and other monastic orders were noted for their schemes of integrated water management – but it is noteworthy that Marshall, speculating on the origins of floating in the west country, noted the juxtaposition of one major leat 'of winding direction and regular descent' with 'a hedge in appearance some centuries old' on a farm in west Devon formerly belonging to Buckland Abbey, a Cistercian house.²⁴ At Rievaulx in Yorkshire possible evidence of meadow irrigation exists on the ground. Some time before 1150 an agreement was reached with Byland Abbey (another Cistercian house) allowing the monks of Rievaulx to divert the river Rye to the west side of its valley leaving the original course as a mill leat (Figure 1).²⁵ By 1160 a second diversion had been effected, incorporating areas of land received from Byland and from Hugh de Malbis, a local benefactor, which added some 80 acres (32 hectares) of potential meadow land to the abbey precinct. Drains, still visible on

²⁴ Marshall, *Rural economy of the West of England*, p. 206.

²⁵ G. Coppack, 'Some Descriptions of Rievaulx Abbey in 1538–9: the disposition of a major Cistercian precinct

in the early sixteenth century', *J. British Archaeological Association* 139 (1990), p. 118; id., *Abbeys and Priories* (1990), p. 85.

the ground, returned water from the mill channels to the deflected channel of the river, and the arrangement certainly had the potential to operate as an irrigation system. A third deflection made at a subsequent date permitted control of the river as it left the precinct to the south.

The records of other monastic houses, especially in the north of England, suggest elements of water management consistent with meadow irrigation. At Bolton Priory in Yorkshire in 1311 payments were made for 'diverting the water of the Aire in the field of Kildwick'.²⁶ Particularly interesting are the 'water meadows' of Fountains Abbey in the same county, beside the rivers Wiske, Swale and Ouse, for these were partly destroyed by a flood in 1456–7, leading to a reduction in the tenants' rent. The fact that the meadows could be 'destroyed' clearly suggests that they consisted of something more than areas of low-lying grassland, and it is tempting to believe that a system of sluices and leats was washed away by the inundation.²⁷ Donkin found references to 'water meadows', perhaps referring to pasture that was improved by the use of water control structures, in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century records of other Cistercian properties in Yorkshire and elsewhere: at Beaulieu, Byland, Jervaulx, Warden, St Mary Graces, Combermere, Furness, Quarr, Holm Cultram, Stanley, Bruern, Rufford, Kingswood, Bordesley and Thame.²⁸ While it is possible that the term was being used in its late, loose sense, a measure of water control, perhaps involving controlled flooding, may be implied.

But such references do not only occur in connection with monastic houses. Fragments of evidence suggest that irrigation may have been a normal part of demesne and perhaps of peasant agriculture in certain districts of England by the fourteenth century. The field name *Le Flodgatededewe* is recorded as early as 1339 at Minshull Vernon in Cheshire. In his 1993 volume on field names John Field commented that this was 'much earlier than the recognised starting date for managed water-meadows, and may relate to a precursor of the more elaborate technique ...'.²⁹ More explicit are fourteenth-century references from the valley of the river Wey in Surrey, a major centre of floating in post-medieval times.³⁰ A list of the labour services due from the tenants of the abbot of Westminster, described in a custumal from Pyrford in Surrey, includes 'damming the water, to overflow the Lord's Meadow, ½d.; Mowing the meadows for three days, 3d.'. ³¹ Steward's accounts for Allerton Bywater in Yorkshire from 1420/1 similarly record the payment of wages to one man for 'making several weirs (*gurgites*) in the flood banks (*ripe acquae*)', while payments were also made for 'flooding and raising the ditch near the king's highway for safe-keeping of the king's meadow there'.³²

It is noteworthy that at Rievaulx the possible irrigation system was associated with a water mill, the mill leat itself acting, perhaps, as a main carrier in a catchwork system. In the 1590s Vaughan's attention was drawn to the potential of irrigation by the way in which water leaking from a leat leading to an overshot mill had enhanced the growth of grass.³³ The possible relationship between mills and early irrigation was noted in the 1960s by Atwood, who suggested

²⁶ S. A. Moorhouse, 'Water supply' in M. L. Faull and S. A. Moorhouse (eds), *West Yorkshire: an Archaeological Survey to AD 1500* (3 vols, 1981), III, pp. 697–8.

²⁷ R. A. Donkin, *The Cistercians: studies in the geography of medieval England and Wales* (1978), p. 120.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

²⁹ Field, *English Field Names*, p. 91.

³⁰ N. Bowles, *The Southern Wey: a guide* (1988), p. 8.

³¹ O. Manning and W. Bray, *The history and antiquities of the county of Surrey* (3 vols, 1804–14), I, p. 154.

³² Moorhouse, 'Water supply', pp. 697–8.

³³ Wood (ed.) Vaughan's *most approved ... water-works*, p. 83.

that the origins of floating lay in the juxtaposition of mill streams (taking water to mills at a high level) and mill tails (removing water at a lower level).³⁴ The early examples of this association which he quotes carry little conviction, but the possible cases presented above suggest that he may well have been thinking on the right lines. Of course, by their very nature many of the references cited are ambiguous in character and, in particular, might refer to 'floating upwards' rather than to irrigation in its fully-developed sense. Nevertheless, coupled with Fitzherbert's description of the technique as early as 1523, they strongly suggest that 'floating' was a medieval rather than post-medieval innovation.

III

It is thus probable that the principles of watermeadow irrigation were quite widely understood several centuries before the experiments of Rowland Vaughan in the 1590s. It is possible that observation of the growth of grass in the vicinity of overshot mills, whose elevated leats were prone to leakage, may have first stimulated experiments in irrigation; and that the earliest irrigation schemes were associated with mills and their leats. If irrigation was indeed practised in the middle ages it was probably always in restricted areas, especially those with narrow valleys and undulating terrain where 'catchworks' could be created with relative ease – the examples quoted above are generally in locations which appear to fit this description. The association of many of the possible examples of medieval meadow irrigation with monastic houses may simply reflect the fact that their activities are generally better-documented than those of lay estates. But the well-established interest of monasteries in water management schemes, and their expertise in hydraulic engineering, may suggest that meadow irrigation was a particular feature of monastic land management. It may be a coincidence, but an interesting one, that Vaughan's Golden Valley was an area in which the Cistercian abbey of Dore held very extensive estates prior to the Dissolution: well-developed systems of leats, associated with a mill but also with areas of meadow land, existed within the monastic precinct.³⁵

Either way, the widespread adoption of irrigation in the course of the seventeenth century was not, in all probability, the consequence of the arrival of an entirely new concept. What may have been new was the development of a particular technique which allowed its widespread adoption in areas in which it could bring the greatest economic benefits – that is, the sheep-corn, arable areas of the southern chalklands. Earlier instances of floating appear to have been of simple catchwork type: but the wide valleys of the main chalkland rivers could only be effectively floated through the construction of bedworks. The stimulus for this innovation did not come from any sudden realisation that floating increased grass production, but arose instead from particular economic circumstances: an expansion in the market, rising prices, and the development of large capitalised farms whose owners and tenants were keen to invest in a range of 'improvements'.³⁶

³⁴ G. Atwood, 'A study of the Wiltshire water meadows', *Wilts Arch. and Nat. Hist. Mag.* 58 (1964), pp. 403–13.

³⁵ R. Shoesmith and R. Richardson, *A definitive history of Dore Abbey* (1997), p. 132.

³⁶ This article is intended as a call for information, and

a description of 'work in progress', rather than as a definitive statement on the subject of the medieval origins of water meadows. The authors would welcome any further evidence, documentary or archaeological, for the early practice of meadow irrigation in Britain.

The development of water meadows on the Salisbury Avon, 1665–1690^{*}

by Joseph Bettey

Abstract

The development and rapid spread of water meadows through the chalkland valleys of Wessex was a major agricultural innovation of the seventeenth century. This article traces the history of a large-scale project for watering the meadows along the wide valley of the Avon south of Salisbury. The successful completion of this scheme, in spite of the difficulties encountered and the expense involved, is a tribute both to the tenacity of the manorial steward and to the value of the early grass and reliable crops of hay which watered meadows provided.

The advantages of watering meadows to produce early grass for the sheep flocks and abundant crops of hay were already well known in Dorset and south Wiltshire by the early decades of the seventeenth century. Successful schemes were implemented in the century along the Frome and Piddle in Dorset and along the Wylfe, Nadder, the upper Avon and the Kennet in Wiltshire.¹ This article adds to the existing literature by describing a remarkable project for creating some 250 acres of water meadows along a four-mile stretch of the river Avon at Downton, south of Salisbury, which was started in 1665 and finished by 1690.

This ambitious scheme was financed by the landowner, Sir Joseph Ashe, but was planned and executed by his steward, John Snow. Ashe (1618–86) was a member of a leading family of west-country clothiers. He had been educated in London and became a wealthy London merchant, dealing in cloth; he was a member of the Drapers' Company and of the East India Company. He lived at Twickenham (Middlesex) and was created a baronet by Charles II in 1660. From 1662 to 1681 he sat as one of the two MPs for the borough of Downton in Wiltshire.² In 1651 he acquired the large farm of New Court in Downton and in 1662 obtained a lease of the whole of the manor of Downton from the bishopric of Winchester.³ Thus Ashe secured

^{*} The author is grateful to Prof. Hoyle and the anonymous referees for their comments; also to Hadrian Cook, Kathy Stearne and Steven Hobbs for their assistance, and to Phillip Judge for producing the map.

¹ E. Kerridge, 'The floating of the Wiltshire water meadows', *Wiltshire Arch. and Nat. Hist. Mag.* 55 (1953), pp. 104–18; J. H. Bettey, 'The development of water meadows in Dorset during the seventeenth century', *AgHR* 25 (1977), pp. 37–43; id., 'Water meadows in the southern counties', in H. Cook and T. Williamson (eds), *Water management in the English landscape* (1999), pp. 179–95.

² J. Burke, *Extinct and dormant baronetcies* (sec. edn, 1844), p. 16; Nancy Steele, 'Sir Joseph Ashe: an advocate

of water meadows', *Hatcher Rev.* 13 (1982), pp. 125–32; B. D. Henning (ed.), *The history of Parliament: the House of Commons, 1660–90* (4 vols, 1983), I, pp. 556–7. For details of the parliamentary representation of Downton see VCH *Wiltshire*, V, pp. 156–63.

³ VCH *Wiltshire*, XI, p. 73; D. A. Crowley, 'The manor court of Downton in the eighteenth century', *Wiltshire Arch. and Nat. Hist. Mag.* 74–75 (1981), pp. 148–160. Ashe also bought the manor of Wawne and lands at Sherburn, Yorks., VCH *Yorkshire East Riding*, VII, pp. 183–4, 190.

control of most of the Avon valley from Alderbury to the Hampshire border south of Downton, including large farms at Witherington, Charlton, Standlynch and New Court, together with Loosehanger Park on the higher ground south-east of Downton. Ashe died in 1686, and the estate was left in the hands of his widow, Lady Mary Ashe, until his son, Sir James Ashe, succeeded in 1698. He retained the Downton estate until his death in 1714. Since the Ashe family never resided at Downton, all aspects of estate management were entrusted to the steward, John Snow. After John Snow's death in 1698, his son, Leonard, followed him as steward for Sir James Ashe.⁴

John Snow came from Winterbourne Stoke in Wiltshire, where he owned a house, paying tax for three hearths during the period 1676–89. He was described as 'yeoman' and was married with several children. In 1662 he was engaged by Sir Joseph Ashe to manage the newly-acquired estate at Downton, and moved with his wife and family into the Lodge at Loosehanger Park. In 1665 he was formally appointed as steward of the manor of Downton.⁵ The Lodge was apparently not ready for immediate occupation and in a letter to Snow of 16 April 1665 Sir Joseph Ashe wrote 'I long to heare that you are at the Lodge settled'. Snow's account book shows considerable work and expenditure on the house and garden at Loosehanger during 1664–5. John Snow was evidently a man of ability and determination. In addition to managing the estate, Snow undertook numerous other tasks, personal and political, for the Ashe family. He fostered good relations with the hundred and more electors of Downton, managed elections and entertained the voters. He carried the rental income to Twickenham, and supplied food-stuffs and livestock to the household there. Servants were engaged from Downton to work at Twickenham, and he even gave advice about a possible bridegroom for Lady Mary's god-daughter. When Sir Joseph Ashe established a free school at Downton in c. 1676, John Snow was involved in making the detailed arrangements. He made several visits to Sir Joseph's properties in Yorkshire to advise on estate management, drainage schemes, tenancies and farming matters. Snow was evidently trusted and highly regarded by his employer, although this did not prevent Sir Joseph from grumbling ceaselessly about the expenditure at Downton. It was due to Snow's enthusiasm, powers of negotiation and perseverance that the water-meadow project was successfully completed.⁶

For the Ashe family the purchase of New Court and the lease of Downton was highly profitable. An account of 1682 shows a rental income from New Court of £460 a year, and an income from the other Downton properties of £750. The annual rent paid to the bishop of Winchester was £150. In addition the lease gave Ashe control of one of the two parliamentary seats for the borough of Downton.

The Downton project (Figure 1) was on a much more expansive scale than any of the earlier projects to create water meadows. It involved the excavation of two new channels for the water, one starting from Alderbury, the other from Charlton; each was 24 feet wide. Weirs and hatches were built in order to divert part of the strong, fast-flowing river Avon along these 'Main Carriages'. From them numerous subsidiary channels took water to the various

⁴ Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office (hereafter WSRO.), 490/842; VCH *Wiltshire*, XI, pp. 24, 29, 41.

⁵ WSRO, 490/1151–3, 1190.

⁶ J. H. Bettey, 'The eyes and ears of the lord: seventeenth-

century manorial stewards in south Wiltshire', *Wiltshire Arch. and Nat. Hist. Mag.* 96 (2003), pp. 19–25. This includes details of the many other personal and political services which John Snow performed for the Ashe family.

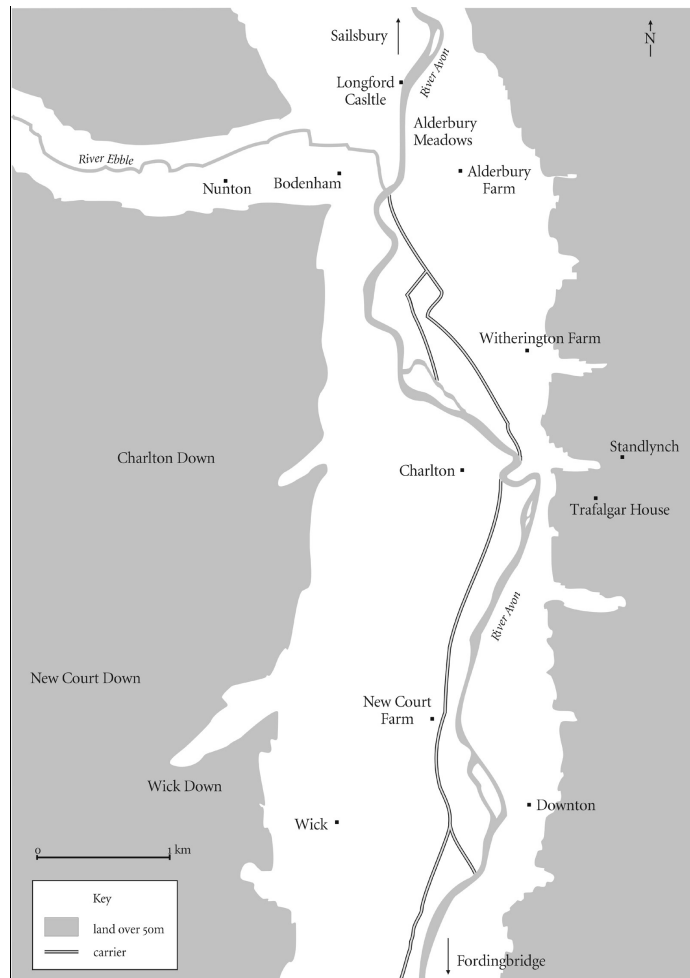


FIGURE 1. The location of Sir Joseph Ashe's water meadows.

meadows. The scheme involved careful surveying, major excavations, substantial hatches on the Avon built strong enough to withstand the current and to survive winter floods, and numerous smaller hatches on the feeder channels. The surface of each meadow had to be carefully prepared with ridges and drains, so that the surface could be covered with a thin sheet of moving water coming 'on at a trot and off at a gallop'.⁷ Many new bridges were needed and those on the river itself had to allow for the passages of barges on the proposed canal which, it was hoped, would give access from Salisbury to the coast at Christchurch. Bridges had also to be provided for the footpaths which linked farms and settlements on either side of the valley. Compensation had to be paid to neighbouring landowners, tenants and commoners through whose land the new channels passed or whose grazing rights were affected. Agreements had also to be made with millers and with those owning fishing rights. It was John Snow who undertook all these negotiations and who organized the large-scale works

⁷ B. J. Whitehead, 'The management of water meadows in the Frome valley, Dorset', *Dorset Nat. Hist. and Arch. Soc. Procs.* 89 (1967), pp. 257–81.

involved. It is a tribute to Snow's skill and patience that agreements were successfully concluded with so many differing interests.

The project started in 1665 with a series of agreements with neighbouring landowners over the digging of the Main Carriage from Alderbury. Eventually more than 40 contracts were made. The landowners included Thomas Jervoise of Britford, Lord Coleraine of Nunton and Bodenham, Sir Giles Eyres of Alderbury and several others. Numerous copyholders had to be compensated, together with those who John Snow described as 'the Earbidgers of Alderbury', that is those with rights to the herbage of Alderbury common meads. Each of the commoners agreed to be paid at the rate of £4 per acre or to have the right to take water from the Main Carriage for their own meadows. With others Sir Joseph Ashe agreed to lease the land required or to purchase it outright. Complex agreements had also to be made with Maurice Bockland who leased Standlynch and also served with Sir Joseph Ashe as member of parliament for the borough of Downton. Bockland undertook to share the cost of bringing water into the Standlynch meadows.⁸

During the early stages of the project, Sir Joseph Ashe took a close and enthusiastic interest, making numerous suggestions in his letters and giving careful instructions over details. As early as 1665 he urged John Snow to make a rapid agreement with the commoners at Charlton, telling him to 'sweeten it by making their grounds rich, and I wil oblige them one way or other to their enrichment'. Above all, he advised Snow to avoid any breach with the commoners since this would hold up the work;

be sure to keepe off a rupture, and if you see cause invyte the persons there to a dynner and be merry with them. Delay noe tyme but keepe the scent hott. Goe on as fast as you can, that we may put our affaires afoot.⁹

By 1671 some of the water meadows were already functioning and were producing early grass and plentiful hay. On 5 February 1671 Ashe wrote to compliment John Snow on the improvement to Witherington farm meads at Katherine Mead, and on the surplus hay which could be sold. 'This hard weather I hope wil bring you customers for our fodder, which now begins to be understood with you well enough'.¹⁰

In 1675 a second Main Carriage was begun in order to water the meadows beyond New Court. As the scheme progressed, however, problems arose and Ashe became more and more concerned about the rising costs. John Snow had originally estimated that the enterprise would cost £2,000, but in 1672 he wrote a memorandum explaining why 'the works come to near double the expenses at first proposed'. He explained that more hatches and more trunks or drainage channels were required than had been anticipated and that the 'Trunkes and all the hatches and stops proved very chargable by reason the ground was so boggy where they was put in and all the meads so soft'. Because of the soft ground horses could not be used to shift soil, bring gravel to assist drainage or carry clay to strengthen the banks of the main carriage and fill boggy places. Moreover, 'the fetching gravill so far and the materialls was very expensive and likewise the making the west maine carriage and the west maine draine'. Snow's explanation

⁸ WSRO, 490/888; 891, 903-4. The Bockland or Buckland name was variously spelt in contemporary documents. Family monuments in Downton and

Standlynch churches have the name as Bockland.

⁹ WSRO, 490/909.

¹⁰ WSRO, 490/910.

of the rising costs illustrates the difficulties he faced with such a large, untried project, and the problem of accurate surveying to ensure an even flow of water and adequate drainage.¹¹

The project created other unforeseen problems. The major excavations caused alarm over damage to the river banks and the possibility of flooding which was a constant danger for the low-lying settlements along the valley. In 1673 John Snow was summoned before the Assizes at Salisbury to answer charges of 'throwinge in of stones and rubbish into the river of Avon in the liberty of Charleton within the said parish of Downton'. He was acquitted after obtaining the signatures of nine local residents certifying that 'the earth and gravell throwne in on the south side of the said river' were to strengthen the banks and prevent their erosion.¹² A year later Sir Joseph Ashe was accused before the justices at Quarter Sessions that he had interfered with the water course at Downton and caused flooding. Again John Snow persuaded 22 local inhabitants to certify that the work had not damaged the water course or highways and was 'not at all prejudiciall or any publique nuisance'.¹³

There were also problems over mills and interference with mill leats. Agreements had to be made over the use of water for the corn mill at Bodenham and the large corn and fulling mill at Downton. Most affected was the corn mill at Standlynch. This had been rebuilt with a new weir and leat in 1575. The effect of the new water courses created many problems over water supply and meant that the mill had to be rebuilt on a new site in 1697. This mill survives, complete with its 'eel house' where large numbers of eels were caught each year during their migration, providing a useful secondary income for the miller. The newly-built 'mill and eele fishery' was let for 21 years for £44 per annum.¹⁴

Faced by continuing criticism from his employer over the rising costs, John Snow responded by making a remarkable offer. On 25 November 1674 he signed an agreement in which he acknowledged that since 1665 Sir Joseph had

by my hands and by my advise layd out great somes of money importinge above Two Thousand pounds upon drowning his meadowes in the parish of Downton that belonged to Newe Court, Wythington and those meadowes in the possession of John Brewer, which hitherto have not rendered him any proffitt. And whereas I have suggested to the said Sir Joseph Ashe that the aforesaid meadowes contayning in all about 200 acres have had their improvement suitable to the moneys desbursed ...?.

He went on to give three examples of the increased value of the meadows:

Brewers Farm	74 acres of meadow previously worth £74 per annum now worth £148 per annum
Witherington Farm	50 acres of meadow previously worth £20 per annum now worth £100 per annum
New Court Farm	70 acres of meadow previously worth £80 per annum now worth £180 per annum.

If the above meadows could not be let to tenants at these improved rents, John Snow undertook

¹¹ WSRO, 490/896.

¹² WSRO, 490/911.

¹³ WSRO, 490/912.

¹⁴ WSRO, 490/147, 912, 927, 1068, 1198, 1217; VCH *Wiltshire*, XI, pp. 39, 66, 54–5, 71.

by this agreement to rent them himself; 'I, John Snow, wilbe tenant [for the meadows] myself for the terme of fower yeares and after the terme encrease the rent as the same shall deserve'.¹⁵

John Snow's confidence was justified and the meadows were rented to tenants at the improved rents. This formal agreement, signed by both parties, shows that John Snow was deeply affected by the complaints of his employer, and that he felt personally responsible for recommending such a costly project. It also reveals that by 1674, only nine years after the project had started, almost 200 acres of meadow were being watered, and the watering had already reached New Court, a short distance north of Downton.

John Snow's bold response did not stop the criticisms, however, and Sir Joseph continued to grumble about the expense. Among the Ashe papers relating to Downton are two copies of a long document dated 1676, setting out the advantages and profits of water meadows and rebutting possible objections. There is no indication of the author, but it seems likely that it was produced by John Snow in response to continuing censure. Since much work remained to be done in extending the system of water meadows, it may be that this document was also intended to obtain the co-operation of other landowners. Having already negotiated many agreements, John Snow seems the most likely author of a paper which proclaimed that amicable accord could be achieved over all objections. It is certainly a remarkable testimony to the value of water meadows. Entitled 'Argument to shew what greate profit may redound to the owners of land upon a free ymprovement, by drowninge, wateringe or drayninge', the first part is in the form of a petition in which the advantages of creating water meadows are listed as follows:

Imprimis, by soe doeinge there will be a greater increase in hay.

Item, there will be greate increase of cattle.

Item, thereby will be a greater increase of corne.

Firste, That there wilbe a greater increase of hay by wateringe of meadowes is knowne by common experience. Hay beinge plenty men may keepe the more cattle whereby theyre ground may be much bettered and ymproved. Theyre ground being thus bettered and ymproved there wilbe a greater increase of corne and the after grasse of their grounds thus ymproved wilbe of greate benefitt for the feedinge of cattle both to fatt and alsoe for butter and cheese.

Theis thinges considered, wee desire that there may be a free ymprovement by drowninge or drayninge of meadowes in all such places where it may be done withoute prejudice to other men.¹⁶

It is notable that whereas in most places throughout the chalkland region of Wessex, the early grass produced by the water meadows was used to feed sheep, enabling larger flocks to be kept and more arable land folded, the emphasis in this document is on hay, cattle, butter and cheese. This reflects the particular circumstances at Downton where the proximity of Salisbury and easy access to Winchester, Southampton and Portsmouth made dairy farming and livestock production profitable. Large sheep flocks were also kept on the Downton farms and were folded on the arable land as was customary throughout the chalklands, but there was also an emphasis on milk and beef production which became increasingly profitable during the later seventeenth century. In addition, because the Avon valley south of Salisbury is much wider than most other

¹⁵ WSRO, 490/904.

¹⁶ WSRO, 490/890.

chalkland valleys, sheep flocks had to be driven longer distances than usual to feed on the water meadows, return to the downs and then be driven back to be folded at night on the arable land. Moreover, it was relatively easy to cart dung to the arable fields from the farmsteads. The sheep fold remained important, but was not such a crucial feature of corn production at Downton as it was elsewhere.¹⁷

The rest of the 'petition' is concerned to refute possible objections to the creation of water meadows. The first objection was 'But what yf there be any mill either above or belowe that may be hindered by it?'. The answer was that equitable agreements could be made for the use of the water and 'wateringe of the ground doth not soe much hinder the miller, but that he may grinde to serve his occasion'. Another possible objection was over flooding or possible damage to the highways. The answer was that 'those that have share in the drowninge shall equally pay theyre parte towards the repayringe of the way soe farre as the way shalbe prejudiced by them'. Other objections concerned possible damage suffered by other landowners through digging of channels and drains, building weirs in the river and setting up hatches to divert the water. Again, these objections were brushed aside by answers such as 'lett the owner of that ground have satisfaction according to his damage'; or 'let satisfaction be given accordinge to the worth of that ground that shalbe diged up or covered with bancks for the bringinge in of the water'. Further it was argued that agreements could be made whereby several men could take turns to use the water, 'lett the water be ymployed upon each man's ground by course soe many dayes one as the other accordinge to theyre proportion of ground'.

Finally, the author requested that

And as for those grounds which some do mowe and others doe feede, yf the major parte doe agree that it may be drowned, wee desire that it may be done, and soe likewise for the inclosinge of commons for drowninge. And lastly that all covenants and agreements be drawne and kepte in the court rolls or parish registers.¹⁸

Even this eloquent defence of watering meadows did not stop the complaints of Sir Joseph Ashe over the expense and problems of negotiating with other landowners. On 22 March 1677 he wrote to John Snow 'I thinke this cursed wateringe hath given me 10 tymes the trouble that all the other concernes of my life hath done'.¹⁹ The heavy costs continued however, especially because of the need to install so many hatches to control the flow of water. On 15 April 1678 Sir Joseph wrote to Snow 'When you will consider the perpetual troubles and constant laying out of money and none coming in you need not wonder I am sicke of those designs'.²⁰

It was not to be expected that such a major scheme could be accomplished without local objections and complaints about John Snow. A diary of proceedings at Downton manorial court 1681–94, kept by a prominent copyhold tenant, George Legg, is full of criticisms of Snow and his disregard for manorial custom. In April 1682 Legg complained that Snow 'will allwaies be fidling in something for his private gaine and incroaching to break our customs as much as it lieth in him to doe ... He cares not the wrong he does in this kind'. In 1694 a group of Downton

¹⁷ WSRO, 490/909; Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, V (ii) (1985), pp. 102–117, 446–7. Joan Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture. A history from the Black Death to the present day* (1997), p. 49.

¹⁸ WSRO, 490/890.

¹⁹ WSRO, 490/909.

²⁰ Ibid.

residents wrote to Lady Mary Ashe to complain about Snow's actions, exhorting her 'not to hearken to the advises of Mr Snow, who is little moved with cryes of the poore where a little small interest is concerned'.²¹

The few surviving accounts showing the detailed costs of construction are all from the last decade of the project. They reveal regular payments of 12*d.* to 18*d.* per day to labourers digging channels and drains and excavating foundations for bridges and hatches. Stone was brought from quarries at Chilmark and Fovant; chalk and gravel came from the surrounding downland; masons were paid 2*s.* 6*d.* a day for building bridges and the sub-structure or 'landfasts' for hatches. Bricks and lime came from local kilns, including numerous deliveries of bricks from Joseph Stokes at Brickmill in Downton. Timber was brought from nearby woodland, much of it from Hale, south of Downton, and some from Loosehanger Park. Carpenters were employed at 2*s.* per day to build a variety of hatches which could be raised or lowered to divert the flow of water as required. These included 'hands' or large hatches with as many as ten 'eyes' or apertures in the main streams, two or three 'eye' hatches in the subsidiary channels, 'trunks' or drainage channels, and 'bunnels' or culverts to supply water to some of the carriers and minor water courses. The Downton blacksmith, Valentine Edsell, made the ironwork and provided the nails for the hatches and their equipment. John Snow paid himself 3*s.* 4*d.* a day for surveying, 'setting out foundations' and directing the work, since presumably he regarded this as additional to his regular work as steward.²²

Whilst these remaining accounts provide much information about individual costs, it is impossible to compute Ashe's investment over the quarter century it took to complete the project. When John Snow admitted in 1674 that more than £2000 had already been spent, the work was to continue for a further 16 years and included the construction of a second main carriage. By 1690 when more than 250 acres of water meadows had been created along the valley, the total cost to the Ashe estate cannot have been far short of £5000. This is in line with the figure of £20 per acre for the construction of water meadows given by Thomas Davis in the *General View of the agriculture of Wiltshire* (1794) although he, no doubt, was thinking of much less ambitious schemes.²³

In spite of Sir Joseph's complaints about costs, the Downton water meadows were evidently a technical success and smaller schemes were soon started by neighbouring landowners. At Nunton and Bodenham near the junction of the Ebbles with the Avon, Henry Hare, Lord Coleraine, the owner of Longford Castle, made an agreement in 1676 with two other landowners, Edward Froud and Elizabeth Clarke, for the creation of water meadows. The agreement included the digging of 'a great trench or main carriage', the right to divert water from above Lord Coleraine's paper mill at Nunton, a rental of £3 per annum to be paid for the water, the obligation to maintain the channels and hatches, and the respective turns or 'stems' for use of the water. Each party was to have the water for 14 days and nights 'and then the stem or turne for the other party ymmediately to begin or succeed'. The same agreement also contains references to meadows on the Ebbles at Odstock called King's Mill Mead and the Marsh which were being watered by the tenants of Sir John Webb. Elaborate arrangements were included to

²¹ WSRO, 490/909, 916.

²² WSRO, 1946 Box 12 (5).

²³ T. Davis, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Wiltshire* (1794), pp. 30–8.

ensure that each tenant had a fair share of the water. During the 1680s a weir was built across the Avon at Britford by Thomas Jervoise for watering the meadows there. A few years later water meadows were created beside the river Nadder, on the earl of Pembroke's manors of Burcombe and Ugford, and a waterman or 'drowner' was appointed to 'look after the Floating of our Meades with water and drawing the said water off againe as he shall think most proper'.²⁴

By 1690 the ambitious scheme for watering the Downton meadows had been completed, and a long list of all the channels, trunks, weirs, hatches and bridges was compiled together with a note of those responsible for their maintenance. In spite of all the problems and controversy it had created, the project had been remarkably successful. As well as the meadows created by the commoners at Alderbury and Charlton, and the meadows along the Ebbles, the excavation of the main carriages and the diversion of the water from the river Avon had transformed farming in the manor of Downton. During the 25 year period, some 40 acres of water meadow had been created at Witherington; at Standlynch there were nearly 100 acres of watered meadow; there were 76 acres of water meadow at New Court Farm, and a similar acreage at Wick and along the Avon south of Downton as far as the Landshire Ditch which marked the county boundary.²⁵

The value of the meadows was doubled as a result of the watering. In 1628 and again during the 1650s the meadows at Witherington, Standlynch and New Court were valued at £1 per acre. By 1682 the unwatered meadows remained at £1, but the watered meadows were said to be worth £2 an acre. The improved values were not confined to the meadows. The early grass and reliable crops of hay provided by the water meadows meant that more livestock could be kept and increased crops of wheat and barley could be grown, increasing the value of the whole farm. A valuation made of part of Sir Joseph Ashe's estate at the time of his death in 1686 lists both the 'natural' and the 'improved' values. The larger part of New Court was said to be worth £420 per annum 'naturally', but £520 'with the improvement'. The rest of New Court was worth £64 15s. *od.* per annum 'naturally' and £148 'with the Improvement'. Witherington Farm was 'naturally' worth £122 10s. *od.* per annum, but £184 7s. *od.* per annum 'with the improvement'. Standlynch was let to the Bockland family on a long lease, and was not included in the valuation of 1686. In 1700 the 734 acres of 'arable, meadow well-watered, and pasture' (including the downland grazing) was producing a rent of £400 per annum or 10s. *od.* per acre; this was the same rate as the improved rental of New Court where 1,136 acres were let for £668 per annum.²⁶

The effect on the landscape of the valley can still be seen in the surviving meadows and water channels. Figure 1 shows the extent of the whole scheme and the work involved in excavating the main carriages. The full scale of the project is only evident when seen on the ground. The long straight main carriages are still full of fast-flowing water and contrast with the sinuous natural course of the river. The subsidiary channels, drains, weirs and culverts survive, and the ridged surface of the meadows is still clearly visible. The foundations for the hatches and culverts are well-built in stone and brick, but the disused meadows now present a sad picture of neglect and decay. In a few places the late eighteenth-century ironwork mechanism for operating the hatches survives, and is stamped 'B. DUTCH. WAR'. This has given rise to the widespread but

²⁴ WSRO, 490/232, 788, 791, 793, 893, 924/1; 2057/M23.

²⁶ WSRO, 490/782-8, 1067-8; 84/47.

²⁵ WSRO, 490/894, 756.

erroneous local belief that the water meadows were conceived and laid out by Dutch immigrants. In fact, the ironwork was supplied by the foundry of Benjamin Dutch of Warminster.²⁷

The early grass and plentiful hay provided by the meadows, and the consequent ability to keep more livestock, had a further profound effect upon farming. This was immediately obvious at Wick where nearly 300 acres of downland had already been converted to arable by 1700. A similar extension of arable on the eastern side of the valley was made at Witherington, and by the early eighteenth century Witherington Farm included 328 acres of arable. At New Court Farm the farmhouse and a large aisled barn of nine bays were rebuilt by Sir Joseph Ashe in c. 1680. At that time there were 346 acres of arable; by 1716 a further 90 acres of arable had been added by the cultivation of downland and former pasture.²⁸

At Standlynch Farm there was another development. John Snow's arguments of 1676 in favour of water meadows had included the fact that the meadows 'wilbe of greate benefitt for the feedinge of cattle, both to fatt and alsoe for butter and cheese'. His faith was confirmed by the establishment of Standlynch Dairy Farm during the late seventeenth century, using the early grass and fodder provided by the water meadows to sustain milk production throughout the year.²⁹

The vision and persistence of John Snow and the grudging expenditure of large sums of money by his wealthy employer, Sir Joseph Ashe, had transformed the farming and landscape along four miles of the Avon valley and had provided an example which was being emulated on neighbouring manors. By the eighteenth century water meadows had become an essential feature of the sheep/corn husbandry of the chalklands, and expert observers could describe the value of the early grass produced by the meadows as 'almost incalculable' and a vital element for successful arable farming on the thin chalk soils.³⁰

The Downton water meadows remained in use until the twentieth century when the cost of labour, the availability of artificial fertilizers and new fodder crops led gradually to their abandonment. Some meadows at Witherington were still being watered during the 1950s, but had been abandoned by 1960. Water meadows at Britford on the Avon, north of Downton, are still in use and continue to be managed in the traditional manner.

²⁷ Steele, 'Sir Joseph Ashe', p. 131. For an account of the surviving meadows along the Avon around Salisbury with sketch maps and diagrams see Michael Cowan, *Floated water meadows in the Salisbury area* (South Wiltshire Industrial Archaeology Society, monograph 9, 1982).

²⁸ WSRO, 490/788, 793, 936, 906/W59; VCH Wiltshire, XI, p. 75.

²⁹ WSRO, 490/890, 927, 924/1. VCH Wiltshire, XI, p. 58. The landscape at Standlynch was transformed in 1733 by the construction of a large mansion and its surrounding parkland. In 1814 this was given by the nation to the heirs of Lord Nelson and was renamed Trafalgar House.

³⁰ Davis, *General view*, pp. 35–8.

The mobility of English tenant farmers, c. 1700–1850*

by David R. Stead

Abstract

This paper surveys the literature on the mobility of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century English rack rent tenant farmers and farming families, and provides new quantitative estimates of the speed of turnover in the market for farm tenancies using data from archival sources. The evidence presented should increase our confidence in the stylised fact of relatively low tenurial mobility, although the extent of inertia should not be exaggerated. Some of the factors that could disrupt the apparent underlying long-term relationship between landlord and tenant are considered.

Agricultural historians have long been interested in the mobility of English tenant farmers. The duration of occupancy of farmers and farming families affected husbandry practices and land improvement and reflected, amongst other things, estate management policies and the extent to which the family/land bond broke down with the development of capitalist farming and the arrival of enclosure. There is a widely held belief that despite short, often annual leases, the turnover of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rack rent tenants in England was typically 'low'.¹ This stylised fact, though, is based on surprisingly little consolidated evidence. The literature covering 1850–1914 has recently been reviewed, but for the period 1700–1850 '[t]here is no general survey'.² This paper surveys the literature on the mobility of rack rent tenant farmers on privately owned estates during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and extends these existing studies by providing new data from archival sources. The evidence indicates that the widespread belief of generally low turnover is not in need of significant revision. The average farmer may not have remained on a holding for life. Nevertheless, the duration of tenants' occupancy was not as short as the terms of their leases implied and there was a good deal of

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¹ A. Offer, 'Farm tenure and land values in England, c. 1750–1950', *EcHR* 44 (1991), p. 10. Compare R. C. Allen, *Enclosure and the yeoman: the agricultural development of the south Midlands, 1450–1850* (1992), pp. 181, 209; J. V. Beckett, 'Landownership and estate management', in G. E. Mingay (ed.), *The agrarian history of England and Wales* (hereafter *Agrarian History*), VI, 1750–1850 (1989), p. 616; C. Clay, 'Landlords and estate management in England', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Agrarian History*, V (ii)

(1985), pp. 210, 213; L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle class, 1780–1850* (1987), pp. 254–5; G. E. Mingay, *English landed society in the eighteenth century* (1963), pp. 170–1; M. E. Turner, J. V. Beckett and B. Afton, *Farm production in England, 1700–1914* (2001), pp. 32, 41.

² Offer, 'Farm tenure', p. 10. The 1850–1914 survey is G. E. Mingay, 'The farmer', in E. J. T. Collins (ed.), *Agrarian History*, VII (2000), pp. 767–78.

family continuity on the same property, although this appears unlikely to have lasted for more than a generation or two. Some of the factors that could disrupt the apparent underlying pattern of tenurial stability are also considered.

I

There are a number of reasons to expect low mobility amongst English rack rent tenants. A landowner with some sense of social responsibility, or who wanted to obtain any approbation that came from being perceived as a good landlord, might have preferred not to disturb the farming families on his estate. Among landowners' other possible non-economic motives for allowing tenurial continuity were to ensure the farmer's vote for a particular electoral candidate or his co-operation in preserving game.³ The economic arguments for renewal of tenancy contracts were perhaps even stronger. Sitting tenants possessed established business contacts and specialist knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of the farm's soil, both of which would take a newcomer time to achieve.⁴ These factors gave the incumbent farmer, and by extension his widow and sons, an advantage in bidding when the term of the current lease ended, and therefore represented a barrier to entry to those seeking to take over the farm from the current occupant. Indeed, modern auction theory suggests that a marginally higher valuation of an asset by one party can translate into a substantial competitive advantage in some types of auctions. Disadvantaged bidders may not even enter the auction, leaving the field clear for the current tenant.⁵

The advantage of the incumbent was not the only economic factor that would have helped produce a long term relationship between landlord and tenant. As Offer has noted, change was costly for both parties.⁶ Withdrawal costs incurred by the farmer included finding and then learning about a new holding. Evidence on the stated motivations of those tenants seeking a move is not suggestive of incessant shopping around for farms. The main reasons why a successful farmer decided to relocate were because he wanted to move up the 'agricultural ladder', either into owner-occupation or to a larger rented farm, or move sideways to make way for a son to take over his current holding.⁷ A change in tenancy brought costs for landlords too. The time and trouble of finding a suitable replacement would have been far from trivial if there was a scarcity of able farmers possessing sufficient capital, as some historians have concluded was typically the case.⁸ Another cost faced by the landlord was the incentive the outgoing farmer had to 'whip' the land and skimp on repairs during the final few years of his term of occupancy. Infrequent changes of tenantry, therefore, would reduce the number of occasions that the landlord was at risk of suffering asset stripping, avoiding the problems at

³ J. Farey, *General view of the agriculture and minerals of Derbyshire* (3 vols, 1811–7), III, pp. 633–4; Allen, *Enclosure and the yeoman*, pp. 181–2; F. M. L. Thompson, *English landed society in the nineteenth century* (1963), pp. 200–4.

⁴ Offer, 'Farm tenure', p. 12.

⁵ P. Klemperer, 'Auctions with almost common values: the "Wallet Game" and its applications', *European Economic Rev.* 42 (1998), pp. 757–69; id., 'Auction theory: a guide

to the literature', *J. Economic Surveys* 13 (1999), pp. 236–7.

⁶ Offer, 'Farm tenure', pp. 10–12.

⁷ See, for instance, Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service (hereafter BLARS), R3/4574/1–2, letter from Mr Bennett, 18 June 1842.

⁸ E.g. G. E. Mingay, 'The size of farms in the eighteenth century', *ECHR* 14 (1962), pp. 473–7; K. Wrightson, *Earthly necessities: economic lives in early modern Britain* (2000), pp. 284–6.

Nidd, West Riding, where the crop yield was said to be 'a very deteriorated one from the land being much run out from the frequent changes of the tenantry'.⁹

Considering the variety of factors making for continuity, it is unsurprising that contemporary comment provides numerous examples of individual farmers, or the same farming family, occupying a property for periods of time ranging from twelve successive years to 'centuries', as well as instances of landlords said to grant short leases but rarely change their tenants.¹⁰ Comments on the rapid turnover of farmers – as at Nidd – were far more infrequent.¹¹ Despite the general impression of tenurial stability given by qualitative sources, this evidence alone cannot be conclusive if only because of the possibility of selection bias. Contemporaries, for instance, might have been especially likely to note examples of long periods of occupancy, perhaps because they thought them unusual. Quantitative estimates of the length of tenurial terms are therefore required. The next section reviews the existing literature; new evidence follows.

The qualitative evidence does, though, indicate that various factors could disrupt the purported underlying pattern of tenurial stability. Most obviously, lack of farm profitability produced greater turnover. This effect would presumably manifest itself most powerfully when prices and costs were generally unfavourable for a succession of years. In the period covered by this paper, the two candidates are the (uneven) depressions during the 1730s–40s and after the Napoleonic Wars. The prosperous times of the wartime agricultural boom, however, could in theory also have raised turnover, perhaps as competition for farms increased or because more farmers sought to ascend the agricultural ladder.¹² Furthermore, stability might be temporarily disrupted by one-off events at the local level, such as enclosure or a new landowner or estate manager who wanted to amalgamate farms by turning out tenants. Relatively low survival rates may also be expected where tenants possessed short leases or occupied farms that were small or located on economically or physically marginal land. Where the evidence permits, the quantitative data on farmer's duration given below is related to these factors. Yet

⁹ PRO, IR/18/12734, tithe file, 1841.

¹⁰ Quote from J. Caird, *English agriculture in 1850–51* (1852, repr. 1968), p. 347. See also *ibid.*, pp. 2, 333–4; Bodleian Library, Oxford (hereafter Bodl.), MS. dd Harcourt C/266, estate survey, 1871, fos 71, 76; Buckinghamshire RO, D/DR/8/16/1, Rev. T. Townson to W. Drake, 2 May 1753; Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, B/170, declaration by T. Harknett, 1851; T. Batchelor, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Bedford* (1808), p. 43; R. W. Dickson and W. Stevenson, *General view of the agriculture of Lancashire* (1815), pp. 127, 139–40; R. Lowe, *General view of the agriculture of the county of Nottingham* (1798), p. 16; W. Mavor, *General view of the agriculture of Berkshire* (1808), p. 90; W. Pitt, *A general view of the agriculture of the county of Leicester* (1809), pp. 31, 82–3; H. E. Strickland, *A general view of the agriculture of the East Riding of Yorkshire* (1812), pp. 72–3; T. W. Beastall, *A north country estate: the Lumleys and Saundersons as landowners, 1600–1900* (1974), pp. 103, 133; Clay in *Agrarian History V* (ii), p. 213; D. R. Hainsworth

and C. Walker (eds), *The correspondence of Lord Fitzwilliam of Milton and Francis Guybon, his steward, 1697–1709* (Northamptonshire Rec. Soc. 36, 1990), pp. 131, 276; S. Matthews, 'The cattle plague in Cheshire, 1865–1866', *Northern Hist.* 38 (2001), p. 117; J. Wake and D. C. Webster (eds), *The letters of Daniel Eaton to the third Earl of Cardigan, 1725–1732* (Northamptonshire Rec. Soc. 24, 1971), p. 99.

¹¹ Christ Church Archives Oxford, MS Estates 72, fos 286–7, letter from J. Stratton, 6 Jan. 1852; Caird, *English agriculture*, pp. 131–2; J. Middleton, *View of the agriculture of Middlesex* (1798), p. 51; J. E. Crowther and P. A. Crowther (eds), *The diary of Robert Sharp of South Cave: life in a Yorkshire village, 1812–1837* (British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, new ser. 26, 1997), pp. 107, 206; Wake and Webster (eds), *Eaton letters*, pp. 93, 101, 103, 126.

¹² For an overview of these periods, see M. E. Turner, J. V. Beckett and B. Afton, *Agricultural rent in England, 1690–1914* (1997), ch. 11.

the possible relationship between turnover and farm size/quality highlights the problem of assigning a causal direction to any correlation found. For instance, relatively rapid turnover on small farms could have been because farmers used these properties as a rung from which to move up the agricultural ladder. Alternatively, the holding may have been small because of frequent changes of tenants: if farmers found the farm unprofitable, the landlord might have decided to reduce its size to make it more attractive. Similarly, a finding of rapid turnover on poor soil could be explained by farmers being eager to leave that type of land, or because frequent changes of lessees led to deteriorating soil quality.

II

Quantitative studies of the speed of turnover track tenants' names over time, almost always from estate rentals or land tax returns. If the incoming tenant possessed the same surname as the outgoer, he is usually assumed to have been a member of the same family. This method of tracing family inheritance of farms misses successions down the female line, but on the other hand an incomer could have come from an unrelated family that coincidentally shared the outgoer's surname. The hope is that these errors are self-cancelling. Another caveat is that the units of property recorded were self-contained to the landlord but not necessarily to the tenant, who may have owned or rented farmland in addition to that tracked by the researcher. Further, the speed of tenants' turnover ought to be judged 'fast' or 'slow' relative to some benchmark. Scholars have tended not to explicitly state what their yardstick is, perhaps because of the danger of arbitrariness in specifying a threshold number of years survival (or a threshold proportion of farmers remaining after some time period). One attempt to address this issue was made by those historians who used the land tax returns to assess the turnover of occupancy and land-ownership associated with parliamentary enclosure. When conducting cross-sectional analysis, they classified parishes into three categories – old enclosed, currently enclosing and still open – and used the first or last group as their benchmark. In longitudinal analysis, the pre-enclosure experience was a yardstick for what occurred post-enclosure.¹³ Where possible, this paper instead focuses on comparing actual lengths of occupancy with the terms of leases. Frequent renewal of contracts, particularly to different members of the same family, must be indicative of sluggishness in the market for farm tenancies.

A final caveat is that almost all mobility figures include tenants who left by retiring or dying. Removing this demographically-driven turnover from the statistics would produce a lower degree of churning than that suggested by the raw data. Unfortunately, adjusting for death and retirement is difficult because it is rarely straightforward to discover why a farmer's name disappeared from an estate rent book. Thus the following results provide an upwardly biased estimate of underlying mobility because they include turnover driven by demographics as well as the market. If Beastall's study of the Earl of Scarbrough's Yorkshire estate during the later period of 1862–1905 is any guide, the magnitude of the bias is not insignificant: at least 27 per cent of individual tenancy changes were due to death or retirement.¹⁴ Another factor possibly

¹³ See J. M. Neeson, *Commoners: common right, enclosure and social change in England, 1700–1820* (1996), chs 7–8, and the studies cited in nn. 23–4 below.

¹⁴ Beastall, *North country estate*, p. 170.

producing exaggerated estimates of mobility is that the survival of usable rentals is probably biased towards estate managers who kept good records and who therefore might have been more commercially minded than the norm, and thus less willing to allow continued occupancy where this was not economically justified.¹⁵

From the rent rolls of Lord Pembroke's Wilton estate, Thompson estimated that in 1865, 55 per cent of the tenantry had occupied their holdings for at least the previous ten years, probably largely under tenancy-at-will (annual contracts). On the Alnwick estate of the Duke of Northumberland in 1880, only 40 of his 673 farms had been in the same family for three generations, although half of the current tenants had succeeded to their father's holding. Farrant found lower rates of turnover on three estates in the lower Ouse valley, Sussex. On the four farms at Stanmer owned by the Earls of Chichester (mean size approximately 900 acres), the duration of occupancy for the three families present in the early 1880s ranged from sixty years to nearly a century under leases of seven to twenty-one years. In Kingston, the Hodsons held a c. 1300-acre farm continuously from 1840–72, while two branches of the Saxby family occupied the Marquis of Abergavenny's Southdown estate (c. 2000 acres) for a similar period. The cessation of these long-lasting terms of family occupancy can be attributed to the impact of the late nineteenth-century agricultural depression.¹⁶

Saville's research on property in the Sussex Weald owned by the Fuller family provides turnover data on 23 farms during the 1720s and 1730s; only one was rented for more than £50 per annum and where possible the estate managers used tenancy-at-will. The mean duration of survival for an individual tenant was eight years (median seven years), and in no instance was the outgoer replaced by a member of the same family. According to Saville, this 'regular' turnover was caused by the agricultural depression and a decline in the demand from the local ironworks for horses, carts and other services that had been provided by the farmers; these two factors were possibly exacerbated by a policy of farm amalgamation. There was a positive association between length of occupancy and the farm's rent, but the correlation coefficient was not statistically significant even at the ten per cent level (p -value=0.106). Farmers still able to diversify by supplying some services to the ironworks experienced the longest survival rates.¹⁷

Short found similarly 'relatively rapid' mobility in the same region about a century later. Fifteen per cent of those listed in the 1841 census as farmers or graziers living in the Sussex High Weald were still in the same parish twenty years later (although not necessarily on the same farm), with the lowest local survival rate being 8.4 per cent in the Worth area. Turnover was especially fast on 62 farms (average size 137 acres) owned by the fourth Earl of Ashburnham. During 1830–50, each property was occupied by an average of three tenants who came from 2.4 tenant families. Short attributed the speed of transference to the nature of the farmers, their tenancy agreements and the land. The fields were small, hilly and poorly drained, and the roads poor. Contemporaries criticised the Ashburnham tenantry for lacking capital and ability: a

¹⁵ Compare Turner *et al*, *Agricultural rent*, pp. 77–9.

¹⁶ F. M. L. Thompson, 'Agriculture since 1870', in VCH *Wiltshire*, IV (1959), p. 94, table 2; *id.*, *Landed society*, pp. 202–3; S. Farrant, 'The management of four estates in the lower Ouse valley (Sussex) and agricultural

change, 1840–1920', *Southern Hist.* 1 (1979), pp. 161–4.

¹⁷ Calculations from R. V. Saville, 'Gentry wealth on the Weald in the eighteenth century: the Fullers of Brightling Park', *Sussex Arch. Coll.* 121 (1983), pp. 132–6. No rent data was available for two farms.

TABLE 1. Survival of farming families at Holkham, Norfolk, 1790–1850

<i>Period</i>	<i>Number of farms held by same family throughout</i>	<i>Survival rate (%)^a</i>
1790–1810	25	38
1810–30	21	32
1830–50	37	56
1790–1830	9	14
1810–50	14	21
1790–1850	5	8

Source: Wade Martins, *A great estate at work*, table 4.1.

Note: ^a Calculated assuming a constant 66 farms on the estate, as implied by Wade Martins, *A great estate at work*, app. 4.

demographic breakdown indicates that they were either young and presumably eager to ascend the agricultural ladder, or old and possibly conservative; moreover, most held at will. The post-war agricultural depression may have been another factor making for low survival rates. Witnesses to government inquiries of the 1830s said that this part of Sussex was a particular cause for concern chiefly on account of low prices and an outbreak of sheep rot. An average length of individual occupation of nearly seven years, then, is possibly not unrespectable given these obstacles, although the relative absence of family continuation is again striking.¹⁸

The Ashburnham tenants' turnover was generally slightly lower in the 1840s than in the 1830s, an issue that Short did not pursue but which is tempting to ascribe to the cessation of the worst of the agricultural depression. Short did analyse the relationship between farm size and the number of individuals occupying the holding, finding a positive but statistically insignificant correlation. For a sub-sample of 27 farms containing land described as 'poor' in an 1835 survey, it is possible to assess the association between mobility and soil quality by correlating turnover with the percentage of that farm's acreage recorded as 'poor'. Interestingly, the results suggest that there was some tendency for the turnover of individuals to be lower on poorer quality farms: the correlation coefficient was negative and statistically significant at the ten per cent level although not quite at the more demanding five per cent (p -value=0.055). The correlation between land quality and family turnover was also negative but not statistically significant (p =0.17).¹⁹

Table 1 presents the results of Wade Martin's study of family occupancy on the Coke estate at Holkham, Norfolk. The first three survival rates indicate that at least a third of the farms were held by the same family for two decades. That the two forty-year survival rates are noticeably lower shows that many of these families did not remain for another twenty years. Less than one farm in ten was cultivated by the same family in 1790 and in 1850. The three twenty-year survival rates indicate that tenurial stability was lowest during 1810–30, while in

¹⁸ B. Short, 'The turnover of tenants on the Ashburnham estate, 1830–1850', *Sussex Arch. Coll.* 113 (1976), pp. 157–74; *Select Committee reports on the state of agriculture*, BPP, 1833, V, pp. 608–17; 1836, VIII (i), pp. 140–56; 1837, V,

pp. 176–81.

¹⁹ Calculated using data from Short, 'Turnover', table 2, appendix.

TABLE 2. Ten-year survival rates of Northamptonshire tenants in open and enclosing parishes, 1774–1814, by size of holding (%)

	0–5 acres	5–25 acres	25–50 acres	50–100 acres	>100 acres	Overall	Sample size
Open	50	62	90	36	86	62	129
Enclosing	26	53	50	56	73	50	236

Source: Neeson, *Commoners*, table 8.5.

1830–50 durability was substantially greater. These differences reflect the changing impact of the post-war agricultural depression on the estate, which acutely affected the tenantry in the early 1820s but was far less serious during the 1830s.²⁰ It could be claimed that the Holkham evidence would be likely to produce lengthy terms of occupation, if only because of the estate managers' widespread use of long leases, which were much less common elsewhere. Nevertheless, continuity was also present where contracts were far shorter, such as on the estates of the Earls of Scarbrough, where annual agreements were common. The Codd family held a large farm in Glentworth, Lincolnshire, in 1727 and remained there until 1818. Other family members occupied 70 acres in Willoughton (also Lincolnshire) in 1736, but had left by 1760, and in 1779 a John Codd farmed 348 acres in Tetney and Holton, again Lincolnshire, and was still there with the same acreage in 1813. 'A fairly high degree of continuity of occupation' was present on the Durham estate, where five of the eleven occupiers of over 15 acres in 1856 had been in place since 1845.²¹

Table 2 reports survival rates from Neeson's study of Northamptonshire tenants who disappeared from the land tax returns over a ten-year period in 23 open and enclosing parishes. Neeson claimed that the figures for the open parishes showed tenants' 'habitual mobility', although whether an overall individual survival rate of 62 per cent after ten years demonstrates 'customary mobility' is perhaps moot. While not indicative of lifetime occupancy, it does appear to represent a fair degree of continuity. Table 2 suggests that tenants tended to survive for longer on larger holdings, but after Ginter's criticism of the use of the land tax returns in calculating acreage equivalents, some caution is required in interpreting Neeson's figures disaggregated by farm size.²²

Neeson's research also indicated that parliamentary enclosure was associated with higher attrition rates for tenant farmers. This is in line with the weight of evidence elsewhere, notably Walton's study of Oxfordshire parishes over 1785–1832, which also using land tax data, found that enclosure usually temporarily accelerated the turnover of tenant families, although not to levels that were high compared with the peaks which could occur at other times. (Walton also calculated that the overall rate of family mobility increased during the latter part of the

²⁰ R. A. C. Parker, *Coke of Norfolk: a financial and agricultural study, 1707–1842* (1975), ch. 10; S. Wade Martins, *A great estate at work. The Holkham estate and its inhabitants in the nineteenth century* (1980), pp. 85–92, 112.

²¹ Beastall, *North country estate*, pp. 41, 94–5, 100, 104, 128, 178.

²² Compare D. E. Ginter, *A measure of wealth: the English land tax in historical analysis* (1992); Neeson, *Commoners*, p. 228, app. A–B; L. Shaw-Taylor, 'Parliamentary enclosure and the emergence of an English agricultural proletariat', *JECH* 61 (2001), pp. 643–4; M. E. Turner, 'Common property and property in common', *AgHR* 42 (1994), p. 162.

TABLE 3. Survival rates at Middle Clayton, Buckinghamshire, 1679–1722

	1679–86	1686–94	1713–22
Farmer remains (% of total)	42	70	65
Farmer remains or widow retains farm (%)	58	70	75
Sample size	26	23	20

Source: Broad, 'Midland yeoman', table 3.

Napoleonic Wars, and was higher still in the post-war depression.) Broad's review argued that Midlands enclosures undertaken during 1650–1770 created more medium-term displacement compared to enclosures in that region in later periods, partly due to the greater amalgamation of farms and the semi-deliberate letting of them to outsiders.²³ Some scholars have concluded that parliamentary enclosure had a more limited impact on tenant farmers, yet their studies assessed the scale of change not by tracking the survival of lessees' names pre- and post-enclosure, but instead by comparing total tenant numbers, a 'mistake' according to Turner because stability in overall numbers did not necessarily preclude a radically changed personnel.²⁴

Table 3 summarises Broad's quantification of turnover on the Verney estate at Middle Clayton, Buckinghamshire; the figures cover farms which in the 1680s rented for over £10 a year with a mean size of approximately 73 acres. Broad claimed that there was little difference between the depression years of the 1670s and 1680s and the purportedly less difficult times around 1720, since attrition rates were generally 'high'. But as with Neeson's study, there is possibly a case for emphasising continuity rather than mobility. By this time, almost all the tenants held at will. Thus, in each sub-period, 42–75 per cent of farmers or farming families survived more than half a dozen renewals of their tenancy agreements. Furthermore, Broad pointed out that there were farmers who remained in the parish for three or four decades, 'sometimes on the same farm', although only six surnames had a continuous presence for more than a hundred years between 1600–1800.²⁵

A particularly valuable aspect of Broad's study was his investigation of the reasons why farmers vacated their holdings. He uncovered details for 11 of the 29 outgoers covered by Table 3. Five suffered downward mobility and became cottagers or paupers on the estate, while six men died and had their holding taken over by their widow. This role for widows is worth highlighting in two respects. First, that at least a fifth of the turnover events captured in Table 3 were caused by death further suggests that turnover driven by demographics, rather than the market, was far from trivial. Second, it confirms that, despite prejudices against female farmers, widows could be important in ensuring family continuity. A widow might hold the

²³ J. R. Walton, 'The residential mobility of farmers and its relationship to the parliamentary enclosure movement in Oxfordshire', in A. D. M. Phillips and B. J. Turton (eds), *Environment, man and economic change* (1975), pp. 238–52; J. Broad, 'The fate of the Midland yeoman: tenants, copyholders, and freeholders as farmers in north Buckinghamshire, 1620–1800', *Continuity and Change* 14 (1999), pp. 327–31.

²⁴ M. E. Turner, 'Parliamentary enclosure and land-ownership change in Buckinghamshire', *EcHR* 28 (1975), p. 569; also J. D. Chambers, 'Enclosure and the small landowner', *EcHR* [first ser.] 10 (1940), pp. 126–7 and J. M. Martin, 'The small landowner and parliamentary enclosure in Warwickshire', *EcHR* 32 (1979), table 8, p. 343.

²⁵ Broad, 'Midland yeoman', pp. 332–4.

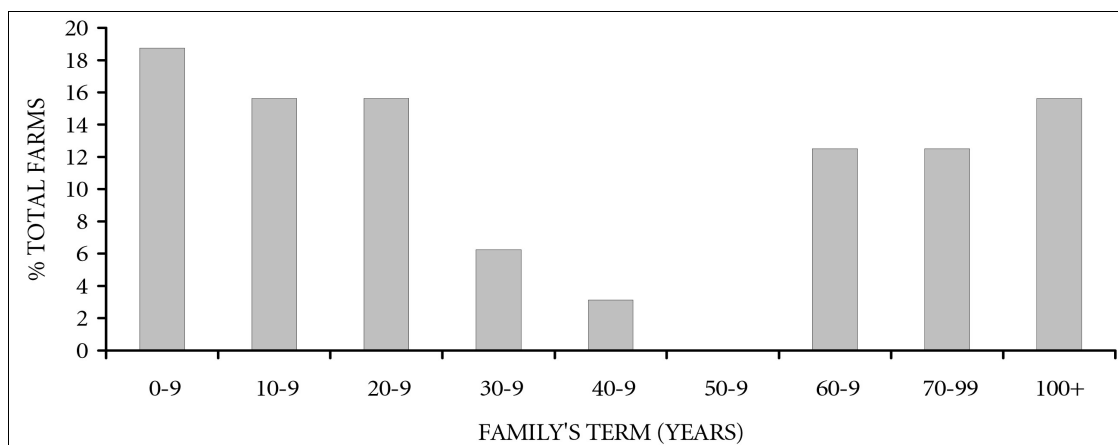


FIGURE 1. Family tenurial terms on Harcourt land in six Oxfordshire parishes at 1849, by percentage of estate farms

Source: Bodl., MS. dd Harcourt C/267, list of tenancy terms, 1849.

Note: The parishes are Cogges, Hinksey, Northmoor, Nuneham Courtenay, Shifford and Stanton Harcourt.

farm in her own name for the remainder of her husband's lease, or until a son was old enough to take over.²⁶

III

Consulting archival material adds additional examples to these published estate case studies. In 1849, an unknown writer listed the number of years each current tenant family had held land on the Harcourts' estate in Oxfordshire. Figure 1 gives the stated length of these family tenurial terms. Most of the farmers appear to have been rack renters, with leases lasting between one and twenty-one years.²⁷ Mobility on the Harcourt estate was very low. As many as 41 per cent of the farms were said to have been occupied by the same family for at least 60 years. On average, a family survived for approximately 45 years. A notable feature of Figure 1 is the small percentage of farms held for 30–59 years, which indicates that during the Napoleonic Wars, the Harcourts rented out land to tenants with less staying power than in any other time. The most obvious explanation is that the wartime boom attracted farmers who, unlike many established occupants, could not survive the post-war downturn in farming fortunes. There is evidence of a 'rush of people like journalists, shopkeepers, even army officers "running helter skelter" to be farmers during the Wars, and even if the Harcourt newcomers were able agriculturists, they may have been particularly vulnerable to the subsequent depression if they had borrowed to equip their new farms.²⁸

The survival of a survey of 1832 makes it possible to calculate the approximate acreage of

²⁶ Davidoff and Hall, *Family fortunes*, pp. 254, 287–9; I. Pinchbeck, *Women workers and the industrial revolution, 1750–1850* (1930, repr. 1969), chs 1–2.

²⁷ Bodl., MS. dd Harcourt B/37, estate particulars, 1814; C/267, C/270–7, tenancy agreements, various years.

²⁸ Quote from Davidoff and Hall, *Family fortunes*, p. 253.

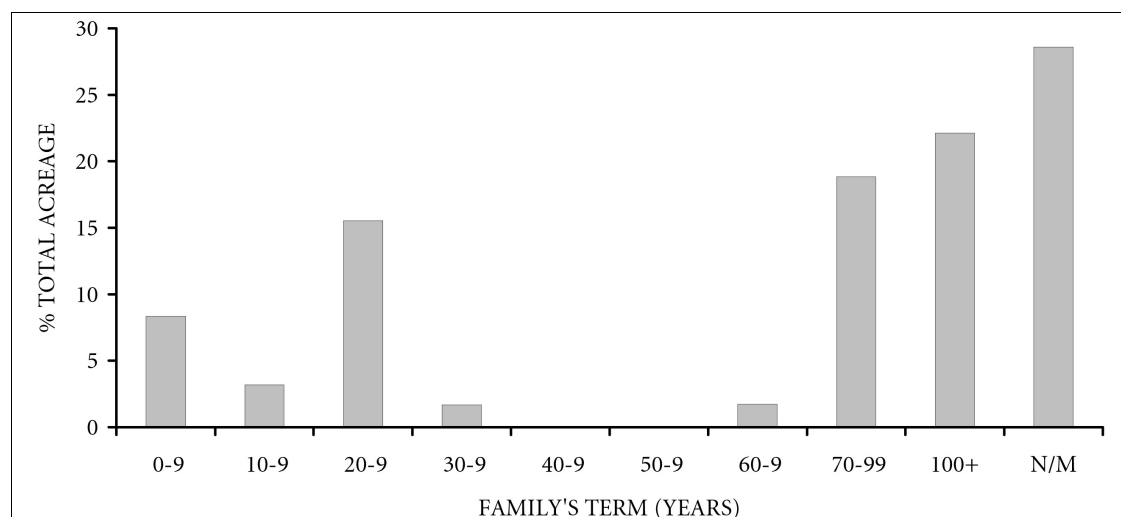


FIGURE 2. Family tenurial terms on Harcourt land in three Oxfordshire parishes at 1849, by percentage of estate acreage

Sources: As figure 1 plus Bodl., MS. dd Harcourt C/265, estate survey, 1832.

Note: The parishes are Cogges, Northmoor and Shifford. N/M is unmatched.

17 of the 32 farms depicted in Figure 1. Figure 2 presents the results. The largest single category was unmatched (N/M), which includes short occupancy terms and farm acreage changes. This residual notwithstanding, the graph indicates that farms rented out on long family tenures were at least as big as the estate average. For example, families who had occupied Harcourt land for over seventy years held a larger proportion of the total acreage (41 per cent) than their proportion of the total number of farms (28 per cent). There was almost no difference to the distribution depicted by Figure 2 if the rent of the land was used instead of the number of acres. It appears that, at least on this estate, high survival rates were not confined to small or poor quality farms.

An alternative method of quantifying the speed of tenants' turnover is to count the number of occasions on which a sample of farmers moved. Unfortunately, the farming careers that are by far the easiest to reconstruct are those of prominent agriculturists whose experience is unlikely to have been representative. Such men must have been relatively mobile to the extent that they possessed a migratory attitude and the aptitude to make any transition work. Thus their attrition rates probably represent an upper bound to the national average. Examination of the careers of twelve elite farmers included in the Dictionary of National Biography on CD-ROM indicates a mean individual tenurial term of 12 years (median 9 years; 14 observations on duration). The incomer was related to the outgoing tenant in at least 6 of the 17 recorded tenancy changes. These figures for upwardly mobile individuals, then, appear to confirm the generalisation of relatively limited mobility and not insignificant family continuity suggested by many, but not all, of the estate case studies.²⁹

²⁹ The sample comprised of Robert Bakewell, John Booth, Richard Booth, Thomas Booth, John Ellman, Richard Ellman, John Loudon, John Morton, Clare Read, William Torr, Jethro Tull and Arthur Young.

IV

As a pilot study of another approach of quantifying the turnover of rack rent lessees, a sample of 32 large farms located in southern England was assembled using estate rentals in ten archives. To ensure the maximum possible diversity, no two properties from the same set of estate rent books were included. From each series of rentals, a large property was randomly selected and tenurial details recorded; the appendix lists the sources employed. Farms likely to be smaller than 100 acres were almost always ignored because the focus of the project was on obtaining turnover estimates for those holdings under which the majority of agricultural land was occupied, namely farms of over 100 acres.³⁰ Data collection ceased in the event of substantial boundary changes to the farm being discovered, for example upon enclosure, since like would not then be compared with like. Attempts to obtain demographic details such as family connections and deaths of occupants by consulting parish registers were abandoned after the successful linkage rate turned out to be very low.

Together, the thirty-two farms listed in thirty-two different sets of estate rentals provided 1622 observations on the turnover of rack renters between 1697 and 1859.³¹ The longest recorded time-series for a farm was 160 years, with the smallest being eight and the mean nearly 51 years. The properties lie across ten counties chiefly in the south Midlands: six in both of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, four in each of Berkshire, Hertfordshire and Kent, three in Oxfordshire, two in Northamptonshire and one in Cambridgeshire, Sussex and Wiltshire. Private individuals owned all the farms apart from five that were the property of institutions. The most densely covered period was c. 1760–1830, with the number of annual observations peaking at nineteen around 1800. Coverage was poor during the start and end points of the sample. The mean size of the farms was calculated at roughly 240 acres (median 220 acres). Precision is difficult due to incomplete information: for three properties no data on size was found, and for many others there was only a single observation. Because smallholdings were deliberately excluded from the sample frame, the mean is substantially higher than other estimates of average farm size.³² Unfortunately, there are no obvious available yardsticks with which to assess how well the sample reflects the characteristics of larger landholdings in southern England. For example, typically little or no information was available on how the acreage of the sample farms was distributed between arable, meadow and pasture.

On the presumption that the sample is adequate, descriptive statistics of the duration of occupancy for individual tenants and farming families can be presented. One method of calculating the mean duration involves pooling the annual data across all the farms and dividing the 1622 observations by the total number of tenurial changes (118 individual and 73 family). Using this approach, the mean term of occupancy of an individual farmer was about 14 years, and the mean family term approximately 22 years. Another method assigns equal weight to each farm's set of observations by calculating the mean duration on each of the thirty-two

³⁰ See M. Overton, *Agricultural revolution in England. The transformation of the agrarian economy, 1500–1850* (1996), tables 4.10–4.13. In two cases the size rule was broken because a lengthy time-series could be easily transcribed. Six of the rentals series were used by Turner *et*

al, *Agricultural rent*, app. 1.

³¹ One observation is one year (new style to Lady Day) on one farm.

³² e.g. the c. 146-acres estimated for the south Midlands in c. 1800. Allen, *Enclosure and the yeoman*, table 4.4.

TABLE 4. Descriptive statistics of individual and family tenurial terms on the sample farms, 1697–1859 (years)

	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Family</i>
Mean	14.7	27.4
Median	14.9	19.3
Minimum	4.8	5.0
Maximum	25.0	80.0
95% confidence interval for mean ^a	12.8, 16.6	20.8, 33.9
Sample size (farms)	32	32

Sources: See appendix.

Note: ^a Lower bound, upper bound.

properties and then taking the average of these. Table 4 presents the results. Both methods generated very similar outcomes, indicating a mean occupancy term for an individual of 14–15 years. The mean term for a family, approximately 22–27 years, appears to have been nearly double that of an individual. Calculations using the pooled data suggest that, when an individual lessee departed, in nearly two-fifths of cases another family member replaced him or her.³³ Widows were recorded as tenants on seven of the thirty-two farms, further supporting claims that on occasion their holding role was important in ensuring continued family occupancy.

The mean duration statistics become even more illuminating when they are compared to the leases that gave farmers access to the land. Some tenancy details were found for twenty of the thirty-two properties. Treating each year of a tenancy-at-will as a separate observation, there were 80 observations on the length of farmers' leases. Tenancy-at-will accounted for 42 of these; the next most frequent were leases for 12 and 21 years (six observations apiece).³⁴ The mean contract length was about 6 years. The actual term of farmers' occupation, 14–15 years, therefore appears to have been approximately twice as long as the length of their leases. For farming families (about twenty-five years occupation) the difference was roughly four-fold. Moreover, there may be a bias towards long leases surviving in the archives, since estate managers presumably would have needed to keep these documents for a longer period of time than shorter agreements. If so, then the true mean contract length would have been less than the recorded six years, thereby making the divergence between the formal and actual duration of occupancy even greater than that suggested by the raw data.

It is tempting to disaggregate the sample, for instance to assess whether turnover was slower on large or enclosed farms. Regression analysis is hindered by a variety of technical problems; descriptive statistics suggest that individual and especially family tenurial terms tended to be longer on farms that were under 220 acres (the sample median), unenclosed and owned by institutions, but these results must be treated extremely tentatively due to the small number

³³ = (118–73)/118.

three years was treated as a three-year lease, and so forth.

³⁴ A twelve-year rack rent lease determinable every

of observations in each sub-category (at most 15 farms).³⁵ Data paucity also precludes persuasive assessments of how the relationship between lease length and actual turnover changed over time. Mean occupancy terms were calculated for three groups of farms: those properties whose tenancy observations began before 1719, during 1790–1815, and after 1815. For what they are worth given the small sub-period sample sizes (at most seven farms), the results indicate that tenants' duration of occupancy declined over time, particularly for families, whose mean occupancy term was twice as long in farms with observations beginning pre-1719 compared to the two subsequent sub-periods.³⁶ The limited data on leases for the first two groups of farms suggests that the mean contract length fell between 1697–1719 and 1790–1815, but that tenants always stayed longer than the terms of their leases, and that the difference increased over time because the fall in mean contract length outweighed the decline in actual occupancy. Thus the duration of individuals rose from very approximately twice their contract length to nearly five-times; for families the increase was from roughly six- to eight-fold.³⁷

In those clear instances of tenancy-at-will, totalling 42 observations across eight farms, the lessees did not move anything like annually. A tenant-at-will departed on only three occasions, and in two cases the incomer came from the same family as the outgoer. One long surviving tenant-at-will was Samuel Bennett, who held a farm on the Paynes' estate at Tempsford, Bedfordshire, throughout 1807–25. Bennett's experience was not unusual for a substantial tenant-at-will on the Tempsford estate at this time, despite there being quite strong pressures for tenurial change. In addition to the final years of a national agricultural boom, and the beginnings of the post-war depression, trustees ran the estate during the owner's minority; presumably they would have been keen to leave it in good order. Indeed, Charles Payne's actions after he came of age indicate that the family could not afford to neglect their estate: he mortgaged it, and then sold up in 1824. Finally, the estate managers were not shy of shaking up tenants, for four small occupants were given notices to quit in 1817. Yet all seven large farming families in occupation in 1807 (median holding about 220 acres) were still in place in 1825, as were five of the original seven tenants-at-will. Of course the Tempsford lessees could have been excellent agriculturists – and there is no indication of dissatisfaction with them in an estate survey of 1810 – but this evidence does not suggest that the turnover of tenants-at-will was necessarily inherently high.³⁸

V

Some contemporaries expressed concern about the security of sitting tenants when an estate was sold ('new lords new laws').³⁹ Even if relatively few farmers were at risk because substantial

³⁵ Mean individual terms: 16, 15 and 16 years on small, open and institutionally owned farms respectively. Mean family terms: 37, 32 and 50 years respectively.

³⁶ Mean individual terms: 19, 14 and 16 years in the 1697–1719, 1790–1815 and post-1815 groups respectively. Mean family terms: 45, 24 and 20 years respectively.

³⁷ The mean lease length of the 1697–1719 group was 8 years (14 observations), falling to 3 years for the 1790–1815 group (26 observations). Only one lease was

found for the post-1815 group. The small number of observations also precludes consideration of changes in the importance of widows over time, the hypothesis being that their role declined due to the alleged rise of 'separate spheres'.

³⁸ BLARS, BS/1481/1–4, notices to quit, Aug. 1817; BS/1486–92, estate survey and rentals, 1807–25; WY/279, sale particulars, 1824.

³⁹ Pitt, *General view, Leicester*, p. 343.

TABLE 5. Tenantry under different owners, East Lockinge, Berkshire, 1842–68

<i>Farm</i>	1842 (<i>Bastard trustees</i>)	1854 (<i>Loyd</i>)	1863 (<i>Loyd</i>)	1868 (<i>Loyd</i>)
East Lockinge	William Gibbs	Jas. Gibbs	Jas. Gibbs	Jas. Gibbs
Lockinge Kiln	William Clarke	Jas. Gibbs	Jas. Gibbs	Jas. Gibbs
West Ginge	Sarah Saunders	Chas. Tame	Jas. Bartholomew	?J. K. Reeves
Red Barn, West Ginge	John K. Reeves	J. K. Reeves	J. K. Reeves	J. K. Reeves
Ardington Wick	Richard Richards	Richard Richards	In hand	In hand
Ardington Estate	Thomas Richards	Thomas Richards	Thomas Richards	Thomas Richards
Ardington Clarke's	Mary Clarke	Chas. Clarke	Francis Clarke	In hand

Source: Havinden, *Estate villages*, tables 5, 15, app. 5.

Notes: Landowner given in parenthesis. Includes property in West Ginge and Ardington initially owned by Bastard.

amounts of agricultural land were not frequently traded, it is still worthwhile attempting to assess the impact of new landowners on tenurial turnover.⁴⁰ As a first test, the sample of 32 large farms was divided into two groups: properties that had been owned by the same family for many years and those that had been newly purchased, with the cut-off point being continued ownership for 25 years before the first tenancy observation. The mean length of the individual and family terms were (respectively) four and five years longer on the 19 holdings that had been owned by the same family for over 25 years, suggesting some disruption to tenurial stability upon a change of ownership.⁴¹

A second method is to track farm occupancy before and after the land was sold, although a caveat to the results obtained from this approach is that any changes in survival rates could be as much due to the altering prosperity of farming as the change of ownership. Havinden found records for two west Berkshire parishes, East Lockinge and Ardington. In 1718, Matthew Wymondsold purchased land in East Lockinge, including the township of West Ginge. After his death in 1757, Wymondsold's property passed (by his widow's remarriage) to John Pollexfen Bastard who, by 1781, owned the whole of West Ginge and most of East Lockinge. Comparing the nine farmers mentioned in a 1767 tithe survey of East Lockinge with a list of tenants liable for church repairs in 1718, just three surnames recur, all of whom were small-scale agriculturists. The changes seem to have been fundamentally driven by a desire for consolidation, because in 1781 the whole parish was let to a single farmer. Similarly, in West Ginge five tenants were listed before Wymondsold's purchase, but by 1767 one man cultivated the whole.⁴²

Table 5 lists the tenantry in East Lockinge before and after the Loyd family bought the manor from the trustees of the Bastard family in 1854. At that date, four of the seven farms had different

⁴⁰ Beckett in *Agrarian History*, VI, pp. 546–64, and Turner *et al*, *Agricultural rent*, pp. 170–2, 214–5, provide overviews of the land market.

⁴¹ Farms classified using J. Burke, *A genealogical and heraldic history of the landed gentry of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1837–8); *id.*, *A general and heraldic dictionary of the peerage and baronetage of the United*

Kingdom (London, sixth edn, 1840); VCH, various vols. No information was found for two farms; the five institutional owners were excluded.

⁴² M. Havinden, *Estate villages revisited: a second, updated edition of a study of the Oxfordshire (formerly Berkshire) villages of Ardington and Lockinge* (1999), pp. 37–43, app. 1.

TABLE 6. Tenantry under different owners, Ardington, Berkshire, 1831–68

<i>Farm</i>	1831 (<i>Clarke</i>)	1842 (<i>Vernon</i>)	1854 (<i>Vernon</i>)	1863 (<i>Loyd</i>)	1868 (<i>Loyd</i>)
East Betterton	William Lawrence	Richard Lawrence	Chas. Lawrence	Wm. Whitfield	Wm. Whitfield
Mead	James Phillips	James Phillips	James Phillips	John Phillips & Jos. Boot	John Phillips
Mill	Mr Tame	Edmund Tame	Robert Willoughby	Robert Willoughby	In hand
Opposite church	Mr Mallam	Richard Mallam	?Thomas Goodwin	In hand	In hand
Land nr the Portway	John Ballard	[3 Ballards were smallholders]	?		
Present in 1831 but not 1842: Life Dacre (house and grounds); J. Palmer and J. Wiltshire (both land in Mead)					

Sources: As table 5 plus Havinden's tables 4, 6.

Notes: Landowner again given in parenthesis. There were substantial acreage changes over 1831–42.

tenants compared to 1842, although in only two cases were the new occupiers from another family. These latter newcomers represented 37 per cent of the total acreage of the farms as surveyed in 1842. By 1863, nine years after the purchase, two more tenant families had left; another two changes had occurred by 1868.

Table 6 gives the analogous details for Ardington. The first comparison is the names of the farmers present when the Clarke family sold up in 1831 with those under the second new owner, Robert Vernon, given in the tithe award eleven years later (Vernon purchased the estate in 1833). Three of the eight farming families, accounting for 15 per cent of the total acreage, had departed. All but one of those tenants surviving experienced large changes in the size of their holdings, gaining or losing upwards of a hundred or so acres. Another change of ownership came when the Loyd family bought the manor in 1861. Two years later, three of the four farms had different occupiers compared to 1854, two of which represented a complete change of the occupying family (comprising 70 per cent of the 1842 aggregate acreage). Seven years after the purchase, in 1868, one joint-tenant had departed and a second farm had been taken in hand. The Phillips family remained on Mead farm throughout the entire period covered by Table 6.

Linkage is also possible for the Paynes' estate at Tempsford, Bedfordshire, which was sold to William Stuart in 1824. The first column of Table 7 lists the substantial tenants-at-will at the time of the sale. Five years later, in 1829, five of the seven lessees – who together occupied 73 per cent of the total acreage – had survived the change of landlord, although John Bird lost 52 acres. Robert Denne, who left, had held the mansion house together with a small farm: Stuart might have decided to occupy these himself. By 1833 Bird had departed completely, while Samuel Bennett lost the acreage he had initially gained under the new owner. Thus the limited evidence from these three parishes indicates that, even when farmland did change hands, a sale rarely had a completely destabilising effect on the incumbent tenantry. A change of ownership could substantially quicken the speed of turnover, but at least as frequently the increase was barely perceptible.

TABLE 7. Tenants' survival under different owners, Tempsford, Bedfordshire, 1824–33

Tenants and acreage, 1824 (Payne)	Survivors and acreage, 1829 (Stuart)	Survivors and acreage, 1833 (Stuart)
Samuel Bennett, 342 acres	Samuel Bennett, 429 acres	Samuel Bennett, 336 acres
John Bird, 288 acres	John Bird, 236 acres	–
Silas Cross, 259 acres	–	–
Robert Denne, 163 acres	–	–
Richard Gell, 148 acres	Richard Gell, 148 acres	Richard Gell, 132 acres
Thomas Hill, 120 acres	Thomas Hill, 163 acres	Thomas Hill, 159 acres
Charles Woods, 240 acres	Charles Woods, 251 acres	Charles Woods, 259 acres

Source: BLARS, WY/38, 279, 307, map reference book, sale particulars, schedule.

VI

The evidence presented above suggested that the turnover experience of English rack rent tenants on private estates during 1700–1850 could vary widely according to factors such as the general prosperity of agriculture and the characteristics of the holding. Yet for historians seeking a generalisation of the national picture, the stylised fact of relatively low tenurial mobility appears to be broadly correct, particularly given scattered evidence that at least a fifth of individuals' tenancy changes were caused by death or retirement rather than market forces. The extent of inertia should not be exaggerated, however. It appears, for instance, to have been unlikely for a farming family to remain for more than a generation or two on the same holding. Nevertheless, it is telling that individuals and families stayed on their farms for significantly longer than the duration of their leases. In short, even if much of the data relates to the south and Midlands, the above results should increase the degree of belief in the stylised fact that eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century English tenant farmers were not inherently mobile.

Appendix: Sources of the large farm sample⁴³

Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service

Bennett's farm, Tempsford, Bedfordshire (Payne), 1807–25, BS/1486–92, WY/279; Berry Fields, North Keysoe, Bedfordshire (Crawley), 1704–1804, C/1176–7, 1185–7, 1663–4, 1710, 1714, 1716–7, 1719, 1724, 1730, 1751–75; Rectory farm, Great Barford, Bedfordshire (Francklin, as tenant of Trinity College, Cambridge), 1821–39, FN/308/1–12, FN/1003–4, 1006, 1008, 1010; Stonebanks', Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire (Gibbard), 1818–38, GA/2449, 2456, 2460; Paradise farm, Crudwell, Wiltshire (Lucas), 1755–1808, L/26/1159, 1173, 1177, 1180, 1484; Feary's farm, Upper Dean, Bedfordshire (Boswell), 1767–81, PA/175, X/186/26; Bailey's farm, Sandy, Bedfordshire (Pym), 1802–30, PM/2384–6, 2938/1/1.

Berkshire RO

Furzy Knowle, ?Hanney or ?Shellingford, Berkshire (Goodlake), 1831–59, D/ECR/E1; Freemantle farm,

⁴³ Owner given in parenthesis: all years are new style to Lady Day.

?Wasing, Berkshire (Mount), 1772–87, D/EMT/A6–7; Old Hayes (etc.); Coleshill, Berkshire (Pleydell-Bouverie), 1766–75, D/EPB/E15/1–13, E21; T29/1A, 2A.

Bodleian Library, Oxford

Parsonage estate, Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire (All Souls College, Oxford), 1774–1852, MS. dd All Souls A/43–121, C/192/61, 63–4; C/194–5; Late Webb's, Wytham and Seacourt, Berkshire (Bertie), 1760–1809, MS. dd Bertie D/4, MS. Top. Berks A/5, B/16–36, 38–9; MS. Top. Oxon A/46–7, B/197–206, C/383; Maps MS. C.17.13 (44)R; Shield or Shill farm, Alvescot, Oxfordshire (Harcourt, as trustees of Blake's charity), 1798–1859, MS. dd Harcourt B/17–21, B36–7, C/131; Oxfordshire RO, Welch CV/II/1.

Buckinghamshire RO

Wattson's, Dorton, Buckinghamshire (Aubrey), 1785–1825, D/AF/122/216; D/AF/218/9, 40, D/AF/219, 221–2, 249–53; Havering Down farm, West Wycombe, Buckinghamshire (Dashwood), 1759–1848, D/D/6/130, 139, 155, D/D/14/1/1Q–5Q, D/D/14/3Aa, D/D/14/35/5; John Jane's, Amersham, Buckinghamshire (Tyrwhitt-Drake), 1812–51, D/DR/2/81/1–33, D/DR/2/83; Lodge farm, Medmenham, Buckinghamshire (Lee Antonie), 1776–1833, D/LE/3/150, 166, 169, D/LE/9/8–10, 17–18, 21/1–13, 22/1–24, 23/1–25, 31/1–10; Grove farm, Chesham, Buckinghamshire (Lowndes), 1745–1819, D/LO/4/18, 21, D/LO/6/1/14, 21, D/LO/6/9/2, 4–5.

Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies

Fair Land or Fair Lawn farm, Stevenage, Hertfordshire (Lytton), 1797–1822, 23434, 46712, 46716, 57371–2; K/516–7, 519; Caswell farm, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire (Drake-Garrard), 1767–89, 27233, 27245, 27424/1; Field's farm, ?Offley, Hertfordshire (Wilshere), 1799–1806, 61477/1–16; Rectory and Parsonage farm, Broxbourne, Hertfordshire (Bishop of London), 1697–1856, B/93, 252, 994, 1020–36.

Centre for Kentish Studies

Fyll farm, Egerton, Kent (Mann), 1814–50, U24/A2/1–43, U24/E1, E7; South Stour farm, Mersham and Aldington, Kent (Knatchbull), 1761–1804, U274/T12, U951/A22, A26, A33, A39, A42–4, C67, C136/3; Brasted Court Lodge farm, Brasted, Kent (Stanhope), 1777–1853, U1590/E8/4–12, E10/1, T51/1–2.

Northamptonshire RO

Chapman's, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire (Wentworth-Fitzwilliam), 1750–1836, F(WW) 78–142 and unnumbered, Fitz Misc. Vols 92, 548, 550; Great Oak Close, Lilford, Northamptonshire (Powys), 1741–1828, POW/2–9.

Oxfordshire RO

Spelsbury farm, Spelsbury, Oxfordshire (Dillon), 1702–1802, DIL/I/L/33A–U, II/I/4–5, 7–11; How's, Hardwick, Buckinghamshire (Lee), 1719–78, DIL/XVII/C/11–15, 17–59.

Other

Hallwood farm, Chatteris, Cambridgeshire (Christ Church, Oxford), 1818–44, Christ Church Archives, LIV/B/2, MS Estates 11, fos 100–260; Estates 12, fos 307–411; Charlton Manor farm, Singleton, Sussex (Lennox), 1765–1801, West Sussex RO, Goodwood MS 1904, E/4501–2, E/5143; Clowder's farm, Sydenham, Kent (Leathersellers Company), 1784–1822, BPP, 1824, XIII, *Report of the Charity Commissioners*, pp. 252–3, app. pp. 760–2.

The Pays de Bray: a vale of dairies in northern France

by Hugh Clout

Abstract

Survival strategies for the local economy of the Pays de Bray highlight the attractiveness of its 'green' landscapes of pastures, woodlands and orchards that contrast with the surrounding arable plateaux of northern France. The area has benefited from its relative proximity to Paris, its environmental resources, and the entrepreneurial skills of its farmers to develop an important range of dairying activities, comprising traditional farm-produced cheeses (*Neufchâtel fermier*) and numerous factory-made varieties, as well as butter. The history of this specialisation is traced from the mid-eighteenth century. Attention is drawn to the transformation of the discipline of distance as a result of road improvements and railway construction in the nineteenth century. Production increasingly became factory-based and although farm cheese production is now only a pale shadow of its former importance, it has recently received *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* (AOC) status.

At the start of the twenty-first century farmers throughout France are modifying their survival strategies in order to respond to the new requirements of the Common Agricultural Policy and to capitalize on the growing demand from urban dwellers for countryside recreation and enjoyment.¹ The Pays de Bray, spanning the thousand year old boundary between Normandy and Picardy, is being marketed as an area of woods and pastures, historic churches and *châteaux*, market towns and dispersed farmsteads that is very different in appearance from the surrounding chalk plateaux.² These characteristics were recognized by Gurney in 1845 as he visited 'this valley of much beauty and well-wooded both as to forests and to hedgerow timber, with a great deal of pasture, and both pasture and arable land covered with apple and pear trees for the purpose of making cider and perry; the effect of this is highly picturesque'.³ In addition to commodifying its landscapes, the *Association Culturelle et Touristique du Pays de Bray* has highlighted its traditional local products, including butter, cheese, cider and pottery. Attractive brochures and well-presented information panels include numerous examples of these products, describe the historic and natural interest of numerous sites in the Pays de Bray and identify specific 'routes' that may be followed by motorists, cyclists or ramblers to explore the woodlands, cider orchards, and cheese farms that are now recognized as heritage features.⁴

The present essay seeks to explore the evolution of the dairy industry in this 'green oasis' in

¹ B. Hervieu and J. Viard, *Au bonheur des campagnes* (sec. edn, 2001); id., *L'archipel paysan: la fin de la république agricole* (2001); P. Perrier-Cornet (ed.), *Repenser les campagnes* (2002); J-P. Sylvestre (ed.), *Agriculteurs, ruraux et citadins: les mutations des campagnes françaises* (2002).

² H. Clout, 'Le Pays de Bray: un lieu de mémoire',

Etudes Normandes 51 (4) (2002), pp. 87–99.

³ D. Gurney, *The record of the House of Gournay* (London, 1848), p. 255.

⁴ J-P. Fruit, 'La patrimoine agro-alimentaire revisité: l'accueil à la ferme en Pays de Bray', *Cahiers de l'Association pour le Patrimoine Industriel de Champagne-Ardenne*, 1 (2002), pp. 179–82.

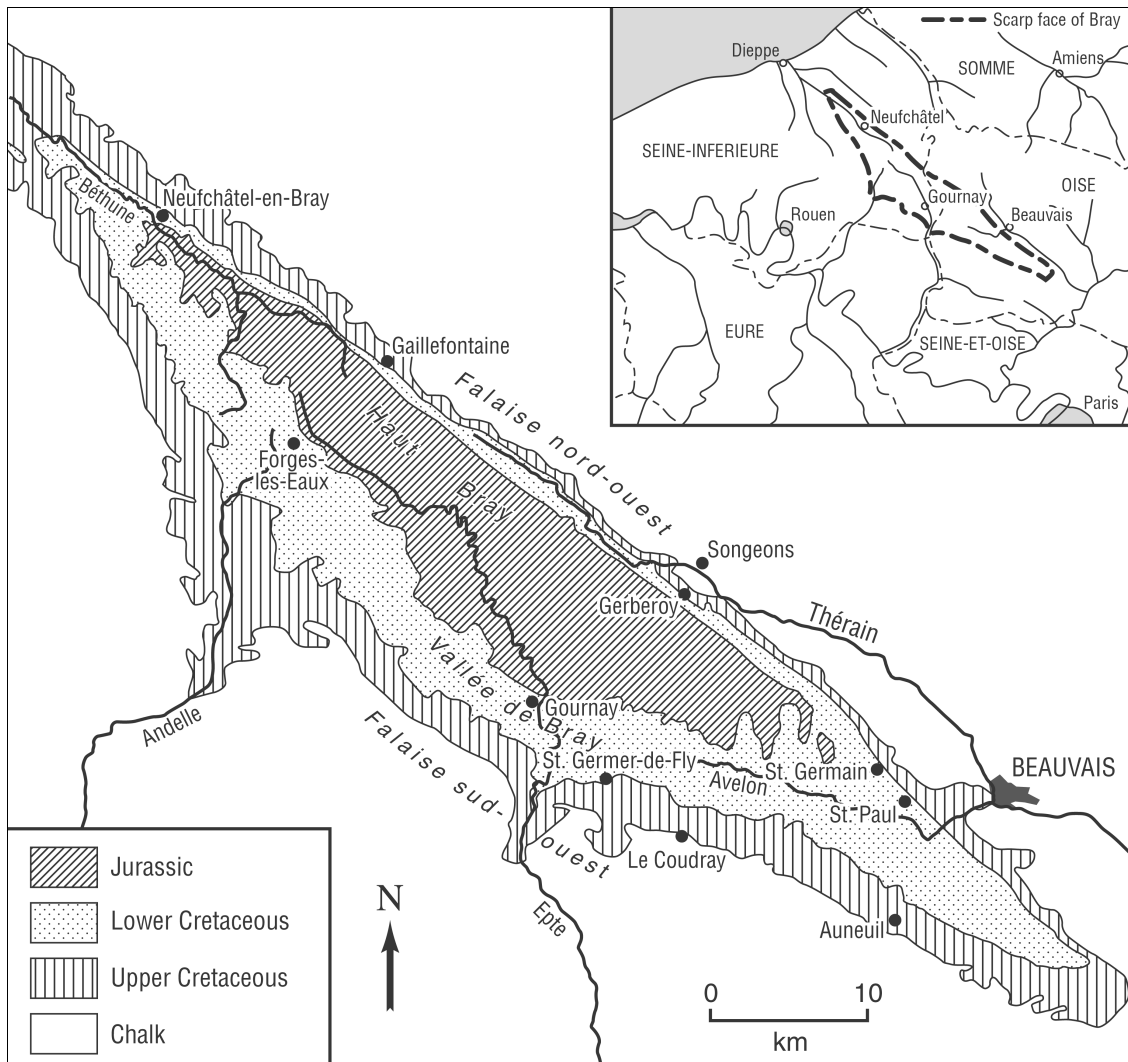


FIGURE 1. The Pays de Bray: geology and towns.

the denuded anticline of Bray that in local parlance 'covers all the territory that is surrounded by chalk'.⁵ In 1869, Dieudonné Dergny went so far as to describe it as 'flowing with streams of milk'.⁶ Conditions between the two scarps are extremely varied, with Bray being 'arid where the iron-bearing sands come to the surface, and damp and wooded where there is clay. The higher areas [in Haut-Bray] become very dry in the summer heat, but are muddy and impassable after rain because of the decomposition of their marls and clays'.⁷ The relationship between

⁵ L. Graves, *Essai sur la topographie géognostique du département de l'Oise* (Beauvais, 1847), p. 34; the diversity of historic agricultural systems in France is discussed by J.-M. Moriceau, *Terres mouvantes. Les campagnes françaises du féodalisme à la mondialisation, XIIe-XIXe*

siècle (2002); also E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Histoire des paysans français de la Peste noire à la Révolution* (2002).

⁶ D. Dergny, *Le Pays de Bray* (Paris, 1869), p. 10.

⁷ Graves, *Essai sur la topographie géognostique*, p. 88.

land use and soil type is, of course, more complex than nineteenth-century *savants* implied but the *pays* is more readily identified from a geological chart than from a topographic map, since this button-hole shaped feature contains gentle hills as well as low-lying valleys and wetlands (Figure 1).⁸ With its numerous springs and streams, the Pays de Bray drains to the Channel and to the Seine, and supported extensive wetlands in the past. At the time of the Revolution, between Forges-les-Eaux and Gournay 'the springs are so abundant that they cannot penetrate the soil, giving rise to mists both morning and evening'.⁹ The core of Bray was wooded in early medieval times and underwent a long and highly contested series of environmental changes as seigniorial woodlands were degraded by livestock owned by surrounding villagers, whose customary rights (*usages*) allowed them to graze cattle and sheep, gather fallen timber, and enjoy other privileges across woodlands, heaths and marshes.¹⁰

In 1740, Duplessis characterized the *pays* as very marshy in its lower areas, with an abundance of grass suitable for fattening livestock.¹¹ Some ploughland was mixed in with the pastures but good wheat was rare since the soil was either sandy or heavy clay. Rye and mixed cereals grew better. The pastures were generally planted with fruit trees, and surrounded by thick hedges that offered shade but rendered roads impracticable.¹² Half a century later, the resources of the Pays de Bray were presented in a more enthusiastic light. The region contained

fertile pastures covered with herds of cattle that yield excellent butter and much cheese. Its industrious inhabitants fatten cows, calves and poultry; its orchards produce very good cider. Gournay [market] is an ever-flowing spring of provisions and foodstuffs for Paris. However, the upkeep of roads is neglected; traders cannot reach the remote countryside; ... if roads are not repaired urgently, trade and farming will languish, and Paris will go hungry.¹³

Not until the nineteenth century were the communal pastures finally replaced by the hedge-ringed enclosures that greatly enhance the appeal of this area.¹⁴ Problems of poor drainage and inadequate communication were tackled and largely resolved after 1850. The historic mixed economy, comprising grain, extensive grazing, some intensive dairying and numerous craft activities, was progressively replaced by dairying from enclosed pastures.¹⁵ In 1836 Moll insisted that 'the pastoral system predominates [in the Pays de Bray] ... and pastures occupy three-quarters of what is not covered with trees'.¹⁶ A decade later, Gurney claimed: 'The Pays

⁸ A. De Lapparent, *Le Pays de Bray* (Paris, 1879); C. Brioux and P. Labounoux, 'Le Bray de la Seine-Inférieure. Zones des herbages et des bouveries', *Annales Agronomiques* (1944), pp. 1–40.

⁹ Archives Départementales de la Seine-Maritime (hereafter ADSM), L 1779, Gournay: agriculture, An II, Commune de Merval.

¹⁰ H. Clout, 'The contested commonlands of the Pays de Bray' (forthcoming).

¹¹ T. Duplessis, *Description géographique et historique de la Haute-Normandie* (2 vols, Paris, 1740), I, p. 53.

¹² C. Gaudefroy, 'Le fromage de Neufchâtel: note historique', in P. Brunet (ed.), *Histoire et géographie des fromages* (1987), p. 141.

¹³ ADSM, F10 221, Extrait d'une lettre des habitants du

Pays de Bray, adressée au Ministre de l'Intérieur, 11 mai An II.

¹⁴ F. Cartier, *Etat de l'agriculture dans l'arrondissement de Neufchâtel* (Neufchâtel, 1822), pp. 21–3; H. Clout, 'The Pays de Bray: a study in land-use change, 1750–1965' (University of London, unpublished M.Phil. thesis, 1967); S. Lycklama, 'Vers une spécialisation agricole. Couchage en herbe et élevage en Pays de Bray, 1800–1850' (Université de Rouen, unpublished mémoire de maîtrise d'histoire, 1988).

¹⁵ R. Abad, *Le grand marché. L'approvisionnement alimentaire de Paris sous l'ancien régime* (2002), pp. 699–710.

¹⁶ M. Moll, 'Excursion agricole dans quelques départements du Nord', *Extraits des Travaux de la Société Centrale d'Agriculture de la Seine-Inférieure* 6 (1836), p. 94.

de Bray is now beyond any other part of France celebrated for the excellence of its dairies. The butter of Bray and the cheeses of Neufchâtel are known to all'.¹⁷ The prediction by geographer Jules Sion in 1909 that the whole of Bray would soon become an immense pasture proved essentially correct.¹⁸ Four years later André Siegfried aptly commented: 'the real capital of the Pays de Bray is Paris'.¹⁹ The present essay pays due attention to changes in competition, innovation, transportation and technology, and acknowledges the spatial variations in dairying activity that have emerged in the Pays de Bray. Well before the Revolution it was an area of precocious economic specialization that contrasted with the polycultural patterns of farming encountered in many other regions of France prior to the railway age. This distinctiveness was the result of spatial location and environmental resources combined with the ingenuity of Brayon farmers in responding to the ever-growing demands of the Parisian market.

I

During the *ancien régime* butter was made on numerous farms surrounding the market town of Gournay which is sited on the river Epte at the frontier between Normandy and Picardy. Paris was less than 90 km (22 leagues) away and the highway through Gisors and Pontoise avoided the unreclaimed wetlands and heaths of the commonlands of eastern Bray. The stretch of wetland extending north-westwards from Gournay to Neufchâtel contained 'excellent pastures, that are sometimes large but mostly small, all surrounded by thick hedges'.²⁰ Four types of improved pasture were recognized by Decorde in 1849.²¹ *Herbages* were delimited by hedges and covered with cider apple trees that were usually so densely planted that both their development and the quality of the underlying grass suffered. *Bouveries* were also hedged but lacked apple trees; many were drained by open ditches and served to fatten dry cows destined for the butchery trade. *Bas prés* were located in marshy spots, were crossed by ditches, and, as natural meadows, were mown rather than grazed. Finally, *prés secs* were located away from watercourses, were manured during the winter, and were mown for fodder. Together, these grasslands composed a highly distinctive environment that would be extended in the future as marshes were drained, woodlands felled, and ploughland converted to permanent pasture.

In 1768, Monsieur de Bacaton, *intendant de commerce*, reported that butter from several parts of the Pays de Bray went under the name of 'beurre de Gournay'. It was 'very much appreciated in Paris ... [reflecting] the quality of the pastures and the cleanliness of the dairies and all the pots that are used'.²² The newly created *Société Royale d'Agriculture de la Généralité de Rouen* also praised the quality of butter made in Bray.²³ The availability of various forms of fodder

¹⁷ Gurney, *Record of the House of Gournay*, p. 6.

¹⁸ J. Sion, *Les paysans de la Normandie orientale* (1909), p. 108.

¹⁹ A. Siegfried, *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest* (1913), p. 253. This early exposure to market requirements may well have contributed to the higher rate of literacy in the Pays de Bray than in surrounding areas. See F. Furet and J. Ozouf, *Reading and writing: literacy in France* (1982), pp. 158–9.

²⁰ J. E. Decorde, *Essai historique et archéologique sur la*

canton de Neufchâtel (Neufchâtel, 1848), p. 8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²² Archives Nationales (hereafter AN), F 12 650, Observations faites par M. de Bacaton, Intendant de Commerce, 1768.

²³ C. Joré, 'Mémoire sur les beurres, les laitages et le commerce du beurre salé dans le Pays de Bray', *Délibérations et Mémoires de la Société Royale d'Agriculture de la Généralité de Rouen*, 1 (1763), pp. 207–32.

from well-watered meadows, *herbages* and rough grazing was essential to its success, and farmers also recognized the need to purchase new cattle from the stock farms of the Cotentin peninsula in Lower Normandy each year.²⁴ Drawing from detailed observations made at Merval (just west of Gournay), Noël described how the milk was processed in cool, vaulted, brick-built underground dairies where the temperature was maintained throughout the year to prevent curdling.²⁵ These cellar-like dairies might require some ventilation in summer and gentle heat in the depths of winter; they were kept scrupulously clean, with outdoor clogs being replaced on entry.²⁶ Joré insisted that the taste and appearance of the butter did not 'depend on the soil but rather on the care taken by the producer'. He then compared the advantages of Bray over other areas, noting

We know of several districts in this province [of Normandy] where the butter is good and of delicate flavour in autumn and at the start of spring, but is rank and bad during summer. This is because conditions are naturally cool in spring and autumn (such conditions are achieved in the Pays de Bray throughout the year). But when the summer arrives, then the bitterness of the milk spoils the butter, making it insipid, even though local pastures are excellent. Presumably if conditions were further improved [in Bray] our farmers would not lose the relative advantage that they currently enjoy only in summer.²⁷

Joré's report alludes to the long-established rivalry between butter producers in Bray and those around Isigny in Lower Normandy (Fig. 2). Located over 240 km (60 leagues) from the capital, farmers from the meadows and wetlands of Bessin could dispatch fresh butter during the winter months without spoiling, but Gournay had the competitive edge in summer, being able to dispatch butter to Paris with little risk of deterioration. Farmers in both areas could 'supply the best butter in the greatest quantities possible', but the anonymous author of this memoir concluded that butter from Isigny was 'greatly superior to that from Gournay'.²⁸ Three months later, Monsieur Bodin of Gournay retaliated, insisting that butter from Bray 'is more able to conserve its substance and its fine, delicate flavour, whilst that from Isigny does not enjoy the same consistency'. He argued that dairy farmers and carriers from Isigny had heavy transport costs to bear; by contrast, producers in Bray paid less on carriage and could devote more money to draining and fertilising their *herbages*, and remunerating their cowmen and dairymaids.²⁹

Dairying was, of course, at the mercy of the weather, with exceptionally dry conditions, as in 1785, greatly reducing fodder supplies, curtailing butter production, and leading to increased prices. Writing from Neufchâtel in February 1786, Bezeuil reported that whilst farmers who normally received 9–10 *sols/livre* of butter were currently receiving 22–23 *sols/livre*, the cost of feeding their cattle had more than doubled.³⁰ In such circumstances of shortage, fodder prices

²⁴ AN, F 10 499, La société populaire de Gournay: rapport concernant la multiplication des élèves en boeufs, vaches, porcs et moutons, An II.

²⁵ S. Noël, *Essai sur le département de la Seine-Inférieure* (2 vols., Rouen, 1795), I, p. 8.

²⁶ ADSM, M, Agriculture. Statistique du département de la Seine-Inférieure, 1820.

²⁷ Joré, 'Mémoire sur les beurres ... dans le Pays de

Bray', p. 216.

²⁸ ADSM, C 188, Agriculture: Gournay. Mémoire sur les beurres d'Isigny et de Gournay, janvier 1787. See also A. Frémont, *L'Elevage en Normandie: étude géographique* (2 vols, 1967), I, pp. 57–66.

²⁹ ADSM, C 118, Agriculture: Gournay. Lettre de Bodin, 28 avril 1787.

³⁰ Ibid., Lettre du 19 février 1786.

were high and fewer livestock could be nourished.³¹ Late in the summer of 1786 dairy farmers from ten parishes between Gournay and Forges-les-Eaux explained to the *intendant* at Rouen that they had had to sell many of their cows for butchery since fodder was so short. They requested that 'a trustworthy man' be selected as their representative to travel to Cotentin, Maine, Brittany and other areas in the following spring to purchase replacement cattle that would be suited to the Pays de Bray. They insisted that dairying was of vital importance in 'over eighty parishes in the Pays de Bray, [whose] inhabitants only make butter and cheese, and raise livestock, all of which contributes to the well-being of the capital'.³²

As well as being sold fresh or lightly salted for local consumption, butter from the Pays de Bray was packed in earthenware jars with a layer of salt across the neck for dispatch to Paris and distant provinces.³³ Butter was also placed in wooden cases for export to tropical destinations in the latter decades of the *ancien régime*.³⁴ Milk and dairy products that were not required for butter served to nourish farmworkers, to fatten calves and pigs, and, of course, to make cheese.³⁵ During the 1820s, Gournay's weekly market handled, on average, 80,000 *livres* of butter, 800,000 eggs, and 'a great multitude' of cheeses.³⁶ As well as serving farms in Seine-Inférieure, substantial quantities of foodstuffs were sent from adjacent areas in the *département* of Oise, some of which were crossed by the new carriageway toward Beauvais.³⁷ However, by the late 1840s, the amount of butter sold there, at Neufchâtel and other local markets was declining since considerable quantities were sent direct from the farms to Paris, other cities, and even abroad.³⁸

Rivalry between Gournay and Isigny continued during the nineteenth century, with Giraudin remarking at mid-century: 'We certainly make better butter than in the past [in the Pays de Bray] but our farmers' wives will have to make considerable progress before they can equal the skills of their counterparts around Bayeux and Isigny'. This was reflected by the fact that butter from Lower Normandy commanded higher prices than that from Gournay at Les Halles in Paris.³⁹ Construction of the railway network worked to the relative disadvantage of the Pays de Bray, with Isigny being served by the Paris-Cherbourg main line as early as 1858 (Fig. 2).⁴⁰ As Brunier remarked: 'before the railways no area could compete with the *arrondissement* of Neufchâtel for sending butter, cheese and eggs to Paris. Now it is not like that, and will be even less so in the future. Products from Lower Normandy are in direct competition with those from the Pays de Bray, and as food is available in greater quantities, so prices have fallen'.⁴¹

³¹ Ibid., Lettre du 5 septembre 1786.

³² Ibid., Lettre des habitants de Mézangueville, etc., 1786.

³³ Joré, 'Mémoire sur les beurres ... dans le Pays de Bray', p. 228.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 225, 229; J. Sion, *Les paysans de la Normandie orientale*, p. 247.

³⁵ Joré, 'Mémoire sur les beurres ... dans le Pays de Bray', p. 221.

³⁶ E. Anne, *Dieppe et sa région. Neufchâtel et le Pays de Bray* (1946), p. 107.

³⁷ L. Graves, 'Précis statistique du canton de Songeons', *Annuaire du Département de l'Oise* (1846), pp. 131-3; 'Précis statistique du canton de Formerie', *An-*

nuaire du Département de l'Oise (1850), pp. 102-4; 'Précis statistique du canton de Saint-Germer', *Annuaire du Département de l'Oise* (1851), pp. 115-17.

³⁸ Anon., 'Importance de l'industrie beurrière dans le département de la Seine-Inférieure en 1876', *Annuaire des Cinq Départements de l'Ancienne Normandie* (1878), p. 46.

³⁹ J. Giraudin, 'Notice sur la fabrication du beurre', *Extraits des Travaux de la Société Centrale d'Agriculture de la Seine-Inférieure* 15 (1849), p. 591.

⁴⁰ R. Musset, *La Normandie* (1960), p. 10.

⁴¹ M. Brunier, 'Souffrances de l'arrondissement de Neufchâtel', *Travaux de la Société Centrale d'Agriculture de la Seine-Inférieure*, 16 (1851), p. 438.

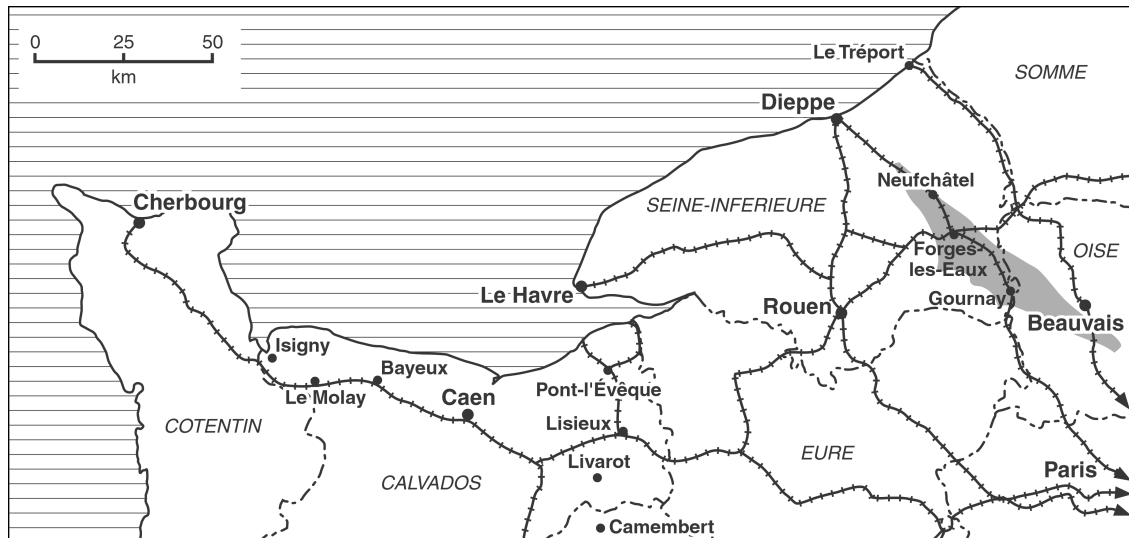


FIGURE 2. Railway network of Normandy.

Butter makers around Gournay responded to this new challenge by enhancing the quality of their product, so that in 1877 Delahaye could report that the town

has recently become famous for the quality of its products, especially its butter which can now rival that from Isigny. Undoubtedly the market [of Gournay] is one of the most frequently used within a radius of 10 leagues (40 km); the railway lines that have recently linked this area to Paris have given it a new life and have contributed to an increase in its wealth.⁴²

The population of Paris was growing rapidly and there was room in the capital's markets for many different suppliers. As Sion commented: 'the Brayons had thought they might be ruined but they were losing heart too fast'.⁴³ New outlets for butter were opening in London, now easily accessible from the Pays de Bray by rail and ferry (Dieppe-Newhaven). However, toward the end of the century butter from Denmark proved to be a formidable competitor, and Gournay butter had also to face growing supplies from Bessin, Cotentin, and Poitou on the Paris market.⁴⁴ The continuing enrichment of the Pays de Bray would have much to do with developments in its cheese industry.

II

The Pays de Bray is currently renowned for two quite distinct types of soft cheese; *Neufchâtel* dates back a thousand years, while *Petit Suisse* has only been produced since 1850. The first

⁴² M. Delahaye, 'Rapport sur le concours du Comice de l'arrondissement de Neufchâtel', *Travaux de la Société Centrale d'Agriculture de la Seine-Inférieure*, 29 (1877), p. 493.

⁴³ Sion, *Les paysans de la Normandie orientale*, p. 387.

⁴⁴ Anne, *Dieppe et sa région*, p. 107; C. Le Carlier de Veslud, *La transformation industrielle des produits laitiers dans le Pays de Bray* (1951), p. 31.

known reference to cheese making in this part of northern France is found in the Charter of Sigy (1037–45) where Hugues de La Ferté, cousin of the *seigneur* of the *comté de Gournay*, established the Abbey of Sigy in the Andelle valley and granted its monks the right to gather tithes on cattle, pigs, sheep, and cheese.⁴⁵ The Charter does not make it clear whether the cheese was made from the milk of ewes or cows, however the activity must have been flourishing to merit special mention.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, this is the earliest reference to cheese making in Upper Normandy, predating other sources by about two decades.⁴⁷ The region suffered the disruptive effects of the Hundred Years War, and the English were not expelled from Upper Normandy until 1449. The main task in the Pays de Bray was to rebuild settlements, reclaim heaths and marshes, and restore agricultural activities, all of which proceeded intermittently during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By 1550, Neufchâtel was already famous for its heart-shaped cheeses called *angelots*.⁴⁸

A chance event during the reclamation of a lake in the Andelle valley in 1573 brought the Pays de Bray to the attention of the citizens of Paris. Members of the hunting party of Nicholas de Moy encountered a spring and remarked that its water reminded them of the waters of Spa in the Ardennes that were famed for assisting those afflicted with dropsy, sterility and other ailments.⁴⁹ A sample was analysed, the result was encouraging, and the town of Forges developed as a resort surrounded by woodlands and wetlands. However, the journey from Paris by carriage or horseback took several days, since road conditions were exceptionally poor in the marshy core of Bray. Forges-les-Eaux remained relatively inaccessible: 'only princes and princesses and *grands seigneurs* were able to make the journey in their carriages, together with their entourage and servants'. The fame of the resort was enhanced when the three main springs were named 'Royale', 'Reinette' and 'Cardinale' to commemorate the visit of Louis XIII, Anne of Austria, and Cardinal Richelieu in June 1633.⁵⁰ As others sought to emulate the example of the elite, Forges attracted a growing clientele who appreciated the soft cheese (*Neufchâtel fermier*) produced on local farms and were keen to consume it when they returned to Paris, Versailles or elsewhere.⁵¹

Neufchâtel fermier was made entirely from cows' milk, with the curds being drained and pressed before being moulded into shape, salted, dried, and left to ripen in cellars that were kept humid (95 per cent humidity) and cool (10–12° C). The cheese was turned every two or three days. After a week or ten days it started to take on a distinctive white bloom (*penicillium candidum*) and could be eaten after two or three weeks when it was uniformly covered. Some consumers demanded a stronger flavour, with the Neufchâtel being ripened until it adopted a reddish hue and gave off a distinct odour of ammonia.⁵² After having been ripened on straw-lined racks for a couple of months, the cheese would keep for up to a year. By the early

⁴⁵ Gaudefroy, 'Le fromage de Neufchâtel', p. 137; M. Ardouin, *Fromage de Neufchâtel* (1963).

⁴⁶ A. Bunel, *Géographie du département de la Seine-Inférieure* (Rouen, 1875), p. 167.

⁴⁷ Gaudefroy, 'Le fromage de Neufchâtel', p. 137.

⁴⁸ Bunel, *Géographie du département de la Seine-Inférieure*, p. 12.

⁴⁹ Anne, *Dieppe et sa région*, p. 33.

⁵⁰ F. Bouquet, *Histoire des eaux de Forges* (Rouen, 1893), pp. 14, 34.

⁵¹ Gaudefroy, 'Le fromage de Neufchâtel', p. 140.

⁵² R. Musset, 'Le Pays de Bray et ses fromages', *Annales de Géographie* 49 (1941), pp. 309–10; C. Brioux, 'Les fromages du Pays de Bray', *Bulletin des Engrais*, 242 (1938), pp. 524–26, 534–36.

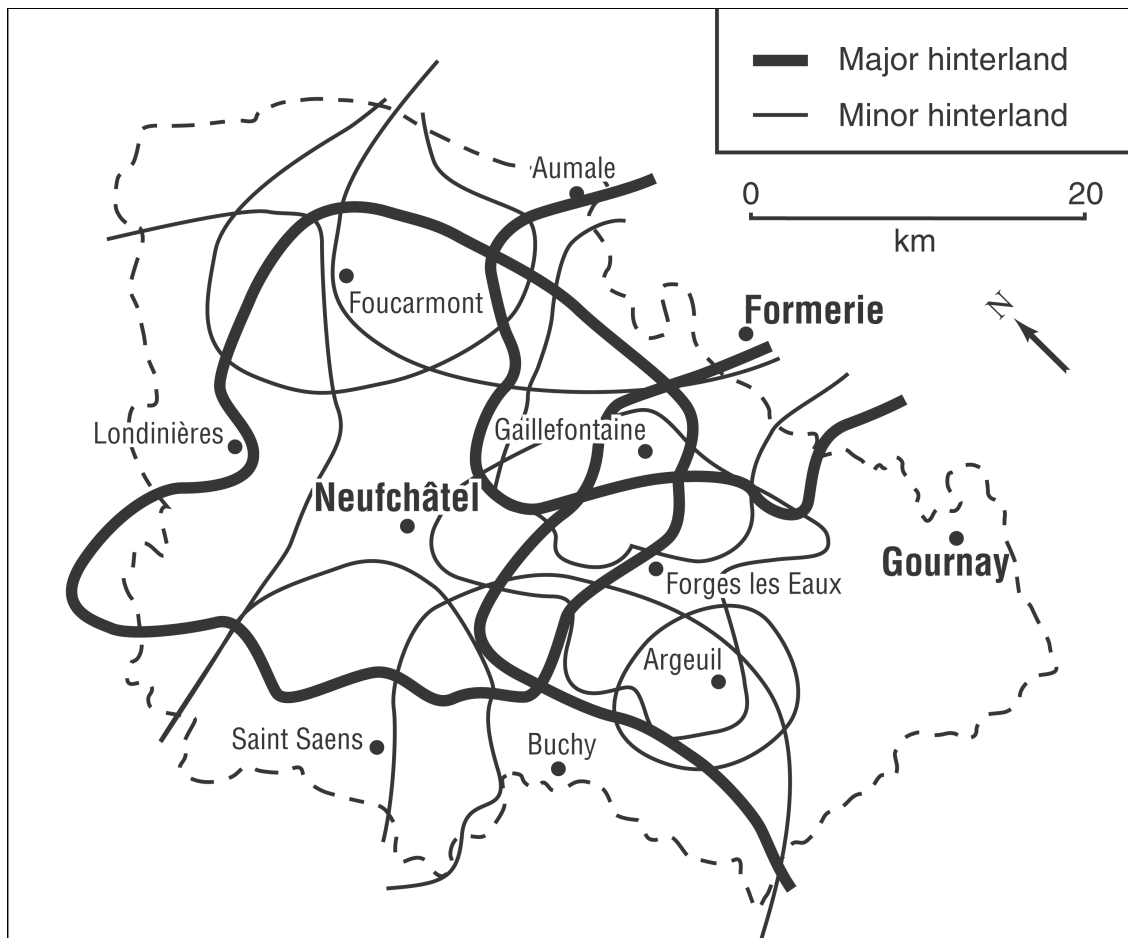


FIGURE 3. Hinterlands around market towns in the Pays de Bray.

eighteenth century, the *coeurs* or *angelots* of Neufchâtel were widely known and appreciated. Cylindrical shaped cheeses, *bondons* (4.5×6.5 cm), were also being made. Similar kinds of cheese were also made around Gournay and were shaped as squares (*carrés*) (6.5×2.5 cm) or flattened cylinders (6×8 cm). Parisians particularly appreciated *fromages de regain* that were made in October using milk from cows that had calved in August or September and been grazed on meadows from which the first crop of hay had been cut back in June. These were recognized as the best quality Neufchâtel cheeses, also being known as *gros doubles*. They were eaten young over the Christmas period or were ripened for eating in late May at Communion celebrations. Even after World War II some farmers ensured that their cows would calve in the late summer so that the milk could be used for making *gros doubles*.⁵³

Markets were held at Neufchâtel every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at which various shapes of cheese were sold, being 'so well known that their praises need not be sung'. The

⁵³ Gaudefroy, 'Le fromage de Neufchâtel', p. 140.

Saturday market was by far the most important with large quantities of cheese, butter, eggs, stock and grain being sold.⁵⁴ During the eighteenth century, new markets for dairy goods were established at Forges-les-Eaux, Gaillefontaine, Buchy and Formerie. The important market at Gournay continued to flourish, albeit with greater emphasis on butter than on cheese. The range over which each of these markets drew goods butter and cheese, and the standing of the local and larger markets which commanded substantial hinterlands can be seen in Figure 3. This is based on information given in the cadastral revision of 1879 on the markets to which individual communes dispatched their dairy produce.⁵⁵

On the eve of the Revolution, Neufchâtel cheese was being produced on farms within a radius of 16 km (4 leagues) of the town and the local population derived considerable incomes from this activity.⁵⁶ Their markets included Paris, Rouen and more distant towns, and hawkers (*colporteurs*) sold them in villages across Picardy and the Pays de Caux.⁵⁷ The 'discipline of distance' prior to the railway age afforded priority to butter around Gournay and to cheese around Neufchâtel (at greater distance from Paris), but despite relative advantages of location, resources and expertise, the core of the Pays de Bray still lacked good means of communication. In March 1789 numerous villagers complained in their *cahiers de doléances* about poor road conditions and urged that new carriageways be built to link Gournay to Forges-les-Eaux and also eastwards to reach Beauvais.⁵⁸

III

In the words of the local *savant* Jules Malicorne: 'travel by carriage was impossible [in parts of the Pays de Bray] during the eighteenth century. Farmers' wives were compelled to carry goods to market in baskets or on their backs or on the backs of plough horses in the case of richer farmers'. However, three royal highways (*chemins du roi*) crossed the area: between Rouen and Amiens, Dieppe and Beauvais, and Paris and Dieppe, with Gournay as their junction (Fig. 4).⁵⁹ The latter road was known as the *route des maréchaussées* (highway of the mounted constables) and was used by four-horse wagons to transport fresh fish from the Channel port to Paris.⁶⁰ Leaving Dieppe in the evening, these wagons reached the Faubourg Poissonnière of Paris and Les Halles before dawn.⁶¹ Two alternative routes existed for the first part of the journey, one passing through Neufchâtel and Gaillefontaine, and the other through Forges and Gournay.⁶² The Neufchâtel route 'serves thirty-two villages that can scarcely move their food-stuffs out to market during the winter, even by horseback ... [road improvements] would assist them to export cider that often remains unsold since outsiders are unsure of the tracks and

⁵⁴ Oursel, quoted in Decorde, *Essai historique*, p. 9.

⁵⁵ Similar, but less complete, information was provided in the cadastral revision of 1850. Both revisions are housed in the archives of the *Direction des Contributions Directes* in Rouen.

⁵⁶ ADSM, F 12 650, Commerce et Industrie, Bray, 1782.

⁵⁷ Gaudefroy, 'Le fromage de Neufchâtel', p. 140; Sion, *Les paysans de la Normandie orientale*, p. 247.

⁵⁸ ADSM, B, Cahiers de Doléances, Bailliage de Neufchâtel; E. Le Parquier, 'Le Pays de Bray en 1789', *La*

Normandie (1906), pp. 97–144; E. Le Parquier, *Cahiers de doléances du bailliage de Neufchâtel-en-Bray* (1908).

⁵⁹ J. Malicorne, *Recherches historiques sur l'agriculture dans le Pays de Bray* (3 vols., 1902), III, pp. 35, 38.

⁶⁰ M. Miellot, 'La chasse-marée et l'approvisionnement de Paris d'autrefois en poisson frais', *Annales des Cinq Départements de l'Ancienne Normandie* (1933), p. 30.

⁶¹ M. David, 'La route de la mer', *Présence Normande* (1961), p. 25.

⁶² Malicorne, *Recherches historiques*, II, p. 38.

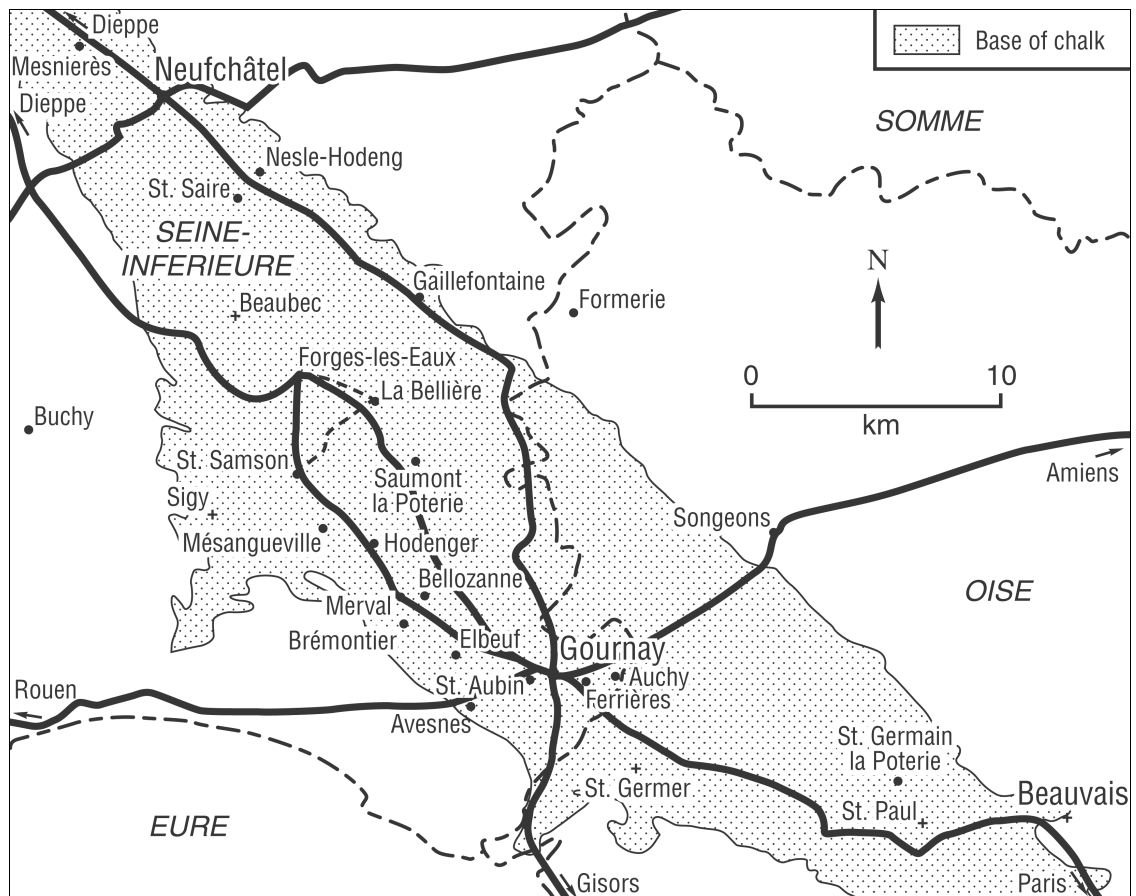


FIGURE 4. Highways and settlements in the Pays de Bray.

approaches to different farms'. In this clayey area of woodlands and enclosed pastures, 'most roads are narrow and deeply shaded by hedgerows and trees that keep them harmfully damp'.⁶³

The other route, between Gournay and Forges, was known as the *chemin des beurriers* (buttermakers) and was even more hazardous since it passed through the marshy core of the Pays de Bray. This was, however, the route that visitors attempted to use as they travelled to sample the waters at Forges-les-Eaux. They complained bitterly at conditions beyond Gournay, as they crossed the marshes and moors of Avesnes, Elbeuf, Brémontier, Bellozanne, Hodenger and Mésangueville. At this last village, 'travellers were obliged to leave the *chemin des beurriers* as it became completely impassable before Saint-Samson, and to follow tracks through the Forêt de Bray to reach La Bellière, then to cross the river Epte and finally reach Forges'.⁶⁴ By making this diversion, travellers avoided dangerous ravines at Saint-Samson and unreclaimed marshes at Le Fayel and Les Aulnays de Catillon. Nonetheless, there were

⁶³ ADSM, C 2170, Procès-verbal des séances de l'assemblée du département: Neufchâtel et Eu, s. d., p. 21.

⁶⁴ Malicorne, *Recherches historiques*, II, pp. 44–5.

numerous difficulties since carriages had to make part of the diversion up to their axles in standing water.⁶⁵ Because of these problems, the idea was mooted of a new carriageway from the capital to the Channel, serving Pontoise, Gisors, Gournay, Forges, and finally Dieppe.⁶⁶

Following the visit of Marie-Joséphé de Saxe (second wife of Louis the Dauphin) to Forges in June 1749, improvements were started on the highway between Gisors and Gournay.⁶⁷ Surveys for the new road between Gournay and Forges began in 1755, with work on the first sections starting ten years later.⁶⁸ By 1787 a few short lengths had been completed near the spa of Forges, at Saint-Aubin and elsewhere, amounting to no more than 3.5 km (2,000 *toises*). When finally constructed, the road would improve access between the capital, Forges and Dieppe; the Tuesday market at Gournay would also benefit.⁶⁹ The oft-repeated idea of digging a canal from Dieppe to Paris through the Pays de Bray came to nothing.⁷⁰

In 1786 Bodin reported on the dual difficulties of carrying butter, eggs, poultry and calves from surrounding farms to Gournay, and of dispatching goods thence to Paris. The royal highway east of Gournay was in a very poor state and vehicles travelling to Paris were 'almost always obliged to go on a longer route through Gisors', rather than Beauvais. If a new highway were built between Gournay and Beauvais 'the neighbouring part of Picardy would be further developed, since the foodstuffs it can produce could be marketed easily and cheaply through Gournay', unfortunately 'most roads from Gournay into Picardy remain bad and impracticable'.⁷¹ By contrast, the carriageway between Gournay, Gisors and Paris had been installed for four decades, was well maintained, and greatly contributed to supplying food to Paris. Conditions between Gournay and Forges were especially lamentable, and only two-thirds of the road surface between Gournay and Rouen had been laid, 'the rest of the route being very poor, and completely impracticable' for carriages during the winter. As a consequence, the citizens of Gournay preferred to travel to the capital than to Rouen, 'because the journey is very much easier'.⁷² Despite problems, Gournay attracted farmers from up to 40 km (10 leagues) and functioned as if it were 'almost one of the markets of Paris'.⁷³ Every Monday evening forty or fifty carts would arrive from Paris, Versailles, Saint-Denis, Saint-Germain, Pontoise, and Argenteuil, and would leave the next evening, laden with butter, cheese, eggs, poultry, calves, and game to reach their destinations before dawn in the cool of Wednesday morning.⁷⁴ Observers believed that the population of Gournay quadrupled on market day.⁷⁵

Although being piecemeal, every road improvement in the Pays de Bray enhanced the potential of the local dairy trade. Revolutionary legislation offered the opportunity of dividing commonland between villagers, and replacing wetlands, moors and heaths with enclosed

⁶⁵ David, 'La route de la mer', p. 27.

⁶⁶ Malicorne, *Recherches historiques*, II, p. 45.

⁶⁷ David, 'La route de la mer', p. 27.

⁶⁸ Malicorne, *Recherches historiques*, II, p. 46.

⁶⁹ ADSM, C 185, Subdélégation de Gournay. Rapport de Bodin, 29 août 1787.

⁷⁰ Noël, *Essai sur le département de la Seine-Inférieure*, I, p. 12.

⁷¹ ADSM, C 118, Agriculture: Gournay. Lettre de Bodin, 4 mars 1786.

⁷² ADSM C 185, Subdélégation de Gournay. Rapport

de Bodin, 29 août 1787.

⁷³ M. Potin de la Mairie, *Recherches historiques sur la ville de Gournay* (Gournay, 1842), p. 240; F. Laurent, 'Les concours des rameaux de Rouen et de Gournay', *Travaux de la Société Centrale d'Agriculture de la Seine-Inférieure* (1909), pp. 31–5.

⁷⁴ Potin de la Mairie, *Recherches historiques*, p. 343; ADSM, L 1819, Tableau des foires et marchés: district de Gournay, 18 ventôse An II.

⁷⁵ J. Soulas, 'Villes-marchés et villes d'industrie de Haute-Normandie', *Annales de Géographie* 44 (1936), p. 399.

pastures and fields. With respect to pastoral practices, the transition from collectivism to individualism, and from rough grazing to more intensively used enclosures, proved contentious and far from unproblematic in the Pays de Bray. The old order of rural organization was not without its defenders, but by the time that the taxation surveys of the *ancien cadastre* were undertaken (c. 1820–30) most traces of rough grazing had been replaced by swathes of *bocage*.⁷⁶ In the words of the rapporteur to the *Association Normande* in 1845: ‘the increase in *herbages* is indisputably the most important improvement in the *arrondissement* [of Neufchâtel] over the past forty years. Indeed, in many communes the area under grass has increased by half’.⁷⁷ Farmers were very attentive to the quality of their herds, buying fresh dairy cows from the Cotentin and elsewhere in Lower Normandy, as well as other cattle that were fattened for the butchery trade in Paris, Rouen, Amiens and Beauvais.⁷⁸

In 1817 the prefect of Oise *département* reported that work was in progress along the carriageway between Gournay and Beauvais, with ‘nine inches (*pouces*) of large stones being placed by hand and hammered into place, then covered by a further eight inches of pebbles’.⁷⁹ Similar progress was made on the other highways, but the section between Gournay and Forges was not completed until the early decades of the nineteenth century, by which time the fashion for sea bathing had created an additional imperative for a good road between Paris and Dieppe.⁸⁰ Minor roads between villages and market towns and out among the farmsteads were not improved until well after legislation of 1836 specified responsibilities and sources of funds.⁸¹ In 1844, Potin de la Mairie remarked that over the past decade ‘the number of roads has increased in the Pays de Bray, and others have been improved. But what is harmful to the roads, even the best in the Pays de Bray, is the constant dampness of the soil and the excessive price of road-building materials’.⁸² At mid-century ‘there were still certain villages in the Pays de Bray that could only be reached on horseback. Now [a quarter century later] the whole area has excellent roads, despite the nature of the soil that is very marshy in the Vallée de Bray’.⁸³

As new roads opened up the Pays de Bray, so new techniques of land drainage improved agricultural conditions. The area had a history of open channels and trenches being filled with branches or stones and then covered with soil. These approaches were successful to some extent, but much land remained to be drained in the middle years of the nineteenth century when piped underdrainage techniques were introduced to France from Britain.⁸⁴ The French government

⁷⁶ H. Clout, ‘The increase in the grassland area of the Pays de Bray’, *Erdkunde* 23 (1969), pp. 20–29; id., ‘The retreat of the wasteland of the Pays de Bray’, *Trans. Institute of British Geographers* 47 (1969), pp. 171–89.

⁷⁷ Anon., ‘Rapport sur l’état de l’agriculture dans l’arrondissement de Neufchâtel en 1845, comparé à la culture ancienne’, *Annales des Cinq Départements de l’Ancienne Normandie* (1846), p. 551.

⁷⁸ M. Lelong, ‘Rapport sur l’engraissement des boeufs et des vaches dans l’arrondissement de Neufchâtel’, *Extraits des Travaux de la Société Centrale d’Agriculture de la Seine-Inférieure* 13 (1845), p. 335.

⁷⁹ Archives Départementales de l’Oise (ADO), Fic V(2), Conseil Général du Département de l’Oise. Extrait

du procès-verbal de l’arrondissement de Beauvais, 1817.

⁸⁰ David, ‘La route de la mer’, p. 27.

⁸¹ M. De Moy, ‘Rapport de la Commission des Recherches sur l’exploitation de l’arrondissement de Neufchâtel’, *Extraits des Travaux de la Société Centrale d’Agriculture de la Seine-Inférieure* 13 (1845), p. 301.

⁸² M. Potin de la Mairie, *Recherches historiques sur la ville de Gournay, Supplément* (Gournay, 1844), p. 339.

⁸³ Bunel, *Géographie du département de la Seine-Inférieure*, p. xviii.

⁸⁴ A. D. M. Phillips and H. D. Clout, ‘Underdrainage in France during the second half of the nineteenth century’, *Trans. Institute of British Geographers* 51 (1970), pp. 71–94.

distributed funds to agricultural societies to purchase pipes and to acquire pipe-making machines. Members of the *Société d'Agriculture de la Seine-Inférieure* realised the potential offered for improving the wetlands of Bray, and in 1851 the *Association Agricole du Drainage de l'Oise* was founded to propagate underdrainage and to create work for the poor and seasonally-unemployed agricultural labourers to the east of the Epte.⁸⁵ During the 1850s, machines for making pipes from local clays were installed at Saint-Germain-la-Poterie, Saint-Samson, Neufchâtel, Forges, and Saumont-la-Poterie.

Property fragmentation hindered the implementation of underdrainage in some sections of the Pays de Bray, but on larger, unfragmented holdings (such as the estate of M. De Bellozanne) the process was taken up with enthusiasm and considerable success.⁸⁶ It was as if 'the grasslands of the whole of Bray were surrounded by trenches, destined to receive drainage pipes'.⁸⁷ Results were generally successful, as at Gournay where 'damp pastures of the worst kind, where cattle became stuck in the mud if they were left out after October, had been so improved that, in spite of heavy rains, they could graze the drained land without being any more troubled by damp than if they were on a highway'.⁸⁸ Areas of peaty soil were also drained for grazing or cultivation.⁸⁹ After 1860, the *Société d'Agriculture* and the *Comice Agricole de Neufchâtel* rewarded many landowners in the Pays de Bray with medals and other prizes for their successful underdrainage.⁹⁰

The experience of highway building was mirrored in the construction of the earliest railway lines: these too avoided the Pays de Bray. Thus, the line between Paris and Dieppe that was opened in 1848 ran through Rouen and across the Plateau de Caux to the west of Bray. Likewise the line from Paris through Pontoise to Le Tréport via Beauvais did not enter the Pays de Bray. However, the new highway from Gournay made Beauvais an important trans-shipment point for certain foodstuffs, including *petits suisses* cheeses made at Gournay and Ferrières. Not until 1872 did the railway serving Gournay, Forges-les-Eaux, Neufchâtel and Dieppe come into operation, facilitating the distribution of Neufchâtel cheese and permitting an interesting innovation in organisation.⁹¹ Isidoire Lefebvre, a dairy farmer from Nesle-Hodeng, realised that the nearby station at Saint-Saire would assist his scheme for collecting curds from surrounding farms, shaping them in his dairy, and maturing them in his own cellars.⁹² His 'Triomphant' brand of cheese enjoyed considerable success, with large quantities being sent by rail to Paris, and to Dieppe for dispatch to London. Other entrepreneurs in the Pays de Bray emulated his

⁸⁵ J. Barral, *Drainage des terres arables* (4 vols, Paris, 1856), III, p. 113; ADO, F10 1636. Drainage: Oise. Association Agricole du Drainage du Département de l'Oise.

⁸⁶ Anon., 'Réunion à Gournay de l'Association Normande en 1856', *Annales des Cinq Départements de l'Ancienne Normandie* (1857), p. 176; J. Nacivet, 'Le Service des améliorations agricoles', *Travaux de la Société Centrale d'Agriculture de la Seine-Inférieure* (1909), pp. 58–60.

⁸⁷ Anon., 'Enquête agricole sur l'arrondissement de Neufchâtel', *Annales des Cinq Départements de l'Ancienne Normandie* (1903), p. 33.

⁸⁸ M. Marchal, 'Rapport sur les communications au sujet de drainage', *Extraits des Travaux de la Société Centrale d'Agriculture de la Seine-Inférieure* 17 (1854), p. 51.

⁸⁹ M. Manière and M. Fauchet, 'Essai sur l'état de l'agriculture dans le département de la Seine-Inférieure en 1860', *Extraits des Travaux de la Société Centrale d'Agriculture de la Seine-Inférieure* 22 (1863), p. 474.

⁹⁰ ADSM, M, Agriculture: Sociétés et Comices Agricoles. Comptes-rendus des travaux.

⁹¹ W. Diville and A. Guilcher, *Bretagne et Normandie* (1951), p. 60.

⁹² Gaudefroy, 'Le fromage de Neufchâtel', p. 141.

example of collecting and maturing Neufchâtel.⁹³ The prefect of Seine-Inférieure noted over 4,000 tonnes of cheese being produced in the *arrondissement* of Neufchâtel in 1873.⁹⁴ By the end of the century it was 'not rare to see 80–100,000 cheeses on the Neufchâtel markets' each week during the summer months. Almost all the milk produced in the Pays de Bray was being transformed into cheese on farms, at three cheeseworks in Gournay-Ferrières, or at isolated plants at Saint-Saire and Mesnières. In addition, a dairy at Neufchâtel was producing important quantities of sterilized and condensed milk.⁹⁵

IV

The great innovation in cheese making occurred not around Neufchâtel but in the environs of Gournay where farmers produced a similar product, typically shaped into a square or into a flattened cylinder, with a slightly drier consistence than *Neufchâtel fermier*. In addition, some Gournay cheeses were matured, with the cellars of the Ferme du Parc at Gournay, of Madame Herould at Auchy-en-Bray, and of Charles-Etienne Pommel also at Gournay enjoying a high reputation in the 1840s. Madame Herould also produced fresh cheeses (*fromages blancs*) but, unlike her neighbours, chose not to sell them on the local Tuesday market but dispatched them every day by horse-drawn wagon to a distributor at Les Halles in Paris. This procedure guaranteed maximum freshness and was particularly appreciated by consumers in the capital. She employed a number of Swiss dairymen and in 1850 followed their suggestion to add extra cream to the curds, to produce a much richer *fromage blanc* as was the practice in the Vaud *canton* of Switzerland.

In this way the first batch of *petits suisses* was made at Auchy-en-Bray. Charles Gervais, a young man from Fontainebleau employed by the cheese wholesaler in Paris, entered into business with Madame Herould and in 1852 they opened a new dairy at the Château du Manais at Ferrières, adjacent to the Gournay-Songeons road.⁹⁶ Milk was supplied from their company's own herd and from local dairy farmers in both Seine-Inférieure and Oise, within a 12 km radius of Gournay.⁹⁷ Gervais employed members of the Lagler and Reichmuth families from Switzerland and, with a genius for publicity, had the words '*Petits suisses* sent direct from the Vaud' or 'Coming from Switzerland' printed on the labels of his small cylindrical soft cheeses. This was indeed more than a white lie, but contemporaries excused 'this little stratagem since the cheese is good'.⁹⁸

At first, these rich dessert cheeses were taken by wagon to Paris but the opening of the railway between Paris and Beauvais in 1857 offered Gervais a faster means of transport.⁹⁹ For a dozen years the first leg of the journey to the capital was achieved by four-horse wagon to Beauvais, but in 1870 a line reached Ferrières-Gournay. Gervais relocated his cheese works to the Ferme de l'Estre, adjacent to the new railway, and sent curds and fresh cream in separate refrigerated

⁹³ M. Poincheval, *Fromages de Normandie* (1960).

⁹⁴ Gaudefroy, 'Le fromage de Neufchâtel', p. 141.

⁹⁵ Anon., 'Enquête agricole', p. 26.

⁹⁶ M. Pellet, 'L'origine des petits suisses', *Bulletin de la Société Centrale d'Agriculture de la Seine-Inférieure* (1939), pp. 16–20; Frémont, *L'Élevage en Normandie*, II, pp. 167–8.

⁹⁷ V. E. Ardouin-Dumazet, *Voyages en France* (66 vols, Paris, 1898), XVII, p. 82.

⁹⁸ Decorde, *Essai historique*, p. 137.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*; A. Delobez, 'La Vallée du Thérain de Beauvais à Creil', *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Mémoires et Documents (Géographie)* 7 (1960), p. 237.

wagons for mixing, moulding and packing at 25 Rue du Pont-Neuf, on the fringe of Les Halles in Paris.¹⁰⁰ With the two ingredients arriving by train in the capital about midnight, the *petits suisses* were ready to be taken to shops and hotels by dawn. Gervais' deliverymen wore the distinctive Normandy smock (*blouse normande*) that made them instantly recognisable on the streets. Gervais was not alone in this kind of enterprise. Charles-Etienne Pommel, who had moved to Gournay from the Puy-de-Dôme in 1839 in order initially to produce traditional *Gournay fermier* that he shaped into squares, also started to make rich double cream cheeses that were marketed as *petits Pommel*.¹⁰¹ By 1896 his dairy at Gournay had moved beyond the artisanal stage and was employing 25 workers, but this enterprise was far outstripped by the Gervais plant at Ferrières with about a hundred staff.¹⁰²

By virtue of this integration of resources, locational opportunity and business acumen, the preparation of ingredients for *fromages double-crème* and other cheeses had become the main industry of the market town of Gournay (population 4,000 in 1900, with a further 2,000 at Ferrières).¹⁰³ By 1905 over 200 people worked in the industrial dairies of the two firms.¹⁰⁴ The Gervais works processed the milk of 4,000 cows every day and produced a dozen types of cheese, with supplies being directed especially to Paris, Lille, and Brussels.¹⁰⁵ The Pommel factory received milk from 1,500 cows and sent cheese to Rouen and other towns in Seine-Inférieure and surrounding *départements* rather than to the capital.¹⁰⁶ Subsidiary activities included making wooden boxes for transporting cheese, and fattening pigs on nearby farms using *petit lait* from the dairies.¹⁰⁷ Workers at the two plants were allowed to take some of this back to their homes for that very purpose; and large numbers of pigs were sent to the market of La Villette in Paris.¹⁰⁸ Almost fifty Swiss workers were still employed at Ferrières-Gournay at the turn of the century.¹⁰⁹

After 1920 both firms enlarged and modernized their plants in the Pays de Bray, and Gervais opened new facilities in the capital to process and distribute what had been developed into 'industrial' products. However, the market for these double-cream dessert cheeses soon suffered the effects of the economic recession as well as competition from other products, including yoghurt and imported apples and bananas. In 1937 Gervais absorbed its smaller competitor and by the outbreak of war was operating plants at Ferrières-Gournay, Neufchâtel, Paris, Longueville (in Petit Caux) and Le Molay Littry (on the Paris-Cherbourg main line in Lower Normandy). The Ferrières works was bombed by the Germans as they advanced in 1940 and again by the Allies in 1944. This caused serious temporary disruption but allowed further modernisation, with Gervais employing 500 at Ferrières and 50 at Neufchâtel in 1950.¹¹⁰ Milk from 37,000 cows on 3,600 farms distributed across 70,000 ha was supplied to the Ferrières factory at

¹⁰⁰ G. Robert, 'Economie rurale du Pays de Bray', *Journal d'Agriculture Pratique* (1880), p. 32; B. Garnier, 'Paris et les fromages frais au XIXe siècle', in Brunet (ed.), *Histoire et géographie des fromages*, pp. 123–35.

¹⁰¹ Brioux, 'Les fromages du Pays de Bray'.

¹⁰² T. Canouville-Deslys, *Rapport sur le mouvement agricole de la Normandie* (Caen, 1896), p. 61.

¹⁰³ Soulas, 'Villes-marchés et villes d'industrie de Haute-Normandie', p. 400.

¹⁰⁴ Sion, *Les paysans de la Normandie orientale*, pp. 389–90.

¹⁰⁵ Anon., 'Enquête agricole', p. 27; Frémont, *L'Elevage*

en Normandie, I, pp. 159–54.

¹⁰⁶ M. Morière, 'De l'industrie fromagère dans le département de la Seine-Inférieure', *Annales des Cinq Départements de l'Ancienne Normandie* (1878), p. 108.

¹⁰⁷ Sion, *Les paysans de la Normandie orientale*, p. 390.

¹⁰⁸ Anon., 'Concours de la Société 1906', *Travaux de la Société Centrale d'Agriculture de la Seine-Inférieure* (1908), p. 51.

¹⁰⁹ Sion, *Les paysans de la Normandie orientale*, p. 390.

¹¹⁰ F. Canu, *Structure agricole optimum: le Pays de Bray* (1957), p. 35.

mid-century.¹¹¹ As René Musset remarked: 'the Pays de Bray lives in the shadow of Paris ... almost like a great Parisian farm', with Gournay's Tuesday market drawing commodities from farms up to 30 km away.¹¹²

V

Until the Second World War, production of *Neufchâtel fermier* continued much as before, with most dairy farms in the core of the Pays de Bray continuing to make cheese, at least for their own consumption if not always for sale.¹¹³ During the war farm-based production was disrupted and the overall quality of the cheese declined. The number of cheeses sold on the Neufchâtel weekly market fell from 30,000 in 1914, to 10,000 in 1938 and 3,000 in 1950. Direct sales of *Neufchâtel fermier* from individual holdings fell from 60,000 on the eve of the Second World War to 20,000 at mid-century. Collection of curds from individual farms for processing and maturing in central dairies and cellars was interrupted during the war; and after 1945 cheese works increased their production of *Neufchâtel laitier* direct from milk. Cheese making was changing dramatically and the artisanal qualities of *Neufchâtel fermier* were overtaken by much more homogenized factory-made products. At mid-century, the main Gervais factory, with 500 employees, continued to dominate cheese production in the Pays de Bray; four much smaller works employed only 80 between them. The Neufchâtel dairy producing condensed milk drew on milk supplies from 15 communes within a 30 km radius and employed 120 people. By this time, farm-based cheese production had effectively disappeared from the eastern section of the Pays de Bray but, together with butter making, survived around Neufchâtel and Forges-les-Eaux.¹¹⁴

In 1949 many producers associated themselves with an experimental label of quality for *Neufchâtel fermier* but the project was discontinued four years later. In 1957, farmers and agricultural advisers came together in a *Syndicat du Label du Fromage de Neufchâtel* that had the dual objective of encouraging the production of *Neufchâtel fermier* and enhancing its quality. Initial membership was 70 and during the first year 1,700,000 farm-made cheeses bore the 'label' of quality. The *Syndicat* was supported by the *Direction Départementale d'Agriculture* for Seine-Maritime, whose staff visited members' dairies to analyse samples of cheese, identify any shortcomings and promote good practice. It was soon discovered that very minor changes in procedure on some dairy farms could generate very good results. In the words of Poincheval: 'Every producer had their own ideas about cheese-making techniques, some of which were false and others were real aberrations'.¹¹⁵

In 1958 about 80 farmers were still making *Neufchâtel fermier*, 57 of whom belonged to the *Syndicat*, with the remainder operating independently. On average, 50,000 *Neufchâtel fermier* cheeses were made each week, giving a total annual yield in excess of 2,500,000. Two-fifths of these were sold direct by the farmers, with the remainder being handled by half a dozen collectors and distributors. (In addition, five factories produced *Neufchâtel laitier*, using milk from

¹¹¹ Le Carlier de Veslud, *La transformation industrielle*, p. 58; J. Corbière, *Les industries laitières en Seine-Maritime* (1960).

¹¹² Musset, *La Normandie*, p. 36; S. D'Arcier, *Gournay et le Pays de Bray* (1950), p. 75

¹¹³ Gaudefroy, 'Le fromage de Neufchâtel', p. 141

¹¹⁴ The previous paragraph is based on Le Carlier de Veslud, *La transformation industrielle*, pp. 31, 41, 46.

¹¹⁵ M. Poincheval, *Fromage de Neufchâtel*, p. 4.

individual farms or milk collecting cooperatives, and yielding about 4,000,000 cheeses each year.) The 'label' served as a guarantee of quality that was widely appreciated by consumers, but there were subtle variations in quality and flavour from farm to farm and week by week. In some cases cellars needed to be improved to ensure that temperature and humidity could be controlled effectively. Such changes required capital or loans, as well as modification in work routine for some producers. By identifying these technical matters, with clear financial implications, the *Syndicat* may well have led some older farmers with small herds to dissociate themselves from its activities, or to cease cheese making altogether. For whatever combination of reasons, membership of the *Syndicat* contracted to 37 in 1963, by which time only 1,200,000 cheeses were bearing its label, out of a total annual output of 2,300,000 *Neufchâtel fermier* cheeses. (In addition, three factories were producing 4,000,000 *Neufchâtel laitier* cheeses each year.)

By 1966 the total number of producers of *Neufchâtel fermier* had contracted to about 50, half of whom belonged to the *Syndicat*.¹¹⁶ Four firms that supplied grocery chains, large stores and hotels collected cheeses from its members. Four-fifths of the cheese made by independent producers was sold directly by them, with the remaining share being handled by the collecting firms. About one-fifth of the *Neufchâtel fermier* was sent to the wholesale market of Paris and to large hotels in the capital, with the remainder being dispatched to markets and shops in Seine-Maritime, Eure, Oise and Somme. Industrially produced *Neufchâtel laitier* was typically distributed through grocery and supermarket chains. In 1977 the *Syndicat* managed to obtain *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* (AOC) status for *Neufchâtel fermier*: this strictly defines the area in which it may be made. Regular inspections by members of a public control commission ensure authenticity and quality of production. Despite this accolade and a lively interest among local consumers and some visitors to the Pays de Bray, the number of farm-based cheese makers has continued to decline, with a total of 'under thirty' and 'precisely 27' being mentioned by two producers in September 2002.

V

At the start of the twenty-first century, the tradition of producing *Neufchâtel fermier* is a pale shadow of its former self, surviving on very few farms around the town whose name the cheese bears. Some holdings are identified along the way-marked *Route des Fromages* and welcome visitors. The *coeurs*, *angelots*, *bondons* and *carrés* of varying size, maturity, flavour and pungency still figure proudly on the weekly markets of the Pays de Bray and in shops in Normandy, Picardy, Paris, and occasionally further afield. The Gervais cheeseworks at Ferrières (now part of the Danone corporation) continues to draw milk supplies from a considerable hinterland and provides an important source of employment in the core of the Pays de Bray. The 'discipline of distance', albeit refashioned across the centuries, continues to exercise its power, with butter and *fromages double-crème* being produced closer to the Parisian market, *Neufchâtel* being made at greater distance, and butter production remaining significant between the two.¹¹⁷ Despite its authenticity and appeal, *Neufchâtel fermier* continues as only a fragment of a much greater

¹¹⁶ M. Sarasin, Direction des Services Agricoles de la Seine-Maritime, interviewed in 1966.

¹¹⁷ J.-R. Pitte, 'Une lecture ordonnée de la carte des

fromages traditionnels de France', in Brunet (ed.) *Histoire et géographie des fromages*, pp. 201–07.

gastronomic heritage, being outstripped by factory-made *Neufchâtel laitier*, *petits suisses* and other varieties, and by competing cheeses from numerous parts of France and indeed from much of western Europe. Nonetheless, cheese making has a contributory role to play in survival strategies for this part of northern France that, in 1844, was described as ‘a picturesque garden, where nothing is lacking; there are wild flowers and ancient trees, sun and shade, cool tracks, calm and rest’.¹¹⁸ In our time of globalisation, the exigencies of the Common Agricultural Policy, and the quest for sustainable development, this description remains largely true and offers real potential for ‘green tourism’ and related enterprises.

¹¹⁸ J. Janin, *La Normandie* (Paris, 1844), quoted in Anne, *Dieppe et sa région*, p. 107.

The Labour Party, agricultural policy and the retreat from rural land nationalisation during the Second World War

by Michael Tichelar

Abstract

By 1945 the Labour Party had abandoned its historic commitment to the nationalisation of agricultural land. Labour retreated from rural land nationalisation not for reasons of pragmatism or for fear of antagonising an electorate suspicious of ideological commitments, but because such a policy did not provide an economic solution to the question of agricultural productivity nor did it guarantee improved nutrition. The war-time agricultural executive committees demonstrated the benefits of state intervention as an alternative to the state ownership of rural land. By 1945 Labour had come to recognize that land nationalisation was an irrelevance to the immediate problem of post-war food shortages which might compromise its relationship with the farmers in the drive for increased productivity.

Land nationalisation was an important element of that body of debate and policy which is collectively known as the Land Question. There is now a well-established body of historical work on the Land Question covering the Edwardian and the inter-war period, but little has been published on the way in which the policies of the main political parties developed after 1939.¹ This article will explore how the Labour Party's policy on rural land nationalisation evolved in response to the impact of the Second World War and ask why – by 1945 – it had retreated from a policy of the state ownership of all agricultural land.

The Land Question encompassed a wide range of progressive issues, including a desire to protect the special role of agriculture in society; increase agricultural productivity by encouraging labour back to the land through smallholdings and resettlement; and generally reversing the deterioration of rural life. This was part of an anti-urban and anti-metropolitan tradition in British cultural life. On the eve of the First World War the question of land ownership in both town and country, and the complex changing legal and political relationship between landlords and the state had been amongst the causes of the constitutional crisis between Lloyd George and the House of Lords. The 1909 Budget reflected the need to find new revenue sources for government: it was also a direct political attack on the rights of the landed aristocracy. By

¹ A. F. Cooper, *British Agricultural Policy, 1912–36. A study in Conservative politics* (1989); M. Fforde, *Conservatism and collectivism, 1886–1914* (1990); I. Packer, 'The Liberal Land Campaign and the Land Issue, 1906–1914' (Oxford University, D.Phil thesis, 1994), now published as *Lloyd George, Liberalism and the land. The land issue and party politics in England, 1906–1914* (2001); A. Offer, *Property and Politics, 1870–1914* (1981); B. Short, *Land and Society in Edwardian Britain* (1997); C. Griffiths, 'Labour and the countryside: rural strands in the British Labour movement, 1900–1939' (unpublished D.Phil thesis, Oxford University, 1996).

the outbreak of the Second World War the Land Question had lost the political controversy of the pre-1914 period and had fragmented into a series of separate but related political issues. Economic, social and cultural change after 1914 had combined with political developments to bring about a transformation in the way in which land reform was understood. These changes included the continuing economic decline of agriculture in the face of foreign competition; the effect of economic depression on the countryside; rapid and unregulated urban growth, particularly in the suburbs; changing patterns of land ownership, especially the increase in institutional and public ownership and the growth of owner occupation in both town and country; the emergence of a popular and class-based outdoor movement; and not least the declining economic and social fortunes of the traditional landed elite, and in particular what was left of the gentry. The break-up of the Liberal Party led to the eclipse of the related policies of free trade and taxation of land values after 1930. Politically the landed aristocracy, and in particular the gentry, was no longer a focus for radical opposition after it had lost a significant part of its social position in rural society during the inter-war period. Political interest thus moved away from attacking the landed aristocracy as a class and focused on the development and control of land-use, particularly in urban areas, and the protection of agriculture and the landscape from urban despoliation.²

Labour Party policy on the Land Question was made up of a number of different and sometimes contradictory elements. At times it supported the demand for land nationalisation, whereby the state would acquire the freehold interest on behalf of the nation, with compensation to the owners. At other times it supported the alternative policy of taxation of land values, which would have left private ownership intact, but would have imposed a levy or a charge on the value of land. Sometimes it supported taxation as a means of achieving public ownership. These policies were major features of the early history of the Party. Before 1914 the Party resisted socialist demands for land nationalisation, but supported a policy of land ownership based on decentralisation and devolution to district and parish councils. This was designed to guarantee the status of the free and independent rural artisan, both labourer and tenant farmer. Such a policy fitted in with the view that agricultural efficiency could be increased by encouraging labour back to the land by means of smallholdings and allotments.³

During the inter-war period the Party began to take an increasing interest in town and country planning and the complex issues of compensation and betterment; access to the countryside for recreational purposes; and the protection of agriculture and the landscape from uncontrolled urban developments. Agriculture continued to be a major feature of the Land Question throughout this period, although the emphasis of Party policy changed. By 1939 the Party had largely rejected the 'back-to-the-land' option as an economic remedy for the ills of British agriculture. Attempts to encourage smallholdings had failed to attract any significant support in rural areas. The Party had always been ambivalent about their virtues, placing the social and economic improvement of the farmer and the agricultural labourer above their right to own and cultivate a small plot of land. Party policy for rural areas shifted during the 1930s towards support for producer marketing, import boards and aimed to achieve better nutrition by larger scale

² M. Tichelar, 'The Labour Party and land reform in the inter-war period,' *Rural Hist.* 13 (2002), pp. 85–101.

³ M. Tichelar, 'Socialists, Labour and the Land: the

response of the Labour Party to the land campaign of Lloyd George before the First World War', *Twentieth Century British Hist.*, 8 (1997), pp. 127–144.

production and market gardening. Labour began to treat agriculture as an important industry requiring state support, and not as a special case based on an agenda of other strategic concerns such as unemployment and the recreation of the peasantry. However, rural land nationalisation remained a constant feature of Party policy before 1939 with demands becoming more insistent after the final demise of the campaign for the taxation of land values in the early 1930s. (Taxation of land values, which characterized the pre-1914 Land Question, had almost disappeared from political view by the end of the 1930s despite some vociferous voices in the party.) Interest had shifted from the taxation of all land, including the traditional agricultural landlord, as a radical panacea for the Land Question, to the taxation of rising land values in urban areas as a means of generating additional income for local authorities.⁴

The Second World War reinforced these pre-war trends and added significant weight to demands for state intervention, centralized land-use planning, land nationalisation and the protection of the countryside. The further demise of the traditional landed establishment created the opportunity for Labour to argue that the state should replace the landlord. This, it was held, was the only way to increase agricultural production, bring derelict land back into use, guarantee capital investment, enhance the rights and conditions of farmers and labourers, revive rural life and protect the landscape. During the war there emerged, as part of both central and local government intervention to rebuild blitzed areas and plans for post-war reconstruction in both town and country, a powerful movement to control land-use and ownership in the national interest, including a growing demand for land nationalisation, particularly amongst intellectuals and certain pressure groups.

A number of major wartime government reports examined aspects of the Land Question. The Barlow Commission (1940), set up in 1937 to examine the geographical distribution of the industrial population, recommended a system of national planning. The Scott Report (1942) on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas also proposed a national system of planning to prevent despoliation of rural areas. The Uthwatt Report (1942) on compensation and betterment, established at the height of the blitz at a moment of growing public concern about property speculation, recommended the control and taxation of land use and development, but specifically rejected land nationalisation as too controversial. The Dower Report on National Parks in England and Wales (1945) proposed the establishment of a National Parks Commission.

Land nationalisation proved to be a major issue within the Labour Party during the war. This controversy arose partly out of the debate on the Uthwatt Report after 1942. Land reform policy was also influenced by the demands of Labour local authorities for powers to re-plan their blitzed city centres and the constraints imposed on the national party by their participation in the Coalition Government. There was widespread support for land nationalisation amongst the war-time intelligentsia and planners, such as Sir Daniel Hall, Sir George Stapledon, and C. S. Orwin.⁵

⁴ M. Chase, 'Nothing less than a revolution? Labour's agricultural policy', in J. Fryth (ed.), *Labour's High Noon. The government and the economy* (1993), pp. 79–95; Cooper, *British Agricultural Policy*; Griffiths, 'Labour and the countryside'; R. J. Middleton, 'The formulation and implementation of British agricultural policy, 1945–1951' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of

Bristol, 1992).

⁵ Sir Daniel Hall, *Reconstruction and the land* (1941); Sir George Stapledon, *Make fruitful the land* (1941); C. S. Orwin, *Speed the plough* (1942). Even populist commentators like A. G. Street proposed national ownership, see his *Farm cottages and post-war farming* (1943) and *Hitler's whistle* (1943).

However, support for land nationalisation was increasingly questioned within the Labour Movement, particularly by its parliamentary leaders. Other possible policies, such as wider and speedier powers of public acquisition, land taxation and town and country planning, attracted those who questioned the private ownership of land. The Party's previous commitment to land nationalisation was significantly diluted by the experience of the war. In 1943 the Party compromised its position by supporting the Uthwatt Report as an interim measure. Uthwatt rejected land nationalisation in favour of the nationalisation of development rights in land and the introduction of a system of compensation and betterment in order to control property speculation during and after the war.⁶ But support for rural land nationalisation remained much stronger owing to the influence of the trade unions. George Dallas, Chief Agricultural Organizer of the Transport and General Workers Union was influential in keeping nationalisation on the policy agenda. However, the expense, complexity and administrative difficulties of the state becoming the freeholder of all rural land became more apparent during the course of the war. As a result, the Party's commitment to the immediate nationalisation of rural land was compromised by 1945. In *Let Us Face the Future* (1945) land nationalisation was considered as a long-term aim rather than as an immediate objective.

The existing secondary literature explaining these policy developments is sparse. Only Malcolm Chase has given any detailed consideration to the reasons behind Labour's change of direction. He argues that before 1939 a combination of electoral calculation and Labour's slender interest in rural areas created a policy vacuum, while during the war the sheer scale of the enterprise (260,000 farmers), the enormous financial cost involved, and potential opposition from agricultural interests at a time when their co-operation was required to increase food production, led the Party to drop its historical commitment to land nationalisation.⁷ This article will explore in more detail the reasons for this shift in policy. It will argue that Labour retreated from rural land nationalisation not for reasons of pragmatism or for fear of antagonising an electorate suspicious of ideological commitments, but because it no longer provided an economic solution to the question of agricultural productivity nor offered improvements in nutrition. While the sheer scale, expense and administrative complexities were relevant factors counting against nationalisation, and the Party was aware of these constraints both before and during the war, it was the experience of the wartime agricultural executive committees which demonstrated the benefits of state intervention (as opposed to the large-scale state ownership of rural land). Up until 1943 Labour reiterated its traditional support for the state ownership of agricultural land. But after this date it began to retreat from a policy of land nationalisation. Thereafter the experience of the war and its support for guaranteed prices after the war reinforced and accelerated this trend.

⁶ *Report of the Expert Committee on compensation and betterment* (1942) Cmd. 6467. The issue of *compensation* and *betterment* was concerned with what level 'the state should compensate land owners whose land is acquired (either by agreement or compulsion) for public or community purposes; and whether or not, and at what level,

the state should seek to collect increases (betterment) in land values created by private capital or government action'. D. H. McKay and A. W. Cox, *The politics of urban change* (1979), pp. 69–106.

⁷ Chase, 'Nothing less than a revolution?'.

I

Debates within the Labour Party during the early years of the war on the condition of agricultural workers and nutrition of the urban population strengthened party and trade union support for the traditional policy of land nationalisation. The Labour Party continued to seek improvements in the wages and conditions of rural workers to bring them onto an equal footing with industrial workers. It argued that backward rural areas and their added needs as a result of evacuation should be addressed by increased grants to rural councils. The Party 'should continue and extend its active campaign in rural areas, War or no War' - a rhetorical demand unrealized as a result of the disrupting impact of the war on political activities and the inherent difficulties of organising in the countryside.⁸ The experience of the ploughing-up campaign reinforced the support of the agricultural trade unions for land nationalisation.⁹ By 1941 the Labour Party could congratulate itself that its role in the Coalition Government had increased unemployment benefit for agricultural workers to a maximum of 41s. a week and had introduced a new national minimum wage of 43s.¹⁰ By 1942, in line with increased public support for wartime planning and the control of profiteering at a time of rationing, the Party conference was calling for the national ownership of agricultural land to enable its full utilisation by the development of a planned system of agricultural production. It also pressed for the merging of the Ministries of Food and Agriculture into a single new ministry. The aim was to achieve an adequate and varied diet, a fair return for the producer at a fair price to the consumer, and a higher standard of living for all people engaged in food production.¹¹

In October 1941 the Party set up a Land and Agricultural Reorganisation Sub-Committee as part of the machinery to develop post-war reconstruction policy. It was chaired by George Dallas, the Chief Agricultural Organizer of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&GWU) during the inter-war period, influential member of the National Executive Committee and long-time supporter of land nationalisation.¹² The T&GWU had reiterated its policy of land nationalisation to the Scott Committee.¹³ Other members of the sub-committee included Lord Addison, Labour Leader in the House of Lords, Minister of Agriculture in the 1929–31 Labour Government, and Chairman of the Buckinghamshire War Agricultural Executive Committee; Joseph Duncan, leader of the Scottish Farm Servants Union; and Tom Williams, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture in the Coalition Government.¹⁴ However, the National Union of Agricultural Workers (NUAW) was not represented. It was only following complaints at the May 1943 party conference that Edwin Gooch, its President, was invited to take part in a two day conference convened in August 1943 to agree a final policy statement.

⁸ *The Report of the 39th Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, May 1940, pp. 175–6.

⁹ *The Land Worker* 21 (May 1940), p. 2; Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), HLG80/65.

¹⁰ *Labour in government. A record of social legislation in wartime* (1941), p. 7. (The Labour Party archives have been used in the Harvester Press microform edition of the Labour Party Archives, hereafter LPA, in this case part 2, pamphlets and leaflets, 41/10).

¹¹ *The Report of the 41st Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, May 1942, pp. 120–3.

¹² J. Bellamy and J. Saville (eds.), *Dictionary of Labour Biography* (10 vols, 1972–2000), IV, pp. 69–74.

¹³ PRO, HLG80/34.

¹⁴ Bellamy and Saville (eds.), *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, II, pp. 406–7; see also T. Williams, *Digging for Britain* (1965).

Attempts by the T&GWU to take over the smaller union before the war, compounded by problems of poaching and workers' representation on the war agricultural executive committees, prevented co-operation between the two unions on policy matters. The NUAW considered that the T&GWU 'should get out of the agricultural industry and leave the field to them'.¹⁵ A. E. Monks, who was the NUAW full-time Organizer for South Lincolnshire, was on the sub-committee as a party member. He played an influential role both through his membership of the Scott Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas (representing the NUAW) and his employment by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1943 as the liaison officer between the ministry and the war agricultural executive committees.¹⁶

The sub-committee relied heavily on the advice of experts and agricultural modernizers who saw rural regeneration in terms of increasing agricultural productivity in contrast to those ruralists opposed to modernisation.¹⁷ Amongst the other members of the sub-committee were Professor A. W. Ashby and George Walworth. Ashby, the elder son of Joseph Ashby of Tysoe, was a Methodist lay preacher from a radical reformist tradition. Ashby junior had fought for smallholdings and allotments as a teenager. He was an agricultural economist and social anthropologist. As a teenager he had fought for smallholdings: before the war he had been active in countering the eugenic notion that rural people were of low intelligence.¹⁸ Ashby was a firm believer in rural land nationalisation.¹⁹ Walworth, the agricultural organizer of the Cooperative Union was author of *Feeding the Nation in Peace and War*. He had argued before the war for capital investment in larger-scale farming and against small holdings, which he regarded as depressing living standards.²⁰

The sub-committee took as its starting point the 'The Land and the National Planning of Agriculture' issued by the Party in 1932, which had demanded that all agricultural land should be nationally owned. In addition it called for the setting up of a National Agricultural Commission and County Agricultural Committees; a minimum wage for the farm worker; and national and local commodity boards to purchase and regulate imports.²¹ Professor Ashby thought that it 'now makes rather dull reading', and recommended that there should be a clearer statement of objectives taking into account dissatisfaction with the operation of the various agricultural

¹⁵ Rural History Centre, University of Reading (hereafter RHC), papers of the National Union of Agricultural Labourers (NUAW), B.X.1 (misc. papers of Edwin Gooch which contain transcripts of heated meetings between the two unions in 1938 and 1944 to discuss amalgamation or federation). Modern Record Centre, University of Warwick, Papers of the Transport and General Workers Union, MSS126/TG/3.

¹⁶ *Land Worker* 26 (Mar. 1945), p. 5. He stood for election as the General Secretary of the NUAW in 1945 and as Labour candidate in South Lincolnshire in 1945, on both occasions unsuccessfully.

¹⁷ For a discussion of the anti-modernizers see R. J. Moore-Colyer, 'Back to Basics: Rolf Gardiner, H. J. Massingham and a "Kinship in Husbandry"', *Rural Hist.* 12 (2001), pp. 85–108.

¹⁸ Ashby was head of the Department of Agricultural

Economics at Aberystwyth. A. W. Ashby, 'The effect of urban growth on the countryside', *Sociological Rev.* 31 (1939); id., *The English countryside and the psychology of scenic change*, typescript evidence to the Scott Committee, 1942, PRO HLG80/92. For biographical details see M. K. Ashby, *Joseph Ashby of Tysoe 1859–1919. A study of English village life* (1974); *Dictionary of National Biography, 1951–1960* (1971), p. 34; and *The Countryman* 48 (1953), pp. 311–16.

¹⁹ PRO, HLG80/92.

²⁰ British Library of Political and Social Science (hereafter BLPES), Fabian Society archives, J23/2 and K28/1; G. Walworth, *Feeding the nation in peace and war* (1940); and *Marketing schemes: their effect on the Industrial Co-operative Movement* (1934).

²¹ LPA, RDR2/Oct. 1941, 'Memorandum for the agricultural and land reorganisation sub-committee'.

marketing boards set up during the late 1930s.²² While the Party had been closely identified with their creation in 1931 (when Addison was Minister of Agriculture), they had become associated in the late 1930s, and especially during the war, with producer interests, high food prices and profiteering by middlemen. Before the war the Party had come under pressure from rural divisional parties to wind up the marketing boards and replace them with smaller commissions with independent chairmen.²³ The sub-committee therefore agreed to some revised policy objectives that reflected wartime concerns about nutrition, agricultural production and price controls. These placed renewed emphasis on the supply of an adequate and varied diet based on healthy home-grown vegetables and milk, secured by obtaining a higher contribution from British agriculture; a higher standard of living for all those engaged in food production; and increased and improved amenities for the general rural population. In support of these new policy developments, Lord Addison was asked to review the working of the marketing acts, and Sir John Boyd Orr, the nutritional expert, was invited to prepare a policy on food and nutrition.²⁴

The Party's agricultural policy was therefore driven primarily by concerns about nutrition and the cost of food. Before the war the Party had been strongly influenced by Orr's *Food, Health and Income*, the first scientific study linking diet and income.²⁵ The war created a wave of public interest in nutrition brought about by the activities of the new Ministry of Food and the political impact of rationing. After Dunkirk the Treasury found it difficult to resist popular demands for the introduction of non-means tested food supplies, such as the National Milk Scheme. Thus fear of inflation, blockade and industrial unrest combined with anxieties about nutrition brought the question of food and rationing onto the top of the Coalition Government's domestic political agenda.²⁶ In these circumstances, the Party's Land and Agricultural Sub-Committee looked to the continued expansion of the home market after the war for health-giving foods such as milk and vegetables. But as a Party of free trade it considered that the country would still need to rely on the importation of cheap supplies of basic foodstuffs such as wheat. To this end it pushed for the setting-up of a powerful central food supply organisation to control the importation and distribution of food and the prices of imported food in the interests of the consumer.²⁷ In 1943 the Party adopted the report prepared by Sir John Boyd Orr, *The Nation's Food. Labour's Nutrition Policy* with only minor amendments and issued it as party policy. This noted how the war had brought about 'a revolutionary change in our food policy'. It recommended that the Ministry of Food should be strengthened by a permanent Food Commission which would act as a national wholesale buyer and seller; that school children should be adequately fed by the state; and that wartime communal restaurants should be extended into peacetime.²⁸

Lord Addison argued for a central organisation to exercise control over price margins and the vested interests involved in the system of wartime controls set up by the new Ministry of

²² LPA, RDR15 (b)/Oct. 1941, 'Note of the work of the committee by Professor A. W. Ashby'.

²³ Resolution submitted by the East Norfolk Divisional Labour Party to Transport House (1937/38), RHC, NUAW, B.X.1.

²⁴ LPA, Minutes of the land and agricultural sub-committee, 13 Nov. 1941; RDR 38/Dec. 1941, 'Progress report of the Central Committee on Reconstruction

Problems'.

²⁵ Sir J. B. Orr, *Food, Health and Income* (1936).

²⁶ R. J. Hammond, *Food and Agriculture in Britain, 1939-45* (1962), pp. 140-53.

²⁷ LPA, RDR85/Apr. 1942, 'Problems of marketing and distribution'.

²⁸ Labour Party, *The Nation's food. Labour's nutrition policy* (1943).

Food.²⁹ There was much anger within the Party about the level of agricultural subsidies contributing to the inflated profits of the food companies.³⁰ Clement Attlee was concerned in the early war years about the policy of the Ministry of Agriculture of increasing productivity through guaranteed prices. He objected to farmers earning disproportionate profits, thereby increasing the rents of the owners of the better land.³¹ The sub-committee therefore sought to maintain a difficult balance between the interests of consumers, or the desire of the Party's traditional urban constituency to benefit from a policy of cheap food, and the interests of producers, or the farmers and farm workers which the party had sought to cultivate politically by its inclusive pre-war agricultural policy. This dilemma was reinforced by the war. The *Fabian Quarterly* pointed out that only a powerful Ministry of Food could ensure that after the war 'cheap food was available in ample quantities for the industrial population while the agricultural worker at home and the food producers overseas were alike assured of a decent livelihood'.³²

Labour was traditionally an urban party supporting a policy of cheap food based on an historic commitment to free trade. The desire of the party to be identified with a policy of cheap food was reaffirmed at the 1942 Annual Conference. The national ownership of agricultural land was approved as the basis of a planned system of agricultural production, involving the merging of the Ministries of Agriculture and Food, and as the best means of providing an adequate and varied diet for the people.³³ The policy of merger proved to be controversial. The Miners' Federation succeeded in referring-back this proposal on the grounds that the gap between consumers and producers was too big and that a strong Ministry of Food was necessary to defend the interests of consumers against the vested interests of the marketing boards (recalling earlier debates in 1917–18 about the policy of the Food Controller). The Sub-Committee had been discussing the need for a Central Food Supply Organisation (with individual commodity boards reporting to it) but emphasising that its personnel should not be drawn from producers as in pre-war years.³⁴ The Co-operative Movement and the Standing Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations had also been pressing the Party (and the Government without success) for the creation of a Consumers Council (similar to that created at the end of the First World War) with housewife representation, to control prices and rationing. The TUC did not feel able to support such a demand, arguing that such a proposal was impracticable during wartime, not least because it was anxious to protect the role of its own Food Committee set up at the request of the Ministry of Food.³⁵

In practice therefore, the Party found it difficult to reconcile the competing demands of consumer and producer interests. A policy of cheap food based on the nutritional needs of the people could not be achieved by subsidising inefficient small-scale mixed farming. But this was a system of agriculture supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, the NFU and the agricultural trade unions on the grounds of soil fertility and the maintenance of high levels of employment

²⁹ LPA, Minutes of the land and agricultural reorganisation sub-committee, 17 Dec. 1941, 18 Feb. 1942.

³⁰ D. Thomas, 'Food and agriculture in post-war Britain', *Socialist Commentary*, Mar. 1944, pp. 193–6.

³¹ BLPES, William Piercy Papers, 8/36 (Agriculture 1943–46), note by Evan Durbin to the Deputy Prime Minister on agricultural policy (1944).

³² *Fabian Quarterly*, Spring 1942.

³³ *The Report of the 41st Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, May 1942, pp. 120–23.

³⁴ LPA, Minutes of the land and agricultural reorganisation sub-committee, 16 Apr. 1942.

³⁵ *The Report of the 40th Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, June 1941, pp. 9–11; LPA, Research 14/Apr. 1942, Report to the policy sub-committee on food policy.

on the land.³⁶ The Party's sub-committee recognized the need for encouraging larger scale, more specialist farming at home producing nutritional foods, although the merits of small and larger farms continued to divide opinion within the party as it had done since before 1914. It was aware that the capital investment required for encouraging larger scale farming was less costly than continuing to subsidize traditional farming methods after the war, which would have been exorbitantly expensive.³⁷ The *New Statesman* maintained that the country could not afford a post-war policy of high agricultural subsidies to keep a greatly enlarged agricultural industry alive, particularly one based on its existing structure.³⁸ A policy of encouraging large-scale specialist farming producing nutritional foods implied the need for greater mechanisation and less labour on the land. It was not clear how these considerations related to a policy of the state ownership of agricultural land.

II

By the time the sub-committee came to produce a first draft of its policy in the spring of 1943, the Party's position on the general question of land nationalisation, both rural and urban, had been influenced by the recommendations of the Uthwatt Report. Uthwatt offered the prospect of a short-term solution pending full nationalisation in the longer-term, and a means of attacking the Coalition Government's reluctance to deal with post-war reconstruction. The report of the National Executive Committee to the Annual Conference in June hinted at the continued existence of private rural landownership at least in the short-term. Uthwatt's recommendation to nationalize development rights in undeveloped land (i.e. in rural areas) proved to be an attractive option. In this respect, the National Executive Committee affirmed its general agreement with the principle of fixing a total national compensation figure to purchase these rights. However it realized the controversial nature of this position by adding rhetorically that 'it is convinced that there can be no final and satisfactory solution to the problems of either physical replanning or of agriculture until the land itself becomes the property of the nation'.³⁹

Debates within the Government's reconstruction machinery during 1942 drew attention to the enormous financial commitments and administrative complexities involved in any proposals to nationalize rural land. On the Reconstruction Problems Committee the Treasury firmly resisted demands from Attlee and others that the landowner was an anachronism under modern conditions.⁴⁰ The Scott report had avoided any reference to the issue of nationalisation of land in rural areas but the Uthwatt Report had advocated the nationalisation of development rights as an alternative to full-state ownership. The Treasury made the Cabinet fully aware of the financial and other implications of such a course of action. Buying out development rights would have a dramatic impact on the post-war National Debt. The Inland Revenue would not be able to process an estimated 250,000 claims from aggrieved landowners for compensation

³⁶ *Staples Reconstruction Digest. What people think No. 6, Agriculture* (1944).

³⁷ Viscount Astor and B. Seebom Rowntree, *Mixed farming and muddled thinking* (1946), p. 107.

³⁸ *New Statesman*, 10 Oct. 1942, p. 230.

³⁹ *The Report of the 42nd Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, June 1943, pp. 4–5.

⁴⁰ J. B. Cullingworth, *Environmental Planning, 1939–1969* (4 vols, 1975–1980), I, *Reconstruction and land use planning, 1939–1947*, p. 46.

arising from the nationalisation of development rights, let alone cope with the task of valuation. Widespread opposition was forecast from landowners based on a rising sense of unfairness.⁴¹

The questions of urban and rural land nationalisation began to merge into one during 1943 as a result of the way that the Party responded to the recommendations of the Uthwatt Report. Uthwatt offered a resolution to both sides of the question. The first draft of Labour's Agricultural Policy produced in April noted for the first time that it needed to take into account matters affecting urban land.⁴² This did not please the NUAW. Their resolution at the party conference in June calling for land requisitioned by the County Committees to be retained after the war as first step in a new plan of public ownership was referred back to the NEC. The union questioned whether all the public improvements introduced by the county committees should go back into the pockets of the landlords when the war was over.⁴³

The sub-committee produced a first draft of its policy in April 1943. Most of its recommendations were uncontroversial and reflected pre-war policies, which it argued, had been justified by the experience of the war. It recommended the creation of a National Land Commission which would hold all land belonging to the state and manage the county committees (which should continue after the war on a permanent basis as local agents of the central state). The sub-committee proposed a Food Production Programme based primarily on protective foods (such as milk, eggs, vegetables and fruit) which, it argued, British agriculture was exceptionally fitted to provide. It supported the permanent establishment of the Ministry of Food with responsibilities (distinct from those of the Ministry of Agriculture) to control overseas supplies of food, determine prices and promote nutrition. The Ministry of Food would also play a key role in the formulation of international arrangements for food supplies and price stabilisation on a large scale in order to prevent the widespread famine conditions that were envisaged after the war. A National Agricultural Council would deal with employment, rural development and education, while the National Wages Board would be preserved. Responsibility for rural housing, and the controversial issue of tied cottages, would be taken away from district councils and given to the Ministry of Works and Buildings.⁴⁴

It was in the area of land ownership that the sub-committee proposed the most radical change to pre-war policy. Labour's draft policy stated that the most practical way of obtaining the fullest use of the land was that it should belong to the people. However it noted that this was not the only way of securing the adequate utilisation of land in the interests of good husbandry. The Land Commission would have the power to purchase land if the existing owner was unable or unwilling to provide such capital outlays as buildings, roads, water supplies and other provisions that attach to ownership. This was a policy being actively and effectively pursued by the wartime county agricultural executive committees. Their success undoubtedly strengthened the case for continuing with these arrangements after the war. The experience of the committees reinforced the case against nationalisation. The Fabians promoted the view that these committees 'have given us a very good line on how you could get control of the land and its use without necessarily taking over ownership of the land or making every

⁴¹ PRO, CAB 117/14; 117/128.

Labour Party, June 1943, pp. 200–2.

⁴² LPA, RDR 209/Apr. 1943, 'Labour's agricultural policy'.

⁴⁴ LPA, RDR 209/Apr. 1943, 'Labour's agricultural policy'.

⁴³ *The Report of the 42nd Annual Conference of the*

farmer a little black-coated appendage of Whitehall'.⁴⁵ Hugh Dalton noted in the summer of 1943 that the planning of production by the committees had been far greater and more detailed than he ever imagined possible. 'They not only have the power but actually use it in some counties to decide how every field should be cultivated'. Dalton confided to his diary:

that of course all this should go on after the war; a typical policy of 'sensible, Socialistic Conservatism'. This rather than any wholesale nationalisation of agricultural land would be the line. Many public and semi-public agencies, of various kinds, would increasingly own land; not only these committees, but the Forestry Commission, the National Trust, universities and charities.⁴⁶

Dalton had taken over the influential position of chairman of the Party's Policy Committee in July and his first act was to wind-up the Central Committee on Reconstruction, controlled by the left-winger Emanuel Shinwell. The direction of policy after this date therefore came under the influence of Dalton, although it is clear that internal party opinion was already moving against wholesale nationalisation. The Party's draft policy on the land produced in April 1943 tentatively suggested that the new Land Commission might approve purchase by a private individual or corporation, pending total nationalisation. Private ownership could be allowed so long as the conditions of ownership guaranteed capital investment to secure increased productivity.⁴⁷ In this case rent courts would be necessary to determine fair rents. The main concern therefore was not an ideological commitment to nationalisation but how to increase capital investment in the land in order to achieve the main objectives of the Party's agricultural policy, namely increased productivity, better nutrition and a higher standard of life for farm workers. Nationalisation was one, but not the only means, of achieving this end. Discussion on post-war reconstruction, and in particular the recommendations of the Scott and Uthwatt reports raised the possibility of other alternative solutions.

In the light of the debate at the Annual Conference in June and the criticisms raised by the NUAW, the Party's Policy Committee recognized the controversial nature of these changes to traditional policy. In August it convened a special two-day conference to discuss the draft statement and invited Edwin Gooch and William Holmes of the NUAW to take part.⁴⁸ The conference discussed the whole range of policy, and confirmed in particular the control of land through a proposed Land Commission and county committees, and the international planning of food supplies.⁴⁹ In relation to land nationalisation a rearguard action was fought, and it was agreed, in line with previous policy, that a General Enabling Act was necessary to give the state power to purchase land compulsorily and pay compensation. Payments were to be based on the value of land estimated by landowners in schedule A of their income tax returns. This, it was felt, would overcome all the difficulties about changing land values brought about by the war. Although the question of some land being nationally acquired while other land was left under private ownership was disputed, it was agreed in principle that it was quite proper to consider alternatives to nationalisation.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ L. F. Easterbrook, 'Plan for the land' in G. D. H. Cole *et al.*, *Plan for Britain. A collection of essays prepared for the Fabian Society* (1943), p. 75.

⁴⁶ BLPES, Dalton Papers, Diary, 24 Aug. 1943.

⁴⁷ LPA, RDR 209/April 1943.

⁴⁸ LPA, Minutes of the policy committee, 5 Aug. 1943.

⁴⁹ LPA, Land and agricultural reorganisation sub-committee, 21, 22 Aug. 1943.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Part of the debate centred on the difficulty of finding trained staff for taking over land which was not being properly used. Tom Williams commented that the new Land Commission would need suitable staff to administer estates, and that this would take time. The administrative problems of state ownership of rural land was increasingly recognized during the war. G. D. H. Cole had admitted to Lord Scott that

As for state ownership of land, I find it very difficult to envisage any proper capitalisation of agriculture save under public ownership. I don't see how the private landlords are to be induced to put in adequate capital under existing conditions, without bribes from the state that would be altogether excessive in justice and impossible politically. But I agree that the problem of public ownership may have to be approached by stages.⁵¹

The technical advice commissioned by the Nuffield Social Reconstruction Survey pointed out the practical difficulties of achieving immediate and comprehensive nationalisation of the land, especially during but also after the war, given the pressure of other problems. For example, the West Midland Group on Post-War Reconstruction and Planning advised Cole that although the best way of securing planned development was by state ownership of land, 'we regard this as [being] immediately impracticable owing to the difficulties of administration that would arise in present circumstances'. It argued that while a procedure is being devised for the acquisition of all land, 'the first practical step towards the attainment of this ideal is the vesting in the state of the development rights in all land'.⁵²

These arguments proved difficult to resist, not least because of growing backbench Conservative opposition to any threat to property rights, and pressure from within the Party to make more rapid progress on post-war reconstruction. The Party's Policy Committee, under the new chairmanship of Dalton, came out in support of the Uthwatt Report in September 1943, and instructed George Dallas to redraft the report on Land and Agriculture for publication.⁵³ In doing this Dallas forged an effective compromise designed to placate those who continued to support the traditional policy of immediate nationalisation. The question became one of timing. In the final policy document *Our Land: The Future of British Agriculture*, published in December 1943, the party advocated a dual approach. First it supported the principal recommendations of both the Scott and Uthwatt reports. Second it agreed that the party should continue to support a General Enabling Act giving the state power to acquire all agricultural land and laying down the basis of compensation. It argued that the necessity for national ownership was too urgent to leave to a very gradual and piecemeal procedure over a long period of years, and specified certain indispensable conditions that had to be met if agricultural land was to avoid being purchased by a National Commission. In practice therefore, the question of immediate land nationalisation was deferred in favour of the short-term remedies offered by Scott and Uthwatt, a change noted by the *Times*.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Nuffield College Oxford, papers of the Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey, C2/22 (letter from G. D. H. Cole to Lord Scott, 21 Feb. 1942). Cole's oral evidence to the Scott Committee also acknowledged that powers of compulsory purchase for specific purposes might be a more realistic policy than total nationalisation: PRO, HLG80/61.

⁵² Nuffield College Oxford, papers of the Nuffield College Social Reconstruction Survey, H1/8: 'West Midland Group on post-war reconstruction and planning, progress report', Oct. 1941.

⁵³ LPA, minutes of the Policy Committee, 21 Sept. 1943.

⁵⁴ *The Times*, 6 Dec. 1943, p. 2.

Our Land also reflected other wartime influences. First, it supported the main outcomes of the Hot Springs Food Conference held in June 1943 in the emphasis it placed on the need for the expansion of production and consumption of food after the war.⁵⁵ Second, the final document was largely silent on the question of smallholdings. The changes brought about by the war in agricultural production, such as mechanisation and the ploughing-up of large areas of uncultivated land, undermined the traditional case for the small farm. This in turn weakened the argument of those campaigning for large scale land settlement by the unemployed and ex-servicemen. The agricultural trade unions had always been opposed to the idea that smallholdings fostered economic and political freedom on the grounds that it undermined their ambitions for improved working conditions for farm workers.⁵⁶ Edwin Gooch came out clearly during the war against the state re-establishing the small unit of production and agreed with Sir Daniel Hall that the development of large farms was necessary to enable production to be carried out with greater efficiency.⁵⁷ The presence of the agricultural unions on Labour's Land Committee ensured that this issue did not divert attention from more realistic economic questions and that land should not be used as dump for the unemployed and derelict people as it had been after the last war.⁵⁸ The annual conference in 1944 specifically rejected the resettlement of ex-servicemen into agriculture on a large scale.⁵⁹ Larger-scale farming was also supported by the Fabians during the war who argued for the buying-out of all private landlords and occupiers, area by area, and the re-planning and re-equipping of the land on up-to-date lines by the State, which would eventually let the new farms to competent tenants.⁶⁰ Third, the final policy statement was also clear on the controversial question of tied cottages. The NUAW had been campaigning for their abolition over a long period.⁶¹ *Our Land* promised to carry this out, and to transfer responsibility for rural housing from the local authorities to a new Rural Development Board working closely with the County Executive Committees (and not, as originally proposed, to the Ministry of Works and Buildings).⁶²

At the end of 1943 the party was still committed to the nationalisation of the land. However, the possibility of leaving land in private ownership in certain circumstances in exchange for guarantees about productivity and efficiency was accepted as was the option of nationalising development rights of land in rural areas. But by 1945 even this traditional commitment to immediate rural land nationalisation had to all intents and purposes been dropped. Labour's manifesto, *Let Us Face the Future*, contained only the promise that 'if a landlord cannot or will not provide proper facilities for his tenant farmers, the State should take over his land at a fair valuation'. The emphasis of policy was on the planning of agriculture 'to give us the food we can best produce at home ... Our good farm lands are part of the wealth of the nation, and

⁵⁵ *Final Act of the United Nations conference on food and agriculture (Hot Springs, May to June 1943)*, Cmd. 6451.

⁵⁶ LPA, LP/AG/30/24 (letter 27 Aug. 1936).

⁵⁷ *The Times*, 10 Dec. 1941, p. 5; *Land Worker* 23 (Feb. 1942), p. 9 ('Large or small farms').

⁵⁸ LPA, Minutes of the land and agricultural reorganisation sub-committee, 21, 22 Aug. 1943.

⁵⁹ *The Report of the 43rd Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, Dec. 1944, pp. 179–82.

⁶⁰ F. W. Bateson, 'Farm sizes and layouts', in Bateson (ed.), *Towards a socialist agriculture. Studies by a group of Fabians* (1946), p. 121. Bateson was the Statistical Officer to the Buckinghamshire War Agricultural Executive Committee.

⁶¹ *Land Worker* 23 (July 1942), p. 7 ('Free homes, not tied houses').

⁶² Labour Party, *Our Land: The future of Britain's agriculture* (1943), p. 9.

that wealth should not be wasted. The land must be farmed, not starved'.⁶³ The NUAW was highly critical of the Party's abandonment of its traditional policy and its executive committee made it clear that there was no question of the the union reversing its stance on nationalisation.⁶⁴ Replying to criticism at the annual conference in 1945, Herbert Morrison justified the dilution of Labour's policy on the grounds that it was not necessary to nationalize all land in order to achieve an efficient agriculture.

What we are proposing is that where a landowner, either through his own fault or owing to financial circumstances that the poor man cannot help, is in such a position that he cannot adequately discharge his duties as a landowner by the provision of buildings and other facilities necessary for the efficient conduct of farming operations, we will move him out and compensate him on a fair basis, taking into account those deficiencies, and that land will become publicly owned. That is because it is necessary and expedient for the efficient conduct of agriculture. But where a landowner is doing his job well, or where a farmer is himself the owner of the land and doing the job well, there is no urgency in making that land publicly owned at this stage.⁶⁵

A number of factors accounted for this significant shift in policy during the latter stages of the war. Clearly by 1945 the institution of private ownership no longer seemed to represent a political evil that could only be corrected by a policy of outright nationalisation. A Fabian commentator drew the conclusion that private property in rural areas could not any longer be 'thought of as a crime, something morally abhorrent, an ugly survival from a cruder form of society'. He questioned whether this attitude to the agricultural landlord was still relevant.

Certainly very few farmers share it, however much they may grumble about their own landlords. A programme of complete and wholesale nationalisation, even one excluding owner-occupiers, would have to be carried through in the teeth of opposition of the great majority of British farmers, and in many areas it might prove impossible to get local agriculturalists of any standing to sit on the County and District Committees that will be essential if the transference is to proceed smoothly and equitably ... If private ownership is, as certainly it appears to be, a decadent institution, it can be relied on to pass naturally into total inanition. Any danger that it may still be a public nuisance, even in its last phase, can be obviated by an imaginative system of State control, such as the democratised ... County Agricultural Executive Committees.⁶⁶

Effective public control of land-use had thus replaced the previous policy of nationalisation. Control of the land was all that was needed to deliver the main objectives of Labour's rural policy which was based on the urban priority of a cheap supply of nutritional food. This, it was held, was dependent on an efficient and mechanized agriculture producing health-giving foods. Large-scale capital investment was necessary to achieve these improvements in productivity. By the end of 1943, Attlee welcomed the direction of the Coalition Government's post-war policy

⁶³ Labour Party, *Let us face the future* (1945).

⁶⁴ RHC, NUAW, minutes of the Executive committee, 27 Apr 1945.

⁶⁵ *The Report of 44th Annual Conference of the Labour*

Party, May 1945, pp. 133–4.

⁶⁶ F. W. Bateson, 'The ownership of agricultural land', in Bateson (ed.), *Towards a socialist agriculture*, pp. 168–86.

on agriculture on two grounds, despite his reservations about the appreciation of land values in rural areas during the war. First he recognized that the main objective of policy was to meet nutritional requirements, and 'this involves, at least for this country, an emphasis upon the production of milk and meat'. Second, he accepted that the powers of the Ministry of Agriculture should be continued after the war to maintain productivity, while 'stable prices should be used to stimulate the consumption of animal products and not to maintain unnecessarily high prices for cereals'.⁶⁷ By 1944 Attlee had accepted the principle of the Annual Price Review on the basis that the Wartime Agricultural Executive Committees would continue after the war.⁶⁸

By the end of the war these policies had become important features of Labour's agricultural programme. Tom Williams pointed out that Britain had the most highly mechanized agriculture in Europe, and that during the war over £100 million of investment had been made in machinery. High levels of mechanisation and productivity needed to be continued after the war to protect the country's trading relationships. He looked to the farmers to continue their wartime efforts into peacetime particularly in the light of post-war food shortages. In these circumstances, 'the farmers must feel reasonably sure of their future; and if they are to have the confidence to plan ahead, they must be assured of a stable market at reasonable prices for all the food the country wishes them to produce'.⁶⁹ Hugh Dalton had recognized that the country's post-war balance of payments 'will be so difficult to establish that we must strive to grow as much, and import as little, food as possible'. He sought to convince officials at the Board of Trade to overcome their traditional resistance to 'quartering the farmers' on the rest of the community.⁷⁰ The main emphasis of party agricultural policy by 1945 was therefore improved rural facilities based 'on an assured market for our agricultural produce'.⁷¹ Ernest Bevin argued at the 1945 party conference that the farmer 'must have a guaranteed price, not only nationally, but internationally' if agriculture was to be made efficient.⁷² Lord Addison confirmed on the eve of the general election that Labour's policy was amongst other things based on 'security of price and tenure for the good cultivator'.⁷³ Labour therefore envisaged the continuation of the Annual Price Review mechanism, set up in 1944 to guarantee prices up to 1948, as a permanent feature of post-war policy. Land Nationalisation would have threatened the co-operation of the farmers, a large proportion of whom were owner-occupiers, in the productive effort required after the war. By 1945 therefore, rural land nationalisation was seen not to offer a solution to the economic problems of British agriculture and had been dropped from the Party's manifesto.

III

In conclusion it is clear that debates during the early part of the war over nutrition and the role of the new Ministry of Food reinforced the Party's traditional support for the nationalisation

⁶⁷ BLPES, Piercy Papers, 8/36 (Agriculture 1943-46), note by Evan Durbin to the Deputy Prime Minister on post-war agricultural policy, 4 Oct. 1943.

⁶⁸ Ibid., Note by William Piercy and Evan Durbin to the Deputy Prime Minister on agricultural prices, 27 Nov. 1944.

⁶⁹ *The Times*, 30 Jan. 1945, p. 2; *Land Worker* 26 (Mar. 1945), p. 1 ('Agriculture and industry': a report of a

speech made by Williams in Liverpool on 30 Jan. 1945).

⁷⁰ BLPES, Dalton Papers, Diary, 15 Oct. 1943.

⁷¹ Morgan Phillips, 'Labour and the Land', *Land Worker* 26 (Mar. 1945), p. 4.

⁷² Ibid., 26, June 1945, p. 2.

⁷³ Lord Addison, 'Labour's record and policy on agriculture', *ibid.*, 26 (July 1945), p. 2.

of agricultural land. But after the publication of the Uthwatt Report in 1942 this began to change. By 1945 land nationalisation had become an irrelevance to the problems of post-war reconstruction. It provided no solutions to food shortages or the problem of increasing agricultural productivity and nutrition.⁷⁴

Labour recognized that the war had made agriculture efficient for the first time in a generation and that the co-operation of the farmers in running the county committees was essential. Labour therefore looked to the continuation of the Annual Price Review mechanism as a permanent feature of post-war policy despite earlier wartime reservations about subsidies benefiting inefficient farms and swelling the rent rolls of landlords. In these circumstances Labour was not prepared to jeopardize their relationship with the farmers by pursuing a policy of land nationalisation, as argued by Malcolm Chase.⁷⁵ Nearly 40 per cent of farmers by this date were owner-occupiers, which was in stark contrast to the position in the First World War when the traditional landlord-tenant system was still a significant feature of the country's social structure. The Party was increasingly sympathetic towards small farmers who owned or leased their farm. It was only prepared to allow the county executive committees to buy out inefficient farms if their landlords could not provide the capital to maintain productivity. By 1945 therefore Labour's emerging policy on agriculture had undermined its traditional stance on rural land nationalisation. It was no longer necessary to nationalize all land to resolve the problem of the inefficient landlord. The traditional rural landlord had been so badly affected by the war that the evils of 'landlordism' no longer posed political or economic questions that needed to be redressed. Indeed it was only the tenants of really inefficient landlords that needed to be rescued by state action.

Land nationalisation was only ever wholeheartedly supported in the 1930s when it coincided with growing support for centralized economic and physical planning. Historians have argued that after this date, and especially after 1945 enthusiasm for extending public ownership in general declined as it was doubted whether nationalisation was the most efficient economic weapon at Labour's disposal.⁷⁶ Martin Francis has maintained that the ideological dimension of this retreat from nationalisation reflected Labour's inability to agree on what the ultimate purpose of public ownership should be: 'was it intended to facilitate greater economic efficiency and modernisation, or was it designed to secure social justice and the redistribution of power, both within a given industry and in society as a whole?'⁷⁷ Support for rural land nationalisation before the 1920s was clearly based on the desire to redistribute political power away from the traditional landed elite to small-scale local ownership. But after 1930, with changing patterns

⁷⁴ Labour also retreated from support for urban land nationalisation at the same time for different but related reasons. Again, it was not that it feared the creation of internal divisions or damaging its electoral chances (support for land nationalisation was anyway running high in the opinion polls), but it responded to pressure from Labour local government for more immediate housing and town planning reform. M. Tichelar, 'The conflict over property rights during the Second World War: the Labour Party's abandonment of land nationalisation,'

Twentieth Century British Hist. 14 (2003), pp. 165–88. A Gallup opinion poll in April 1945 showed support for the nationalisation of land at 51%. G. H. Gallup (ed.), *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, Great Britain, 1937–1975* (2 vols, 1976), I, p. 108.

⁷⁵ Chase, 'Nothing less than a revolution'.

⁷⁶ S. Brooke, *Labour's War: the Labour Party during the Second World War* (1992), p. 331.

⁷⁷ S. Francis, *Ideas and policies under Labour, 1945–1951. Building a new Britain* (1997), ch. 4.

of landownership, the debate shifted to the question of how to make agriculture more efficient. The experience of the Second World War demonstrated the virtues of state intervention to replace the inefficient landowner. But it also established that it was not politically necessary to threaten owner-occupation (in either town or country) nor economically efficient to take over all land to achieve agricultural modernisation.

If the Labour Party had tried to nationalize agricultural land after 1945, how easy would it have been compared with other industries and services? The Labour Government would have found it extremely difficult to justify taking into state ownership an industry that had not failed, but, on the contrary, had saved the nation economically during the war. This was not the case for the railways and coal. It would also have been politically difficult to defend after 1945 when the country's economic position was dependent on the farmers' co-operation in increasing domestic food production to protect the balance of payments by reducing imports from dollar areas. Nationalisation could not therefore be justified on economic grounds. Neither was it acceptable politically at a time of food rationing. A good comparison might be iron and steel, which Labour was reluctant to take into state ownership after 1947 because it had a relatively good war record in terms of production, the lack of enthusiasm for nationalisation on the part of the trade unions and ministerial scepticism that it would lead to greater efficiency.⁷⁸ Furthermore, although Labour had recommended during the war a state commission to purchase land, there was no clearly identifiable model of management control that would have worked in an industry where – unlike the railways for example – ownership was not concentrated. The only comparison might be with road haulage, where ownership was spread amongst a large number of small operators. This was one of the few areas which generated acute controversy and opposition largely around the issue of the threat to the liberty of the individual. Land nationalisation would have threatened the property rights of a very large number of farmers at a time when owner-occupation both in town and countryside was spreading. In practice Labour took measures after 1945 to secure the tenancies of tenant farmers rather than to attack the rights to ownership.

Labour's Agricultural Act 1947 continued with the system of annual price reviews introduced in 1944. It was an urgent measure to address postwar food shortages and rationing. This heralded an era of structural surpluses, continuing rural depopulation and environmental despoliation. The debate on land nationalisation re-emerged during the 1950s when it was realised that although home food production had increased by 40 per cent since the war, farming profits had gone up by 400 per cent.⁷⁹ Some in the Party, like G. D. H. Cole, continued to think that the post-war Labour Government had missed a 'great opportunity' in failing to nationalize the land. As late as 1956 he could maintain that '... nothing short of this can bring about a right balance in the use of land or ensure that development follows lines consistent with public advantage'.⁸⁰ It is an interesting speculation whether land nationalisation would have advanced or hindered the achievements of agriculture in the three or so decades after the 1947 Agriculture Act and whether those, who like Cole, lamented the loss of the 'great opportunity', were right to do so.

⁷⁸ K. O. Morgan, *Labour in Power, 1945–1951* (1984), pp. 95–141 for the best discussion of nationalisation. – a debate between Michael Foot and George Brown).

⁷⁹ *Fabian J.*, Oct. 1954 ('Is land nationalisation necessary (1956), p. 366. ⁸⁰ G. D. H. Cole, *The post-war condition of Britain*

Book Reviews

Britain and Ireland

PETER FOWLER, *Farming in the first millennium AD: British agriculture between Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror* (CUP, 2002). xviii + 393 pp. 43 plates; 21 figs. £75 (hbk); £27.95 (pbk).

This book is an ambitious enterprise, which, in effect, aims to supersede volume II (i) of CUP's *Agrarian history of England and Wales* edited by H. P. R. Finberg and published in 1972. The main differences are that Scotland is included, chronological treatment is largely eschewed, the approach is predominantly archaeological rather than historical – and the whole is written by one person. Mostly, the book is organized as a series of thematic chapters on farms, ploughs, livestock and so on, illustrated by a selection of archaeological discoveries mostly made in the (post-Finberg) era of much more intensive archaeological work. Additional insights are derived from 'traditional' farming practices, medieval literature and manuscript illustrations, as well as Fowler's own fieldwork on Overton Down in north Wiltshire, consultative roles at Butser Ancient Farm (and, I presume, Bede's World), and observations of recent farming practice in Galicia and the Causse Méjean in the Cévennes. The book is intended in part as a textbook, and it certainly contains a great deal of information and thoughtful comment, as well as a 38-page bibliography. It will be especially useful for those whose specialism is document-based history, and who wish to develop an understanding of what archaeologists have contributed to knowledge of first millennium farming in recent years.

A survey of British agriculture which aims to run in time from Cunobelin to Cnut and in space from Marazion to Muckle Flugga involves hard choices. Fowler has rejected a framework of region-based chapters which would have encouraged more even spatial coverage. Rightly out of sympathy with 'ethnic' categories such as 'Romano-British agriculture', 'Anglo-Saxon agriculture' and so on, he has also refrained from telling the story chronologically. In the short and seemingly belated historical overview which turns up in the final chapter, eight phases of agrarian history are described in fourteen pages, within a framework defined by 'political' events. (And in this context, the book has largely lost interest in anywhere

more than a hundred miles from Oxford.) It seems that first millennium agrarian history cannot be put into self-defined phases, even those fuzzy and regionally-varying phases which last a couple of centuries or so and are markedly different from those which precede and succeed them despite the fact that their boundaries are transgressed by quite a few general trends. I appreciate that this book is not intended as an agrarian history; yet someone, some day, will have to provide such a history for the first millennium AD – and he or she will be using much the same sort of data as Fowler presents here.

The thematic treatment carries the risk that the reader will rarely gain a sense of the holistic, experiential, landscape-centred nature of farming. To some extent a corrective is provided by local case studies, though as these are quite frequently not illustrated by site plans or photographs, it is sometimes hard to visualize the agrarian landscape being described. I suggest that a second edition might contain illustrations more closely linked to what is after all quite a closely-focused text. Some of the photos are atmospheric, but they don't do much work; most readers will already know what muck heaps, flocks of sheep, and coppice stools look like.

What are Fowler's first millennium farmers like? Mostly, they resemble the figures in Alan Sorrell's well-known illustrations of the archaeologically-oriented past – working their butts off for an oppressive master, with some very nasty weather on the way. They are portrayed as conservative, pragmatic characters, whose common sense was much like ours, so it is not surprising that what they did is often described as 'unsurprising'. They were 'not democratic', their spirituality (although 'sincere') was very much an epiphenomenon, and they worked land which was almost always 'owned' by somebody else. They were in other words essentially passive, their cultural competence and social agency fenced in by certain given factors whose complexity, variability, mutability and internal tensions are largely unexplored. They are stereotypical 'farmers', only allowed roles as social beings in other branches of history. They are characterized as exploited, for instance, but this does not lead to an interesting (Marxian?) analysis. The research agenda mostly involves farming practice in its narrower sense and the recommended strategy seems to be simply to

wait and see what archaeology will throw up next. Don't we also need a wider, more intellectually demanding agenda, in which farming practice is socially, politically, and economically contextualized, and archaeology makes its contribution to some wider debates? We might, for instance, set a knowledgeable concern for the pinch-points of farming practice, in terms of soils and weather and labour bottlenecks, alongside closer and wider social and economic understandings, and a good sense of regional landscapes, rather as Tom Williamson has attempted to do in his excellent *Shaping medieval landscapes* (Windgather Press, 2003). *Farming in the first millennium* is indeed authoritative, as its publisher's blurb maintains, and it is often illuminating; but it is also a distinctly personal view.

ANDREW FLEMING

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PHILIP RIDEN (ed.), *The Victoria history of the counties of England. A history of the county of Northampton, V, Cleyley hundred* (Boydell and Brewer for the Institute of Historical Research, 2002). xvi + 466 pp. 16 plates; 34 maps. £90.

In common with other counties, the Victoria County History of Northamptonshire is undergoing a long period of gestation. Four years elapsed between the appearance of Volume I in 1902 and the publication of the second volume, while Volumes III and IV became available in 1930 and 1937 respectively. Whether through intention or serendipity, then, this latest edition to the magisterial series celebrates the centenary of the project. The editor's foreword darkly hints at a complexity of interplaying tensions at work during the work's preparation. These were perhaps not entirely unconnected with disagreements between collaborating academic institutions and other difficulties which appear to have been in part instrumental in the termination of the contracts of employment of both the editor himself and his assistant at the Nene College of Higher Education (currently University College, Northampton) where they were based. This being the case, it is to the credit of Philip Riden and his colleague Charles Insley that with the generous support of a variety of trusts, commercial organizations, banks, historical societies and individuals the volume has been safely guided through the press.

The hundred of Cleyley comprises twenty-five thousand acres in the extreme south of Northamptonshire and in its quiet way reflects on a local basis many of the broader trends of English rural history. Although the limited fieldwork to date has identified little in the way of prehistoric, Roman or early Saxon activity, Cleyley had evolved by the later Middle Ages as a district of nucleated settlement largely innocent of industrial activity. Of

major significance was the establishment in 1542 of a large royal estate, the Honor of Grafton, which, before it passed into the control of the second Duke of Grafton in 1706, had been subject to imparking, some enclosure of common field and a modest degree of depopulation. While various grantees remodelled their houses and rationalized their estates in the seventeenth century, industrial development remained vestigial and Cleyley rested in its rural slumber for the next three centuries. The Victorian period witnessed the final enclosure of open field, extensive rebuilding of farms on the major estates, the establishment of village schools, the renovation of parish churches, and, in parishes not under the control of major landowners, some limited building of villas for the professional classes. Meanwhile the hundred pursued the quiet tenor of its way. Political and religious tensions were few, industrial and commercial development fragmentary, and as men laboured in field, wood and byre, their women remained at the hearthside occupied with lace-making. The only perceptible stresses within this particular rural backwater were linked to an increasing level of pauperism, and as population increased limited efforts were made to establish a small-scale scheme to promote transatlantic emigration.

With the sale of the great estates and the rise of freehold farming in the early twentieth century, the age-old pattern was set to change. The Heskeths managed to cling on to the great estate of Easton Neston with its glorious Hawksmoor house, yet thousands of acres of other properties changed hands as generations of tenants purchased their freeholds. Henceforth we encounter the familiar pattern of increasing rural depopulation, the building of council houses after World War I (often against the wishes of the sometimes obscurantist rural district councils), and, in subsequent years, the almost total eclipse of traditional village life. As the working classes happily gravitated towards the new council houses after the Second World War, so their dark and insanitary cottages – sanctified by age, if little more – were eagerly acquired by professional incomers from elsewhere, keen to secure a rural foothold. In the meantime, farm buildings were adapted for light industry or offices and outlying field barns were converted to domestic purposes, so that rural facilities deteriorated in a manner so balefully perpetuated the length and breadth of England. Today Milton Keynes and Northampton, the workplaces of many Cleyley denizens (whence they are obliged to travel by car due to the disgraceful shortage of public transport), are the principal influences on the local economy.

Philip Riden's volume follows the standard Victoria County History format and in terms of its detail is rather superior in respect of depth and breadth than its

predecessors. Drawing upon an impressive range of sources, the work achieves exhaustive (and sometimes exhausting) coverage of individual parishes including manorial and ecclesiastical aspects, agricultural and economic history, local government, landscape and settlement, trades and crafts and much more besides. Lustre is lent to Riden and Insley's efforts by the high quality of the line drawings and maps, the excellence of Peter Moyse's photographs, and a highly-detailed and comprehensive index which is an exemplar of the *genre*. The volume is prefaced by a lengthy introduction to the hundred of Cleyley and a separate section dealing with the Honor of Grafton. Whereas in keeping with the traditions of the Victoria County Histories, these essays are severely factual and offer little in the way of analysis or interpretation, they provide valuable context to the remainder of the work.

Many readers of this *Review* will not have been born when the previous volume of the Victoria History of the County of Northampton came into being. Let us hope that not too long a time will elapse before the appearance of Volume VI from which, if it equates with the admirable quality of Riden and Insley's efforts, those of us still in the land of the living will derive much pleasure and profit.

R. J. MOORE-COLYER
University of Wales, Aberystwyth

MARYANNE KOWALESKI (ed.), *The havener's accounts of the earldom and duchy of Cornwall, 1287–1356* (Devon and Cornwall Record Society, new ser. 44, 2001). xii + 361 pp. £20 incl. p&p from the Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 7 The Close, Exeter, EX1 1EZ.

It is the harvest of the sea rather than the harvest of the land that is the principal focus of this welcome and scholarly volume. Professor Kowaleski has drawn selectively on the first seventy years of the copious records of the earldom and, then, duchy of Cornwall to assemble this remarkable collection of accounts. They document the pioneering attempts made by successive earls and dukes to regulate and profit from an array of maritime activities and resources over the critical and controversial period punctuated by the agrarian crisis of 1315–22, outbreak of the Hundred Years War in 1337, and Black Death of 1348–9. The 'havener' of the title was the official responsible for administering the earldom/duchy's maritime properties. This unique position first appeared in the mid-thirteenth century and is a clear indication of the importance of the sea to this most maritime of English earldoms. Wrecks, royal fish (whales, sturgeon, and porpoises), prisage from cargoes of wine, port farms, fines levied in maritime courts, trantery (a toll paid by those who purchased fish for re-sale elsewhere), fines

paid by forestallers of fish, customs duties on a range of imported and exported goods, and an assortment of other perquisites were all potentially lucrative sources of revenue for which the havener was required to account.

This comprehensive edition of the havener's accounts – translated into English and reproduced verbatim (including insertions and deletions) – therefore makes interesting and revealing reading. Here are the materials that make it possible to document the relative importance of Cornwall's many ports, the volume and composition of the trade that they handled, the ships and shipmasters responsible for carrying that trade and the voyages that they took, trade links between Cornwall and the rest of England, Wales, Ireland, Flanders, France, and Spain, the activities of Cornish fishermen and the nature of their catches, the risks and hazards of navigation, and the relationships between those who worked the sea for their livelihoods and the officials of the earldom/duchy. Much of this information is repetitive, cryptic, and formulaic but it is leavened by a wealth of anecdotal detail which ensures that these accounts are anything but a dull read. They record, for instance, the intriguing case of a ship captured in 1338/9 with a valuable cargo of wine and salt but entirely deserted by its crew and even its cat, the costs involved in transporting a carcass of venison from Lostwithiel to Bristol in 1339/40, and a tragic case in 1348/9 when a crew of fishermen were drowned even though their boat was saved. A substantial and first-rate introduction by the editor, detailed and thorough index, and glossary of the many unusual and archaic terms establish this as a volume that is as easy as it is interesting to use. It will become an indispensable work of reference for anyone interested in the south-west, in the earldom/duchy of Cornwall, in medieval fishing, trade, and shipping, and in the many trials and tribulations of the early fourteenth century.

Plainly, no account of the agrarian economy of the south-west can afford to ignore the food, employment, wealth and commercial opportunities that were supplied by the sea (the same, of course, applies to the national economy). Moreover, because so much of what Cornwall produced and needed left and entered the county by sea the character and composition of its economy are more transparent than would have been the case had the county been more land-locked. The Cornish economy at this high point of medieval economic development was overwhelmingly geared towards primary production. Tin, sought after throughout Europe, was its most valuable export (and, by implication, a major employer), followed by unprocessed hides, and fish. At this peak in the national wool trade Cornwall was not a significant producer and exporter of wool, for Cornish wool was coarse in quality and low in value and of little use,

therefore, to Flemish cloth producers who were increasingly specializing in high-quality woollens. In return came salt, required in quantity by the fishing industry, wine, and grain, the poor harvests of 1352–53 eliciting a noticeable increase in grain shipments. Significantly, the ships that carried this trade were as yet mostly built and owned elsewhere.

To an economy so dependent upon maritime trade the outbreak of hostilities between England and France proved to be a major set-back. Not only were established patterns of supply and demand disrupted, but piracy and privateering made plying the high seas a great deal more dangerous. The 1330s and 1340s were therefore a very difficult time for the Cornish economy and these problems were greatly compounded by the massive impact upon the county of the Black Death, to which the haverer's accounts bear abundant witness. In the long run, however, as Professor Kowaleski is at pains to emphasize, adversity served as a spur to enterprise, stimulating investment in ships, mariners, naval supplies, and administrative experience. To war rather than peace, Cornwall ultimately owed the increased supply of ships and mariners that underpinned its remarkable late medieval efflorescence. Professor Kowaleski is therefore to be congratulated for having produced a volume that will please the small band of those interested in the general problems of the medieval economy as much as the host of potential readers hungry for information about the history of this much loved and distinctive English county.

BRUCE M. S. CAMPBELL
Queen's University, Belfast

J. L. KIRBY and JANET H. STEVENSON (eds), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem and other analogous documents preserved in the Public Record Office, XXI, 6 to 10 Henry V (1418–1422)* (Boydell / Public Record Office, 2002). xvii + 462 pp. £120.

Volume I of the *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem preserved in the Public Record Office*, covering the reign of Henry III, was published as long ago as 1904. It is therefore something of a shock to be reminded that calendaring of the fifteenth-century IPMs remains ongoing, with the reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV outstanding. In part this is because of the sheer mass of documentation to be processed but it also reflects the widespread historical perception that the IPMs are of dubious reliability and the later IPMs especially so. To have promoted such a view of one of the most comprehensive and useful of all sources bearing upon issues of land-ownership, property, and land-use during the later middle ages must rank as one of the most remarkable own goals ever scored by historians. This detailed calendar of 964 IPMs and related documents from the

last five years of the reign of Henry V (1418–22) is therefore very much to be welcomed. The sheer wealth and variety of the information that it summarizes, concerning landlords and their heirs, tenants and their holdings, rents and services, buildings and their value, mills and other assets, and much else besides should go a long way towards reinstating these fifteenth-century IPMs as an important source, not least by greatly facilitating their use. Indeed, the detail and consistency of the information given in this, the twenty-first volume in the series, is far superior to that provided in the earliest volumes. Over a hundred pages of indexes also make it very easy to locate relevant people, places, and subjects.

Here is information for virtually every county in England and a cross section of almost 450 land-owners. The latter range from the duchess of York and earls of Devon and of Oxford at one social extreme to individuals as humble as William Appelyerd of East Carleton in Norfolk (who died possessed of half a messuage and 13 acres of arable) at the other. In contrast to the earliest IPMs, dating from the reigns of Henry III and Edward I, it is the properties of the lay gentry, rather than the aristocracy, that dominate this calendar. Women also feature more prominently and account for over a quarter of those recorded. Of the men, almost a third are described as knights, a sixth as esquires, and half had no title at all. Imperfect though the IPMs may be, without them many of these lesser landowners and their properties would be unrecorded. With the publication of this excellent calendar there is no longer any excuse for them passing unnoticed.

BRUCE M. S. CAMPBELL
Queen's University, Belfast

C. P. LEWIS, *A history of Kirtling and Upend. Landowners and people in a Cambridgeshire parish, 1000–2000* (Wallasey: Magazine Lane Press for Kirtling and Upend Parish Council, 2000). 90 pp. Illus. £7.99

This book, one of a genre of local parish studies produced to celebrate the millennium, covers the history of Kirtling and Upend and its inhabitants over the last 1000 years. The text runs to just 64 pages, divided into six chapters, and is furnished with maps, 'special features' and an album of well-chosen photographs portraying village life from the 1860s. A friendly feel is combined with genuine scholarship as the author develops various themes, familiar to more academic accounts. Central to the story is the impact of the Norths, the leading landowning family, on the lives of the people, the landscape and physical fabric of the parish. Their experience was unusual in that having established themselves in the sixteenth century, with a great estate, mansion and park, they left in 1677 and resided elsewhere for some 150 years,

before returning to Kirtling Tower – all that remained of the house – in the 1820s. Without their presence in the formative years of the eighteenth century, Kirtling and Upend did not become a typical ‘closed’ estate village, but developed in more diverse ways. Enclosure was delayed, independent landowners survived and new influences, such as nonconformity, flourished. By the time the Norths returned they were powerless to reverse these trends. Despite an energetic programme of building new cottages, almshouses and schools, the social control they exercised was little more than decorative.

This tale of interaction between landowner and community is interwoven with themes on the development of farming, the changes in social structure and the cultural life of the village. The work is well organized, fully documented and supported by the several published accounts of the North family. The author also acknowledges his debt to the *Victoria County History of Cambridgeshire*, which allowed him to use the material from the History of Kirtling ahead of publication. Nevertheless, it has been his task to present the story to a new audience in a manner which is crisp, convincing and relevant. A particular strength is the final chapter, ‘Within living memory 1910–2000’, which links the past to the present, and provides for the newcomers to the parish – many commuting daily to Cambridge and beyond – a rich historical context for their often transient lives in this burgeoning part of East Anglia.

ELIZABETH GRIFFITHS
University of Exeter

PAMELA SHARPE, *Population and society in an east Devon parish. Reproducing Colyton, 1540–1840* (University of Exeter Press, 2002). xvi + 408 pp. 49 tables; 8 plates; 17 figs; 6 maps. £45.

Colyton is without doubt the spiritual home of English historical demography, and symbolizes both the frustrations and the achievements of this branch of the discipline, both of which are reflected in the latest interpretation of demographic developments in the parish offered by Pam Sharpe. The frustrations are inherent in the sources and basic methodologies of historical demography; the achievements in the ability of demographers to come to terms with, and often transcend, these frustrations. This is exactly what Sharpe has managed to do in this stimulating, if at times somewhat speculative, study.

The problem with Anglican parish registers upon which historical demography depends is that you cannot always trust them. The secret is to choose parish registers of particularly high quality, preferably for a parish large enough to minimize the impact of short-distance migration, and then to identify any remaining shortcomings

and allow for them. When he chose Colyton to pioneer for England the technique of family reconstitution, Tony Wrigley was confident that its registers were comprehensive: it now appears that the early registers cover only the wealthier section of the population, and there is a significant shortfall in marriages registered in the century after 1650, persuasively explained here as the product of the nonconformist tendencies of both labouring and ‘middling’ groups in the parish. A second cause of frustration is that reconstitution, despite its time-consuming nature, remains a blunt analytical tool without context, offering only limited insight in the absence of knowledge of the broader economic, social and cultural identity of the community to which it relates, and the specificity by social class of the various measures to which it gives rise. It is in these latter respects that Sharpe makes her major contribution, providing a ‘total reconstitution’ of the parish of Colyton that draws upon some 80 sets of additional sources to supplement the extant reconstitution of the parish’s Anglican registers. The key novelty is the identification through these sources of four broad social groups – gentry, crafts, labourers and the poor – and the subsequent elucidation of the demographic experiences of each through nominative linkage to the reconstitution data.

Despite the chronological range advertized by the title of this book, there is little here on the sixteenth or nineteenth centuries, and a very heavy focus indeed upon the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when interesting things were happening in the parish. It was this period that witnessed a substantial rise in the age at marriage of women, particularly among the poorer social groups who also exhibited low rates of remarriage, features which are explained in terms of a skewed sex ratio which is itself the product of sex-specific in-migration to take up opportunities in the expanding lace-making industry, a similar hypothesis to that offered to explain relatively late female ages at marriage in the mid-nineteenth century in those parts of Hertfordshire where the straw plait industry flourished. In this period too birth intervals grew, and Sharpe finds evidence of ‘stopping’ behaviour which is consistent with family limitation, particularly for those groups below the level of the gentry, explained in terms of deteriorating economic circumstances and the discipline of dissent. Economic polarization, allied to a rise in infectious disease, also helps to explain rising child and (subsequently) infant mortality after 1650, as well as the onset of disparity between social groups, but the overall conclusion to this central section of the book is that economic factors must be considered alongside the cultural context of population change.

The key demographic analysis is confined to just 47 pages, with much of the rest of the volume providing

economic, social and cultural context. A wide range of fascinating material is included on matters such as pauper apprenticeship, education, the incidence of poverty and its alleviation, the structure of local government, the changing nature of the local agrarian regime and farming practice, land reclamation, the rise of dissent and involvement of Colyton residents in Monmouth's rebellion, and much more. In these sometimes rather discursive discussions, Sharpe reaches out to the wider economy of east Devon, even including a section on the fishing industry despite the fact that it was of very little importance to Colyton itself. The section on the rise of dissent, which unfortunately she had to 'piece together . . . from a disparate set of sources' (p. 30), is central to her subsequent demographic explanations. Her reinterpretation of the development of Colyton's economy, however, is of even more crucial importance, for not only does it underpin the explanation of the skewed sex ratio which emerged in the seventeenth century, but it also fundamentally contradicts the chronology and composition of economic development previously offered by David Levine. What a pity it is that the sources are lacking to provide a clear picture of the changing occupational structure of the parish over time.

The final substantive chapter of the book, 'Viable Households', returns to examine demographic matters in more detail, tracing the inhabitants of Colyton through from birth to old age, emphasizing the correspondence between domestic industry, poverty, singlehood and illegitimacy, and offering particularly valuable insights into the limited extent to which the 'nuclear family' model encapsulated the long-term experiences of the parish poor. In many ways the most stimulating of all the discussions, it is merely one more fascinating chapter, bold in interpretation, rich in detail, and as firmly rooted in evidence as the documentation allows. That documentation is frequently disappointing, as Sharpe is well aware; the social categories adopted are rather amorphous, difficult to define and variable in their representation over time; even a 'total reconstitution' can achieve no more than very partial coverage of even a single parish. Much remains ultimately unknowable, but we are unlikely to get much closer to the 'truth' about Colyton than Pam Sharpe has done here.

NIGEL GOOSE

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CHARLES F. FOSTER, *Seven households. Life in Cheshire and Lancashire, 1582 to 1774* (Arley Hall Press, 2002).

xviii + 248 pp. Illus. £19.95 (hbk); £11.95 (pbk) incl. p&xp from Arley Hall Press, Northwich, CW9 6NA.

This is the third volume to appear in a series of books, based on the archives of the Arley and Tabley estates in

Cheshire, which describe social and economic developments in a corner of north-western England in the early modern period. This time, however, the scope is far more ambitious; not only is this book twice the size of the first two but it also extends its survey into mid-Lancashire and Furness. To do so, the author has to go beyond the bounds of his own primary research and make use of published material, specifically, the accounts of Sarah Fell of Swarthmoor Hall, Richard Latham of Scarisbrick and the Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe. His intention is to provide the 'intimate details of daily life' of people from a variety of backgrounds, even families of comparatively humble means. To a certain extent he succeeds. While the gentry dominate the proceedings, there are interesting chapters on representatives of the yeoman class, namely the Fells of Swarthmoor, the Jacksons of Hield and the Lathams of Scarisbrick. Moreover, in passing we learn something of the lives of a kaleidoscopic cast of tenants, craftsmen, labourers and servants. Like the previous two volumes, the book remains true to its origins as a local history project, similarly displaying the strengths and weakness of that genre.

Agricultural historians will read this book with profit for, taken together, the seven case studies cover a number of key developments that were taking place in the countryside at the time. They include agricultural, economic and commercial change; family life and inheritance; social mobility; the provision of rural credit; and the decline in the system of living-in servants. I found particularly illuminating the career of Thomas Jackson, a three-life leaseholder of a fifteen acre farm at Hield in Aston-by-Budworth. Through his efforts he managed to earn enough to spend £840 on setting up his children, to acquire a freehold estate, amass £200 in ready money, and to be recognized as a gentleman. Education, as with so many other people, was the key, for it enabled him to obtain employment as the steward of the Leicesters of Tabley Hall and carry on a thriving legal practice. Alas, two of his three sons did not prosper, illustrating the point that mobility was downwards as well as upwards. This theme crops up regularly in various chapters.

The format of the book, unfortunately, does create some problems. Because the seven households are looked at end-on, there is a considerable amount of repetition. Thus, major themes, such as the ones listed above, are scattered throughout the text and, as a result, the argument is fragmented. In places, too, the local experience should have been contextualized. In addition, some of the findings should have been highlighted to a greater extent; the material presented here is very important but its value is not always fully appreciated. The text also contains a considerable amount of raw data, whether in the form of lists of wages and prices, extracts from

account books or genealogical details. This documentation is very useful as a source of primary information, especially when printed in the numerous appendices, but it distracts, when placed in the middle of a passage. Of course, many of the *Review's* readers will recognize the significance of the information included here and be able to put it into context themselves. The book should certainly be read by all those researching the process of social and economic change in north-western England in the period 1550–1750. I look forward to the fourth and final volume.

PETER EDWARDS

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MARGARET SPUFFORD, *The scope of local history and the potential of the hearth tax returns* (British Association for Local History, 2000). 20 pp. £3.50; NESTA EVANS and SUSAN ROSE (eds), *Cambridgeshire hearth tax returns, Michaelmas 1664* (British Record Society/Cambridgeshire Records Society, 2001). cxx + 385 pp. £32; DUNCAN HARRINGTON, SARAH PEARSON and SUSAN ROSE (eds), *Kent hearth tax assessment, Lady Day 1664* (British Record Society/Kent Archaeological Society, 2001). cxvi + 687 pp. £40.

These three volumes present the first results of a project initiated by Professor Spufford at the University of Surrey, Roehampton to publish a series of county hearth tax returns for each county where there is not one in print. Transcription of the original lists, most held at the PRO, will be undertaken by volunteers using microfilms of the appropriate return obtained with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The aim of the project is to provide a national picture of the English and Welsh counties in which the density of those taxed, those taxed according to specific hearth number and those exempted is mapped on a parochial or equivalent basis. Such a picture can then be used as a background against which the typicality or atypicality of a settlement can be judged and as such will provide an immense resource for those interested in agricultural, economic, social, and family history.

The first volume, *The potential of the hearth tax returns* is an edited version of the Phillimore lecture delivered in November 2000 as a progress report on the project. By this date, the maps and tables for Cambridgeshire, Kent and Durham had been completed and Professor Spufford has drawn together the results from these counties to illustrate her vision. The comparable maps show that in Durham those parishes with over 70 per cent of householders paying on one hearth are not scattered spasmodically as in Cambridgeshire but are the norm all over the county, whereas in Kent, they appear only in some numbers in specific areas of the county. Such information presented pictorially does highlight the huge

contrast between 'rich agricultural and clothing Kent and poverty-stricken coal-mining Durham' with Cambridgeshire sitting somewhere between the two. This is impressive work but its validity is open to the usual debate of the extent of comparability of hearth tax data both within and between counties. Similarly, there is the question of whether the recording of the exempt within the hearth tax lists is uniform enough to use as an indicator of poverty, whatever such a condition implies.

The two county volumes follow the usual format of a record society publication, the transcript preceded by a scholarly introduction in which the analysed data is discussed with the aid of well-produced tables and maps arranged by Susan Rose. Whilst the coverage of Cambridgeshire is virtually complete, that for Kent excludes the Cinque Ports and some smaller liberties. The data for Canterbury is taken from an earlier assessment. What sets these volumes apart from earlier hearth tax transcriptions is the standardization of the criteria used in the analyses and the maps, thus allowing for future comparison on a national scale.

Both introducers have used case studies of two or three villages to put flesh on the bones of the hearth tax data in terms of population density, buildings and the wealth and identity of their occupiers. The detailed layout of the Cambridgeshire list proved a more difficult task to transcribe for Nesta Evans, resulting in some errors, and the reader would have benefited from an illustration of a sample extract. The transcript supplies information for both 1662 and 1664 and with the inclusion of additional analyses for 1666 and 1674, the volume provides comparative data for four distinct dates. Although Evans has only briefly touched upon the use of such analyses to investigate the comprehensiveness of the transcribed return, the information is there for others to pursue. The strength of this introduction lies in its detailed comparison of the hearth tax data with that from other sources pinpointing areas of omission and evasion within the list and also suggesting possible fields for future research.

The simpler format of the Kent list, transcribed by Duncan Harrington and using different conventions, is easier to understand. In this introduction, Sarah Pearson has used her deep knowledge of surviving seventeenth-century Kent buildings to show that the relationship between hearths and wealth is not always straightforward. She is able to show that the smaller newer houses in the county tended to have more hearths per house than the older buildings whose occupiers were slow to upgrade their homes.

The potential of the hearth tax returns is well-known and Margaret Spufford is to be congratulated for her vision in initiating the recovery of the national picture.

Hopefully, initial teething problems such as uniformity of conventions and typesetting and the danger of mis-transcription will be addressed in the subsequent volumes. Publication of accurate transcriptions of these hearth tax lists, permitting comparison of the data both between and within counties, is a major stepping stone in the quest to determine their validity.

ELIZABETH PARKINSON
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RACHEL CRAWFORD, *Poetry, enclosure, and the vernacular landscape, 1700–1830* (CUP, 2002). xiii + 318 pp. 18 illus. £ 45.

Rachel Crawford asserts in the opening sentence of her monograph that ‘containment is not the first thing to come to mind when reading histories of Great Britain’s eighteenth century’ (p. 3). Yet, by the time the reader concludes Crawford’s richly-researched book, she will agree that the idea of containment is essential to understanding landscape architecture, horticultural science, poetic forms, and the very concept of Englishness itself as these each developed during 130-year scope of the book. Crawford’s variegated and erudite exposition forces readers to question many other critical and historical truisms about the forms and aims of writing about the land in the long eighteenth century. Crawford demonstrates that the central concepts of expansion and contraction, when applied to writing about landscape, are not mutually exclusive but exist in a fluid dialectic within an historical trajectory that is much less disjunctive, and thus much more resistant to easy developmental schemas, than previous historians and literary critics have acknowledged.

Knitting numerous heterogeneous sources, from primary texts such as Ralph Austen’s *A treatise on fruit-trees* (1653) to modern works of critical theory such as Susan Stewart’s *On longing* (1993), Crawford relies upon a seemingly limitless set of texts to argue for the importance of the bounded and limited space in discussions of national identity in the period. Weaving so many skeins of discussion together, Crawford’s book resists easy summary, though it is organized overall into tripartite structures, presented chronologically and developmentally. Each of the three main sections contains three chapters, and several individual chapters focus on three specific examples or moments. Fundamental to the book’s argument is the premise of what Crawford labels ‘isomeric relations of words and space’ (p. 5), evident in how writers, whether of agricultural treatises or of georgic poetry, borrow from one another, demonstrating ‘how representational conceptions of space intersect with representational forms in literature’ (p. 9). Crawford gracefully negotiates the linguistic and ideological cross-

pollination among horticultural studies and sonnet collections, garden design guides and popular periodical essays. Her serpentine argument demands concentration, but the abundance of sources allows her to break down unproductive boundaries among academic disciplines. The resulting study is an original and important revisionary history of the eighteenth-century landscape and its representations.

The book opens with an overview of the history of parks and of enclosure in the eighteenth century, and the second chapter is especially valuable for its nuanced account of parliamentary enclosure. Crawford refuses the mystifications of previous accounts (such as that of J. M. Neeson), seeing these as perpetuating an oversimplified notion of the ideality of the open-field system. By exposing how the forces of nostalgia blur modern critical understanding of the significance of enclosure, the book illustrates that

reading in and about agricultural tracts and materials drains parliamentary enclosure of its spectacular effect and provides us with a glimpse of the disparity between historical circumstance and symbolic representation. It becomes clear that the symbolic power of enclosure far exceeds either its positive effects for agriculture or its negative effects on the poor or landscape (p. 54).

Chapter 3 then traces three moments illustrating the mounting importance of the concept of containment through the gardening treatises of Switzer (1715), Whately (1770), and Repton (1808). Relying upon these exemplary texts, Crawford underscores the claim of the previous chapter, that it was increasingly the enclosed landscape that was perceived as authentically English.

The second part of the book examines the literary mode most commonly associated with eighteenth-century discourse about the land: the georgic. After summarizing the rise and fall of the georgic as genre, connecting its fate to historical and cultural developments from the Act of Union to the increased popularity of scientific prose to the impact of the loss of the American colonies, Crawford examines John Philips’s *Cyder* in Chapter 5 and Richard Jago’s *Edge-Hill* in Chapter 6. For the literary critic, in particular, these chapters offer fascinating explorations demonstrating that there is more to georgic poetry than tedious didacticism. Crawford’s reading of *Cyder*, often pinpointed as the first major English georgic of the eighteenth century, focuses on how the apple was appropriated by both poetry and agricultural treatises to the status of the fruit of true Englishness. Her ambitious reading of *Edge-Hill*, often considered as the last major English georgic, focuses on Jago’s techniques of ekphrasis and metaphrasis

as instrumental in moving the georgic scene from a wide view of the landscape to 'the small, well-delineated quarters of the industrial shop and from the unbounded prospects of gentry to the ingenuity of tradesmen' (p. 142).

By the end of the century, the unbounded vistas of aristocratic parks and the capacious form of the georgic were replaced by interest in the aesthetic and ideological possibilities of both kitchen gardens and sonnets or minor odes. The study closes with chapters devoted to kitchen garden manuals and minor poems on the subject of garden bowers by Keats, Coleridge, and Hemans. The final chapters illustrate Crawford's overall contention that the early eighteenth-century emphasis on 'the boundless view put into play a dialectic between containment and unrestrained space that ultimately provided containment with new symbolic possibilities . . . containment could be visualized anew as the means by which England could be made the Garden of the World' (p. 253).

By grafting sources from literature, horticulture, agronomy and aesthetics (to name only a few), Crawford produces a hybrid scholarly work. Yet, as is the case with many hybrids, Crawford's argument yields surprising and productive conclusions. By liberally mixing resources currently constrained within separate academic disciplines, Crawford's work will open up vaster fields of knowledge for readers, challenging the assumptions of literary history with those of agricultural history and vice versa.

BRIDGET KEEGAN
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NICOLA VERDON, *Rural women workers in nineteenth-century England. Gender, work and wages* (Boydell Press, 2002). viii + 232 pp. 16 tables; 8 figs. £45.

Nicola Verdon charges that despite the recent 'impressive ascent' of both women's history and agrarian social history, we know 'surprisingly little' about how rural women made a living during the nineteenth century. Her book is intended to fill this gap.

The starting point for Verdon, as for most other researchers, is Ivy Pinchbeck's foundational *Women workers in the industrial revolution* (first edition, 1930). Pinchbeck's consummate text is based on an exploration of printed sources using traditional historical methods. It has been embellished by subsequent research in the same vein, and by Ann Kussmaul and Keith Snell's innovative research. Their work was inferential, based heavily on southern sources, and is now the subject of revision. But both Kussmaul and Snell provided new insight, significantly in my view, embedded in careful statistical analysis. The resulting conventional wisdom focuses disputation on the precise chronology of women's retreat from waged labour with regional variations in trends readily acknowledged.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of familiar printed sources and seeks to extract something fresh. Verdon begins with the widely-quoted budget accounts of Eden and Davies. Verdon claims the only quantitative analysis of this evidence to be by Thomas Sokoll (1991). This is not correct as both sets of accounts were included in the large data set of working-class budgets assembled by Sara Horrell and myself and analyzed in a series of articles published in the 1990s. Moreover we anticipated Verdon in decomposing family incomes into contributions by fathers, mothers and children. We, however, only included households with a male head, subdivided the budgets according to the occupation of that male head and according to their geographical location, combined the budgets with others recorded for the same period, and contrasted their structure with budgets for different periods. Given the overlap in sources it is not surprising that Verdon's findings mirror our own: the paramount importance of men's earnings, the greater importance of children's earnings than women's earnings and the relative unimportance of women's earnings, although Verdon does not describe them in these terms. Verdon does not report the number of observations on which her averages are based nor whether she includes the female-headed households that feature in these collections in her computations, nor how she treats the contributions of poor relief.

Another well-known source discussed in this chapter is the 1834 Poor Law Report. Again it is not correct that answers to the questions on female and child employment have not been 'systematically exploited' (p. 53). George Boyer, for example, included the answer to Question 11, on the presence or absence of cottage industry, in his econometric analysis of the determination of wages and poor relief in southern counties. Moreover it needs to be underlined that the answers to Question 13 ('What might the labourer's wife and four children aged 14, 11, 8 and 5 years respectively, expect to earn in the year?') do not relate to any actual wife and children but simply to the beliefs of the respondents about what was possible. The value of bar charts based on this evidence would be enhanced if we knew how many responses they represent and/or the variances involved. The resulting decompositions of family income generally confirm the findings from the family budgets for the era, in particular that the earnings of children outstripped those of adult women. It is clear that studies of nineteenth-century standards of living that rely solely on male wage data are misleading.

Perhaps the most useful findings from the printed sources (and see here Burnette, EHNet) are the comparative male and female agricultural servants wages extracted from the Board of Agriculture *Reports*. Verdon

is undoubtedly on the right track when she explains the relatively high female to male wage ratio for Hertford and Buckingham by competition for female labour from domestic industry. Perhaps this explanation could be tested further by linking these wage ratios to the evidence on the geographical distribution of domestic industry revealed in the Poor Law Report.

Chapter 3 turns to farm servants and contributes to the revision of Kussmaul's description of apparently too rapid and universal decline. There is interesting material here on hiring fairs, servants' wages, and the replacement of women by young men in milking. But the focus on the East Riding of Yorkshire, which Verdon herself notes was unique among arable counties in the extent to which unmarried male and female farm servants remained a fundamental component of the labour force, means that the reported experience was far from typical. Moreover as the historians of the East Riding have shown, farm service persisted there because it adapted, shedding many of its traditional characteristics such as residence in the farmhouse. It is interesting to speculate how this process of adaptation contributed to the greater segregation of the workforce, with women servants increasingly confined to indoor domestic labour and men monopolizing outdoor agricultural work.

The most important contributions of the book are undoubtedly in Chapters 4 and 5, which summarize the author's study of farm account books, a much less familiar source than those discussed earlier. In Chapter 4 Verdon measures the relative employment of men women and children at four farms in Norfolk and three in east Yorkshire. She finds that female employment declined in Norfolk but not in Yorkshire. She also charts the seasonal patterns of employment by type of labour, although the failure to record work done on piece rate in the account books leaves men's work seriously underestimated. After 1850 the accounts indicate a decline in women's employment consistent with the standard historiography, though it does not entirely disappear. Verdon also adds to the now long list of comparisons of wage books or farm records with census enumerators' books to show that women who figured as workers in the former were often not recorded as workers in the latter. More ammunition to suggest that the mid-Victorian censuses systematically under-record working women. Cross-linking also allows Verdon to demonstrate that most of her female labourers were married and that many had young children, an important finding.

Verdon joins the debate about the role of custom versus the power of the market in the determination of women's relative wages. While the constancy of female day wages over the nineteenth century leads Verdon to propose some customary element, she does not reject

entirely the argument that women's low pay reflected their shorter hours of work and lesser physical strength.

Chapter 5 turns to women's employment in domestic industry, which is explored indirectly through farm accounts. Verdon shows that in Bedfordshire, where there were jobs for women in lace making and straw plaiting, they were rarely employed in agriculture. The absence of women from farm labour here contrasts with Norfolk and Yorkshire where women's share of the workforce was often around one third and did not fall below five per cent until the end of the century. The inference is that farm labour persisted in areas where there were no alternative employment opportunities. Whether this holds beyond the comparison of Bedford with Norfolk and Yorkshire and why it might be the case are questions deserving further attention.

The systematic failure of many sources which saw the rural economy through the blinkered eyes of Victorian middle-class observers to notice and record the productive activities of women is an ongoing challenge to historians of women's work. Many authors have emphasized that rural women's contributions did not always or even usually take the form of earnings. They also contributed through gleaning, gathering, gardening and micro-enterprise as Verdon's survey of rural working-class autobiographies confirms. But however important they were for individual families, women's earnings and self-provisioning were small beer relative to the contributions of their husbands and children. Verdon balks at this conclusion, even though it is where her evidence leads, as if acknowledging women's dependence undermines the value of her topic. In fact the precocious appearance of a male breadwinner family system is probably of central importance in understanding nineteenth-century social and economic history and it is time it was acknowledged.

In conclusion: did we know surprisingly little about the ways in which rural women made a living in the nineteenth century? I read Verdon's work as confirming key findings from recent research and shading the conventional wisdom rather than stopping major gaps or radically readjusting our focus. This is not to deprecate her contribution. We all stand on the shoulders of others and Verdon has written a fine book that deserves wide readership.

JANE HUMPHRIES
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JEREMY BURCHARDT, *Paradise lost. Rural idyll and social change since 1800* (I. B. Tauris, 2002). 228 pp. Illus. £29.50. In this well-written volume, Jeremy Burchardt has set out to write a history of the countryside but without agriculture taking centre stage. Instead, it is the cultural

appraisal of the English (primarily English in this volume rather than British) of their countryside which is given precedence. As such, he sets himself a difficult task, since arguably one cannot divorce agriculture prior to the latter half of the twentieth century from its social and cultural milieux. To do otherwise is to risk an analysis of cultural production without an understanding of its fundamental context: the (literal) grass roots of rural life.

This is an overview book. As such its primary aim is largely to synthesize and organize previously published material, and in this it certainly succeeds. The writing is admirably balanced and has been helped by good production standards from I. B. Tauris. Chapter 1 provides an excellent introduction to the rest of the book, setting out the broad outlines of industrialization and urbanization in Britain at a macro level, and this is followed by chapters which outline the archaic and classical formulations of the 'Golden Age' (very dependent on Raymond Williams here) and the development of a yardstick by which the quality of rural lives and environments was used to judge the quality of that socio-economic progress which dominated nineteenth- and twentieth-century urban/industrial environments. Having set out the broad parameters, Burchardt then proceeds to both demystify the rural idyll by narrating the outlines of rural radicalism in the nineteenth century (Chapter 3) and to illustrate the 'greening of the city' in the later Victorian period (Chapter 4), thereby bringing the supposed restorative (aesthetic and social morality) properties of the countryside into the burgeoning cities. This coalescence of town and country is then taken a stage further by a consideration of model villages and garden cities (Chapter 5). The chronological structure of the book is also developed by a consideration of literary attitudes to the rural in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Chapter 6) and also by an informative account of land reform movements from 1850 (Chapter 7) and suburban growth (Chapter 8).

The later part of the book departs to some extent from a broad chronological sequencing to examine certain themes. The economic consequences of rural nostalgia (Chapter 9), and rambling (Chapter 10) are examples. However chronology is again established with the twentieth-century organic movement (Chapter 11), interwar rural reconstruction (Chapter 12), rural change and the legislative framework from 1939 (Chapter 13), agriculture and the environment which only deals with the last 50 years (Chapter 14), recreation in the countryside (Chapter 15) and the relationship between attitudinal conflict and social change in the countryside (Chapter 16). The final chapter provides an excellent summary and very balanced judgement of the interrelationship between rural attitudes

and political power in Britain, and is especially good on the analysis of the current Countryside Alliance.

The number of chapters purposely detailed above – 18 including the introduction – and spread across just 208 pages, indicates to the reader that few of the multiple elements involved with this subject can be explored in depth. Indeed, for the academic with background in rural history there will inevitably be a sense of frustration because there is simply insufficient space to develop any of the themes. The movement between chronological narrative and thematic treatment can also lead to an element of repetition, although this is kept to a minimum. I would take issue with a few of the matters dealt with: the treatment of counterurbanization in Chapter 14 is cursory and underplays the extent to which it is not just people moving out from towns into the countryside, but jobs also. In Chapter 16 there are rather too many hints that Burchardt sees the village as the only real rural settlement feature (neglecting the hamlet and scattered settlement patterns of much of the country) and that rural society is dominated by the old tripartite (squire, farmer, farmworker) structure. These are two myths which really also require firm demolition. Finally, does the author succeed in providing sufficient analytical separation between agriculture and his cultural investigation of the countryside, as claimed at the outset? The answer is no. Time and again he simply has to set out the broad perspective or inherent detail of British agriculture; indeed, in some of the later chapters he loses sight of his ambition, and deals very firmly with farming issues – and in this reviewer's opinion, rightly so, since the 'other country' can exist as an imagined idyll only in relation to its historical reality.

All that is, however, to detract from the main strength of the book, which is its synthesis and text book qualities, and I shall be pleased to recommend this as an undergraduate text, and the end-notes and bibliography are helpful for further reading, being generally clear and with very few errors. The price is reasonable, although a soft back version would be helpful for student requirements.

BRIAN SHORT
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PATRICIA LYNCH, *The Liberal party in rural England, 1885–1910. Radicalism and community* (OUP, 2003).

x + 262 pp. 12 tables. £45.

Studies of political change after the Third Reform Act have tended to focus on urban areas. Despite the extension of the franchise to agricultural labourers, there has been a lack of detailed work on the politics of the English countryside. Patricia Lynch's revision of her doctoral thesis ('Popular Liberalism in the English

counties, 1885–1906') goes some way towards filling this historiographical gap.

The book focuses on three county constituencies: North Essex, South Oxfordshire and the Holmfirth division of Yorkshire. Using these case studies, Lynch charts the changing character of Liberal politics in rural England between 1885 and 1910. An opening chapter on the 1885 election shows how pressure from newly enfranchised voters radicalized Liberal rural politics. Candidates often found themselves compelled to make appeals conforming to pre-existing traditions of popular radicalism (e.g. Chartism in Holmfirth, agricultural trade unionism in North Essex). It was where these traditions were strong, Lynch concludes, that the Liberals tended to do best at the polls; where they were weak (as in South Oxfordshire), they did less well.

Liberal success in rural and semi-rural constituencies in 1885 was not repeated in the four subsequent general elections. Lynch finds two major reasons for this. One was the 'abandonment, on a national level, of the language of rural reform that helped them win victory in 1885' (p. 118). The other was a tension between Liberal political culture and the rural 'culture of community'. This helps explain, Lynch suggests, why Liberal party organization was often weak, especially in predominantly agrarian constituencies like North Essex. According to Lynch, the political culture of Liberal activism conflicted with the prevailing ideal of a harmonious, organic rural community, while that of the Conservatives did not. With their emphasis on partisanship and debate, Liberal clubs and associations were seen as divisive in rural villages: hence they often failed to take root. The Primrose League, by contrast, proved far more successful, as its inclusive yet hierarchical ethos and stress on local sociability conformed to the rural community ideal.

Furthermore, in a chapter on local government, Lynch suggests that this community ideal explains why partisan, ideological, campaigns were rarely seen in parish, district and county council elections. It also informed a strong desire for cross-class representation on councils, so acting to stymie working-class radical ambitions to gain a controlling influence over local politics.

In her final two chapters, Lynch argues that the constraints limiting Liberal success in the countryside were lifted. By the 1906 election, the Liberals had returned to the radicalism of 1885. But they combined this revival of radical agrarianism with an emphasis on community. A reformist, anti-aristocratic agenda fused with a defence of the national community against the sectional claims of Unionists (especially tariff reformers). This, Lynch says, was a winning combination, being a key factor behind Liberal electoral success before 1914.

Scholars will find much of use in Lynch's book. It provides valuable insight into the texture of Liberal county politics, with the attention paid to political culture and language being especially welcome. In addition, the chapter on local government provides a bridgehead for future research into a neglected subject. One quibble would be the choice of Holmfirth as a case study: it is easy to see how a constituency where 92 per cent of people lived in towns of over 1,000 inhabitants is a fit subject for a PhD thesis on English county politics, but its appropriateness in a monograph on the politics of 'rural England' is a moot point.

The book's arguments are also questionable. Quite possibly, Lynch exaggerates the extent to which the post-1886 Liberal party withdrew its support for agrarian radicalism. Land reform figured prominently in the 1891 'Newcastle Programme' and in the 1892 election. And even at the next two general elections, agrarian radicalism occupied a significant place on the national platform. In 1895 and 1900 land reform appeared in over forty per cent (1895) and over sixty per cent (1900) of the addresses of Liberal candidates standing for English borough constituencies. By comparison, at the 1906 election, two-thirds of candidates for English seats – both counties and boroughs – made reference to land reform in their addresses. This does not reflect any very dramatic rediscovery of agrarian radicalism.

What, then, of the argument that Liberals were constrained by a rural 'culture of community' before 1900? This is certainly suggestive, but it is not conclusively proven. Lynch might have provided more documentary evidence of the purchase of the village community ideal, to which she attaches such interpretative weight. Moreover, if this harmonious, hierarchical ideal was so pervasive, why didn't it restrain the vigorously, even violently anti-aristocratic appeal that paid such dividends in 1885? And what happened to this ideal after 1900? We are told that Edwardian Liberals mixed traditional radicalism with the language of community, to great electoral effect. But the Edwardian Liberal language of national community was not the same as the 'resolutely apolitical ideal of the harmonious village community' (p. 220) of Lynch's account. This conservative ideal certainly existed (particularly in the fantasies of agrarian Tories), but so did very different alternatives. Lynch pays insufficient attention to the democratic Liberal vision of a village community of self-sufficient, independent cultivators. This vision, which drew upon the Anglo-Saxon and pre-enclosure past for inspiration, informed Liberal local government reform proposals, and also those for land reform (smallholdings legislation especially). It was a vision wholly consonant with long-running traditions of agrarian radicalism, but also – in its unimpeachable

Englishness – with the national, patriotic turn taken by Liberal reformist discourse after 1900.

PAUL READMAN
King's College, London

HEATHER HOLMES, *'As good as a holiday'. Potato harvesting in the Lothians from 1870 to the present* (Tuckwell Press, 2000). xvi + 334 pp. 41 tables; 16 illus; 11 figs. £20. In the Celtic areas of Britain and especially in Scotland there has developed, mainly since the Second World, an impressive 'school' of academics and enthusiasts working in folk life studies. Folk life studies is perhaps best seen as centred on the intersection of folk-lore, ethnography and history, sharing some the concerns of all these disciplines but above all concerned with the relationships around work practices and material culture. In this, how people work, the tools they use and the organization of the labour process are key elements in the shaping of social relations.

Heather Holmes' fine and interesting book is very much a product of this tradition. Although to an English reader its title suggests that other great movement of casual work – hopping – in fact it centres on very different concerns than those of the 'holiday'. Rather it constructs a complex picture of change over time centred on the nature of the technology of potato harvesting and the changing nature of the workforce. This picture is made up by the skilful weaving together of government reports, local papers, local government records, farm records and oral accounts.

The general outlines of the 'story' fit in with a range of work produced over the last few years on the fluctuations of casual employment in agriculture, particularly in relationship to the employment of women and children. At the end of the nineteenth century the autumn harvest of potatoes was highly labour intensive drawing on local women and children but also urban migrants and Irish workers. By the end of the twentieth century the workforce was much smaller and reliant on quite different groups of workers. However, what is striking is that the technology of the potato harvest underwent much less change, and what change there was was much slower and later than that say of the grain harvest. Holmes shows that many of the basic techniques (and hence labour processes) of potato harvesting not only pre-dated the 1870s but also persisted well into the 1960s. As late as 1963 the Potato Marketing Board could comment that 'traditional methods persist on all but a small part of the acreage' (p. 58).

The main reason for this was the continued availability of 'traditional' labour supply. Children's employment, for example, which had ceased to be a major part of the cereal harvest, in England at least, by the Great War, not only remained central to the Scottish potato harvest but also

was encouraged and protected by legislation until 1962. Irish migrants, again a group declining in importance in much of England before 1914, continued central in the Lothians until after the Second World War. Again what figures there are suggest the final decline was in the 1960s. Finally changes in women's employment patterns, especially the growth of full-time, year-long work in light industry reduced the availability of a key work group.

As a result of the decline in these groups of workers, mechanization, which had been much discussed since the 1920s, finally became urgent. In the late 1950s, with the encouragement of the Potato Marketing Board, but pressed by labour shortage, successful potato harvesters began to appear. The final technical development of the 'complete harvester' in the 1970s and its widespread adoption in the subsequent decades ended the old system and its work patterns and workforce.

This broad account centres only on part of a book, which, as I have already suggested, is a complex and detailed study. Its account of the labour process and the social relations it produced is exemplary and all too seldom seen in English histories of agriculture. Its account of the workforce and especially the changing role of women is extremely important, if for no other reason than that there are virtually no accounts of women in twentieth-century agriculture. As with Richard Anthony's work of a few years ago on the lowland farm worker, Scotland has again provided a pioneering account. It is a sad reflection on English histories of the countryside that we continue to know so little about those who worked the land in the twentieth century, let alone how they worked it.

ALUN HOWKINS
University of Sussex

ALUN HOWKINS, *The death of rural England. A social history of the countryside since 1900* (Routledge, 2003). xii + 260 pp. 21 plates. £60 (hbk); £16.00 (pbk).

In this admirably-researched and crisply-written book Alun Howkins takes us on a brisk canter through a century of English rural life. Most of the general themes will be familiar to students of the recent history of agriculture, yet Howkins offers a comprehensive summary coupled with incisive judgements and what to some readers will prove to be controversial viewpoints. From an agricultural perspective it is a rather sad tale, being in essence a chronicle of the descent of a great industry from triumph into decline, and from public admiration to widespread vilification. While they may have been accused of 'doing rather well' out of two world wars, the farmers' remarkable contribution to wartime food production engendered much public sympathy and a general belief in the principle of protection. But this was to evaporate due

largely to indifference in the inter-war period and increasing resentment over environmental, public health and animal rights issues in the later twentieth century. Incidentally, Howkins writes brilliantly (if controversially) on the rise of the counter-culture of environmental protest and the growth of profound hostility towards the farming interest (whose doings were orchestrated by MAFF and its advisory wing) in the latter period. Farming, of course, has always been a broad church and throughout his book Howkins emphasizes the fundamental social, cultural and economic differences between the large (and highly-influential) arable producers predominantly of the central and eastern regions and their livestock-rearing brethren of the west. Not only did these groupings respond differentially to changing economic conditions, but their attitudes towards their workforces and their overall social aspirations varied enormously. As the eastern grain farmer of the 1980s pocketed his arable area payments, so the small dairyman of the west was forced to sell up as the Milk Marketing Board insisted that he abandon his churns and concrete his farm lane to accommodate their thirty-ton bulk tanker. With the growth of the political clout of the NFU from the 1930s onwards, the initiation of the post-war mechanism of the Annual Price Review, the compliance of the MAFF (more recently castigated as the farmers' poodle) and the positive propaganda provided by the *Farmers Weekly* and kindred journals, there appeared to be no end to the growth of agricultural prosperity by the 1980s. The age-old rural-urban divide was still there, yet even this seemed to decline in significance as increasing numbers of townspeople moved into the countryside from the 1930s onwards. True, this increased village house prices to the discomfort of the indigenes, fuelled the craving for more access to the countryside and threw up the odd Linda Snell-like irritant to moan about the pesticides and the smell of pig slurry. But somehow, it hardly seemed to matter. 'Silent Spring' had come and gone, the environmentalists, and animal rights lobbyists could be dismissed as marginal cranks while the subsidies rolled in and the structural surpluses grew. My father, in many ways a far-sighted man, bought land at this time! The inevitable followed and Alun Howkins chronicles with considerable insight (and un concealed relish) the subsequent disasters; the growth of the anti-factory farming lobby drawing support from all classes and age-groups, the dramatic rise of the environmental movement, the fiasco of BSE, the tragedy of foot-and-mouth disease, and the slumping of farm income from £6 billion in 1995–6 to £1.8 billion in 2000. The Countryside Alliance might fight back with some gusto, yet the world of agriculture had changed for ever as the farmer became an increasingly-marginalized figure

and the MAFF a disgraced, derided and ultimately defunct body.

Howkins' story, of course, is not merely about farming and the book is concerned throughout with the changing class and social structure of the countryside. As one might have anticipated, he relates in some detail the varying fortunes of the farm workforce and its evolving relationship with employers, discusses the tied cottage issue, and describes the effects of in-comers on core community values as urban folk drifted to the villages and farm workers became (almost) strangers in their own land. At the other end of the social scale were the landed gentry, whom Howkins sees as being increasingly divorced from the roots of their landed income as the rituals of deference – still common between the wars – began to evaporate. Perhaps, but not in the Northamptonshire of my youth in the 1960s where the squire was decidedly more than 'increasingly symbolic' and the parson, far from being 'a marginalized minority' remained a force to be reckoned with. Meanwhile, in the village hostelrys of that same county (for all the effects of incomers, sales of council houses, declining farm work force and so on) public bar talk still tends to be of crops and livestock, the weather, hunting and shooting. Here, in the middle of England, animal rights activists and hunt saboteurs are thin on the ground. All of which leads me to my sole gripe with Alun Howkins' admirable book; the title itself.

Having travelled a good deal in the tropics, being immune to the dubious allure of beaches, and having little taste for the company of the Chianti drinkers in Tuscany, I tend to go on holiday in England; frequently alone and more often than not, on foot. On my various wanderings over the past few years, I have seen little evidence of the 'death' of rural England which, to me at least, still seems a highly-dynamic place where crops flourish, woodland is planted, environmental schemes are elaborated, farms adapt to change by way of diversification and 'added value' and the rural economy adjusts to the demands of tourism and the imperatives of increased public access to the land. Of course there has been physical and structural change (as there has always been); of course farmers bemoan their lot (as they always have done) and of course the farmscape appears emptier as demand for labour declines. If 'traditional' rural society has changed, in some areas almost beyond recognition, the notion of a rural England close to 'death' appears to me a little extreme. Go to east Northamptonshire, central Dorset, the Yorkshire dales, the glorious country of the Welsh marches or the broad farmlands of Northumbria, and the 'real' rural England is still to be found, its social structures, traditions and rituals largely intact. And then, of course, there is Wales

to which Alun Howkins nods from time-to-time. Wales may be 'a country in the world's backside', but here the little grey Fergie is as common as the modern behe-moth, every other field is a wildflower meadow, bracken, brambles and bush abound, and farms still co-operate at hay time and shearing time. Social patterns and social behaviours in the countryside remain constrained by traditional values, and the ancient language continues to flourish to the great benefit both of cultural diversity and the tourism industry. As Howkins rightly observes, tourism has long overtaken agriculture as a contributor to national income. Time and again, moreover, focus group studies of visitor perception reveal that in both England and Wales tourists identify the farmed landscape as a major priority. True, the ideal is a 'traditional' farmed landscape, but it is a farmed landscape nevertheless. The appalling disaster of the recent foot-and-mouth disease epidemic dramatically illustrated the intimate links between the fortunes of farming, tourism and rural society in general. Since people do not as a rule come to this country in pursuit of wilderness, we disregard the maintenance of farming England at our peril and while the demands of the environmentalist, the wetlands zealot and the lover of wasteland should be met, they should be accommodated within the framework of well-conducted farming.

In producing this highly-readable and challenging account, Alun Howkins offers a valuable counterpoint to John Martin's recent work focusing essentially on agriculture. Howkins draws upon a wide range of sources in a book which, despite the odd typographical error, is notable for the charm of its illustrations, the common sense deployed in its arguments, and the reasonableness of its price. It is required reading for historians, economists, and social anthropologists for whom it will provide a valuable launching pad for further research into this most important period of rural history.

R. J. MOORE-COLYER
University of Wales, Aberystwyth

Elsewhere and General

HELENA HAMEROW, *Early medieval settlements. The archaeology of rural communities in north-west Europe, 400–900* (OUP, 2002). xiii + 225 pp. 1 table; 75 illus. £45. In 1855 John Mitchell Kemble saw the similarity of some excavated pottery from Stade on the Elbe and pottery from East Anglia. Since then archaeology has played a major role in the study of the historical relations in the early medieval period between Britain and the countries on the other side of the North Sea. Not only the pottery but also the weaponry, the ornaments, the dress and the

burial rituals of both regions showed a high degree of correspondence in style, technique and origin.

In the field of housing the sunken hut was the common element. But with the expansion of settlement archaeology on the continent since the 1950s and somewhat later in Britain a marked difference appeared. The sunken huts, long seen in England as human dwellings, appeared on the continent to be secondary buildings in farmyards dominated by aisled bipartite longhouses that housed both people and cattle. In due course ground-level buildings were also discovered in England but they averaged only 10 to 12 metres and lacked cattle byres. The roof weight was not supported by double rows of inner posts as in the longhouse, but by wall posts. At the large fourth to sixth century site of Mucking on the Thames, some 200 sunken huts were accompanied by over 50 small wooden buildings, none of them exceeding 15 metres in length and all of them lacking the aisled structure prevailing on the continent in the same period. Why didn't the Angles, Saxons and Jutes in England in the fourth century build the houses they were used to in their homelands, and why didn't their descendants in the eighth century follow the general continental fashion of building houses with roof supports set in the wall, with external raking posts and bowed long walls?

Working on the Mucking material and confronted with the apparent anomaly, Helena Hamerow felt the necessity to study in detail the archaeology of the early medieval settlements on the continent. The book under review is the result of her efforts which brought her in personal contact with archaeologists in Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and northern France and for which she often had to consult papers in the languages of these countries.

In her analysis of the excavated settlements the author has looked at a number of aspects, devoting separate chapters to the different archaeological approaches, the archaeology of the buildings, the settlement structures, the territorial context, the agrarian production, and the evidence for trade and non-agrarian production. At the end of each chapter she discusses the British evidence. In addition she had all the major settlement plans schematically redrawn. In this way she has made a large body of archaeological information from the continent accessible to British students.

I personally have been closely involved with some of the Dutch excavated settlements dealt with – Wijster, Odoorn, Gasselte – and can assure British readers that Hamerow provides an up-to-date picture of these sites and their interpretation. I am convinced that the same holds good for other informative sites, such as Vorbasse and Nørre Snede in Denmark, Flögeln, Dalem and Feddersen Wierde in Germany, Kootwijk and Gennepe in the

Netherlands, and Mondeville in France. Few continental archaeologists will have the same overview as the author, and so her book, with its rich list of references to primary sources, will certainly be of great use to them as well. On the other hand, the continental reader interested in British settlement sites must make do with very few illustrations. Mucking and Cowdery's Down each receive one picture, but where are the plans of, for example, Catholm, Chalton, Linford, West Heslerton, West Stow, Yarnnton and Yeavinger, sites that are amply discussed in the text? We on the continent would have benefited had some of these sites been illustrated in the same way as their continental counterparts.

The author has no clear-cut answers to the central questions. But she is struck by the great diversity shown by the continental settlement data and she finds much that would weaken the contrast, especially when considering long-term social and economic developments as revealed by the archaeological data. Discussing the origin of the Anglo-Saxon timber building, she refers to a number of short houses without internal roof supports in some Dutch sites, suggesting that they might be comparable. Here, however, I would disagree. In these houses the roofs are supported by opposing sets of double posts in and close to the wall, a system quite unlike that of the British houses. Furthermore, these houses only occur in combination with ordinary longhouses in the same farmyard. In my view, the absence of the longhouse in Britain and the origin of the Anglo-Saxon house are two sides of the same problem, the solution of which can only be found in Britain itself.

Hamerow's book is well produced. It should be read and consulted by all students of early medieval archaeology, both on the British and on the continental side of the North Sea.

H. T. WATERBOLK
University of Groningen

CÉDRIC LAVIGNE, *Essai sur la planification agraire au moyen âge. Les paysages neufs de la Gascogne médiévale (XIIIe-XIVe siècles)* (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2002). 299 pp. 135 figs. €38.

This book is the published version of the author's doctoral thesis prepared under the direction of J. B. Marquette at the University of Bordeaux III. It deals with the agricultural landscape of the medieval new towns and villages ('bastides') which were founded in south-western France (Gascony) during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. According to the author, his main achievement is to show that the foundation of the bastides entailed the laying out of planned field systems according to a coherent set of measures based on three fundamental units (16.41 metres, 21.09 metres and 37.5 metres) which

have a common denominator of 9.375 metres (though only after being multiplied by four!).

Lavigne uses vertical aerial photographs, topographic maps and cadastral plans, applying the filtering and other techniques to identify metrological regularities developed by the Centre d'Histoire Ancienne at the University of Besançon in the course of their studies of Roman centuriations. This work on centuriations was designed to discover the periodicity of road layouts on very large surfaces of land, and was carried out at a scale of 1:25,000. A technique developed to function at this scale cannot provide a proper basis for the metrological analysis of field boundaries at the scale of 1:2500, and neither of these scales can allow measurements to be made with the precision alleged by Lavigne. Moreover, the basic documents used by Lavigne, the nineteenth century cadastral maps, are not accurate enough for his purpose. Obviously, he should have checked them on the ground with modern topographical instruments, or assessed their standard of accuracy against present-day cadastral maps.

Although Lavigne starts with a list of 255 bastides located in eleven *départements*, the actual metrological analysis was applied only to a small portion of the commune of Barcelonne-du-Gers, which was the subject of his MA at the University of Bordeaux III. From the results of this single analysis, he creates templates which are then used to analyze and compare the land parcel measurements of thirteen other bastides. Postulating that the same coherent system was used for each of them, the author then jumps to the conclusion that it must be based on the *arpent* and the *journal*, these being the most common units of land measurement in the bastides' foundation charters. His next step is to infer that whenever the *arpent* and the *journal* are mentioned, it implies the creation of planned field systems.

Overall, there is little to recommend in this book. The metrological analysis is fraught with errors, and is carried out on a very narrow sample. The dating of the field systems relies exclusively on written sources. The notion that planned field systems were laid out during the middle ages is anything but new, and there is no need to challenge the allegedly common view that medieval planned field systems were circular in shape, there being no such common view. The author, who presents his book as the first significant contribution to the study of medieval field systems since Marc Bloch in the 1930s, seems unaware of the huge amount of work which has been done on medieval agrarian landscapes in various parts of Europe.

ELISABETH ZADORA-RIO
CNRS-Université François Rabelais, Tours

MARTINA DE MOOR, LEIGH SHAW-TAYLOR and PAUL WARDE (eds), *The management of common land in north-west Europe, c. 1500–1850* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002) (CORN Series 8). 261 pp. 10 tables; 17 figs. €60. This is an exciting book by seven historians familiar with the history of Europe from the fifteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. By covering the various forms of common property related to land in both upland and lowland England, the Netherlands, Flanders, France, Sweden, and western Germany, the authors do a real service to the academic community. They are bringing together information from a variety of archival sources combined with historical studies by the authors and others of a diversity of common property institutions in these regions during the above era. I do not know of another book like this. Any serious student of common property history simply must read this book.

What is outstanding is that the authors have met and discussed the terms they were going to be using and kept to the conventions they developed as closely as any group of authors I have read recently. For the simple descriptive veracity, this is extremely useful for all serious scholars in this field.

I was flattered that this distinguished group of historians took the design principles I outlined in *Governing the commons* seriously. I think they somewhat mistakenly thought you could describe a wide variety of common property institutions using the design principles. They found, as I have found earlier, that specific common property institutions do differ from one another. I was working at the level of individual common property institutions for specific resources. The authors point out that they notice that even in the same community the rules and the likelihood of conforming to the rules vary by specific resource.

It is my fondest hope that this group can now go on to a second or third enterprise whereby they identify specific institutional arrangements that they hopefully could trace across time. All of us interested in this field are frustrated with the difficulty of studying failures and why some systems succeed while others fail. Hopefully, they will be able to identify sufficient resource institutions or resources that collapse after some time so as to begin to get a good quantitative assessment of the difference in the successful versus failed systems. Throughout this book they give us very good descriptions of some of this kind of information, but hopefully in future work they could each pick a set of institutions about which there is data at an early period and assess when the system appears to have disappeared or entered a very difficult time.

This may well be an impossibility, but it would be certainly worthwhile to try even if they were only able

to code eight to ten core variables for each of one hundred or so institutions.

I know I will be recommending this book to my graduate students in the future and I strongly urge readers of this journal to do likewise.

ELINOR OSTROM
Indiana University

WILLIAM W. HAGEN, *Ordinary Prussians. Brandenburg Junkers and villagers, 1500–1840* (CUP, 2002). xxxii + 679 pp. 22 plates; 3 maps. £75.

This is not a modest book, in any sense of the word. William Hagen has not only undertaken a momentous task in his ambition to convey the experiences of 'ordinary Prussians' over three and a half centuries and produced a monumental tome to match; he equally desires to banish forever perceptions of an interminably oppressive *Junker* regime east of the Elbe, and a perpetually cowed and submissive rural population. Such a conclusion speaks as much to twentieth-century history as that of the *ancien régime*. There is no direct line between the social relations of the absolutist or indeed feudal state and a receptiveness to Nazi ideology. Neither, according to Hagen, should we see ordinary folk of the eighteenth century as much different from ourselves. They are 'more brother than Other' in his terms. In these endeavours Hagen to some degree follows a trail laid out by Peter Blicke in his attempt to rehabilitate, still controversially, the consultative and at times querulous political traditions of southern and western German village life.

The means to do this is a 'micro-history' of the lordship of Stavenow in the Prignitz district of Brandenburg, only a few miles north-east of the Elbe. This lordship comprised several villages (in part subject to other lordships, though they appear in the story relatively seldom) and manors that passed through several families over these centuries. The most prominent owners, and those given by far the most attention in the record, were the von Kleists of both literary and military fame. Hagen follows the micro-historical tradition that has inspired numerous local studies in the past three decades, seeking large-scale structural change as manifested in everyday experience. Indeed, his approach perhaps owes more to the 'history of everyday life' (*Alltagsgeschichte*) as a genre, rather than the more demographically based studies associated with historians of early modern German villages such as David Sabeau, Jürgen Schlumbohm and Hans Medick. Hagen does not eschew quantitative approaches, but neither does he make rigorous use of them. Indeed, he does not appear to have actually employed the parish registers that apparently survive, but a summary drawn up by a twentieth-century local pastor. Aside from the implications for the reliability of the demographic

sections, this means that we are repeatedly told that people share the same surname, but not whether they are actually related.

The study proceeds, in part chronologically, through the developing estate economy, the conditions of life of the tenant farmers, the estate stewards, officials and workers, labourers and inmates, the regulation of village life and morals, and the dissolution of the *ancien régime*. Before the latter part of the seventeenth century, sources largely consist of estate surveys and lordly correspondence, but thereafter increasingly consist of court records, petitions, and inventories of various kinds. The lordship of Stavenow was as much of the east Elbian lands, although personal serfdom did not exist in this part of Brandenburg. 'Subject' status pertained to the (fairly onerous) terms of farm tenancies. More significant than demesne farming were fairly rigidly defined 'fullholdings' of up to 34 hectares, surrounded by smallholdings and a limited cottage economy. The three-field system of grain cultivation predominated until the nineteenth century, although forms of convertible husbandry made inroads on the demesne lands from the 1740s onward. The abolition of subject status and tenurial servitude, along with enclosure of the tenant farms, arrived in the 1810s.

Hagen's strategy is to use the Stavenow records to the full, and he presents us with an exhaustive account of all recorded aspects of life. He provides an archive unlike any other on the villagers of Brandenburg, especially in the English language. However, while many impressions are vivid, others are simply superfluous. The approach of letting the sources speak for themselves seems least productive in discussing conditions of material life, where Hagen for the most part simply lists the complete contents of numerous inventories. This might provide useful raw material for a study, but for most readers, one suspects, it will not be especially helpful.

This is despite the fact that Hagen repeatedly asserts the importance of comparison, claiming relatively bountiful conditions for Stavenow that compare favourably with other parts of Germany and western Europe. Yet comparative data are barely ever brought to bear, even from other areas of Brandenburg, or indeed lordships that shared the same villages, never mind other parts of Europe. Neither do they appear to any great degree in the footnotes. Hagen may well be right, and some of the material wealth of the farmers and widows, or wages of the labourers, are indeed impressive. But he does not provide the means to demonstrate this.

Among the welter of information, agricultural historians will have much to glean. We can see here a gradual improvement of yields, especially of livestock numbers and quality, and gradual innovation during the eighteenth century. Certainly the commercialized manorialism of

Brandenburg displays little of the inertia and under-investment long-argued for the manorial estates of Poland. Antagonism between the lordship and its subject farmers over *corvée* labour and rents gave rise to strikes, long drawn-out legal cases where the farmers at times won the backing of the 'enlightened' state, and all the usual arts of resistance in badly-performed and tardy labours. Hagen's sections on these are (literally?) striking, and evidence, he claims, of the real ability of Brandenburg farmers to meliorate their working conditions and dues. By the Napoleonic period both lordship and tenants unsentimentally sought to reap the most profit from the onrushing transition to free land markets and a liberalized world. There was little nostalgia for the old order on display. These trends, probably reflected in much of central Europe, hardly justify Hagen's adoption of the term 'agricultural revolution'; in this case a rise of seed to yield ratios from about 1:3–4 to 1:4–5.

This book will be important for a long time to come. There is no study like it in English, and it can rightly claim to make some original contributions to German history. The evidence for women's activities is particularly wide-ranging, although scattered throughout the book. One feels however that the volume may have been too long in gestation. The traditional divide of 'east-Elbian' and 'western' Germany is treated with suspicion nowadays, and peasant agency and vigorous, even violent, negotiation of terms with lordship are everywhere in the historiography. And as Hagen admits, the seigneurial regime often remained oppressive and violent although not arbitrary. The methodological strategy adopted indubitably strongly imprints the mind with much detail of the lives of 'ordinary Prussians', yet leaves the theoretical or macrohistorical generalizations (and generalizations they most certainly remain) feeling somewhat disconnected, while genuine comparison remains scarce. Nevertheless, the book is a significant challenge – in many senses of the word.

PAUL WARDE

Pembroke College, Cambridge

ERIC PAWSON AND TOM BROOKING (eds), *Environmental histories of New Zealand* (OUP, 2002). xvii + 342 pp. 4 tables; 77 figs. £18.99.

On the make or in the making, modern environmental history contrives to ignore, absorb, resurrect and elaborate any number of established scholarly pursuits, profoundly influencing most of them. It is difficult to predict the outcome in the world's older and larger academic cultures, but in the case of southern hemisphere groups, recurrent funding crises and coarse instrumentalism seem to favour pragmatic accommodations. The transition is reflected in this multi-disciplinary, five-part collection of

commissioned essays, which builds upon New Zealand's distinctive legacy of environmental narrations, academic and otherwise.

Encounters opens the proceedings with three interpretations of early Maori and Pakeha transactions with the new country, explaining that intercultural relations pivoted on contrasting modes of resource appraisal and environmental management. *Colonizing* and *Special Environments* consider environmental change between the mid-nineteenth century and the early twentieth century – on the grasslands, in the mines and forests – and the range of reaction in utilitarian and preservationist orientations to conservationism. A subsequent *Modernizing* bracket relates the evolution of the state's assertive application of science and technology to New Zealand's agricultural, pastoral, forest and water resources, deepening opposition from its largely urban environmentalists, and the gamut of hazard-prone town residence and comprehensive withdrawals into suburban gardens. A final section, *Perspectives*, supports environmental history's 'moral tales' characterization. It consists of four discussions of the longitudinal themes of pests and weeds, the problematical interweaving of cultural disruption and Maori attitudes towards environmental change, inherited legal biases towards development imperatives, and a sketch of radical alternatives nominating greater reliance on organic production and the confrontation of presumptuous global traders.

The editors (a geographer and a historian) reasonably suggest that this collection indicates a number of opportunities for increasing New Zealand's output of environmental history. If that claim warranted the insertion of more comprehensive guides to sources and national and international exemplars, perhaps the too-obvious rejoinder would be that it is better left to a companion volume. But the associated list is ambitious enough: it includes such topics as coastal management, environmental hazards, the changing roles of the state and its major resource agencies, the environmental impacts of transport and tourism, and the production and dissemination of environmental ideas. As for the organizational home or homes of those projected endeavours, the editors are less confident about the prospects of full-blown interdisciplinarity, inclining instead towards retention of individual essayist formats. That may indeed be the wiser course: the heyday of the specialist or connoisseur is far from spent. It remains to be seen whether the managerialists will approve.

In the interim, the old 'relevance' defence is strengthened by an attention to style as well as content in this welcome volume. Certainly, its accessible prose and rich illustration bid for a comparatively wide circulation, but on balance it seems more likely that an accusing gap will

be filled in the armoury of main and supplementary texts designed for geography, history and environmental studies programmes. Reward enough. Through similar sets of concise expositions, as well as by means of more extended individual inputs, New Zealand society may soon be encouraged to revise a troubled transaction with some of the world's most engaging environmental settings.

J. M. POWELL
Monash University

WILLIAM D. WALTERS JR, *The heart of the cornbelt: an illustrated history of corn farming in McLean County* (Bloomington IL: McLean County Historical Society, 1998). viii + 132 pp. \$25.

McLean County extends for about fifty miles from east to west, and half that from north to south, around Bloomington in Illinois, roughly halfway between Chicago and St. Louis. It has over 700,000 acres of glacial clay soil with a high lime and organic matter content, perfect for corn growing once drained, and its proud boast is that for much of its history (since the arrival of people of European origin) it has been the leading corn (i.e. maize) producing county in the United States. This book records that history, well illustrated with maps, prints and photographs.

The native American population fled this area between about 1812 and 1830, and the early settlers, many of them native-born Americans from Kentucky, Ohio and the eastern states, moved in. Most of the land remained in prairie grass, over which roamed herds of cattle and pigs. Keeping these scavengers out of the crops was a major problem, which was why prairie next to woodland that could be cut for fence posts and rails was most valuable. By the 1840s woodland was in short supply, and miles of Osage orange hedgerow were planted to keep arable fields stockproof. The corn in these fields was variable and low yielding, and mostly fed to live-stock, since transport was primitive and markets distant. The typical farm of 1850 covered 160 acres, half of which were improved, growing wheat, oats and hay, as well as corn, of which the county as a whole produced some three million bushels. At the end of the twentieth century the average farm size had trebled, most of the livestock had disappeared, along with the fences and hedges, and corn output had increased twentyfold, to about sixty million bushels.

The book tells the story of this transformation. It is essentially about a series of technical changes and their economic and social effects. The first was the arrival of the railroad in 1853, bringing timber and agricultural machinery in, and taking corn and livestock out. By 1895 few farmers were more than four miles from a railroad and the grain elevator was a common landscape feature.

Between the 1870s and the 1890s there was a tile drainage boom that dramatically increased the arable potential of the county, and by the end of the nineteenth century corn-planting machines were available. In the early years of the twentieth century the Funk Brothers Seed Company began to produce improved seed by selecting from existing strains of corn, and the general air of quiet prosperity was reflected in a rash of farmhouse and barn building. The inter-war years were much tougher, but they still saw the arrival of the tractor and the mechanical corn picker, and the spread of hybrid corn in the late 1930s, with its dramatic impact on yields. The disappearance of the horse also led to the replacement of oats by soybeans, and after 1950 fertilizers and herbicides came in and livestock and hedges gradually went out.

The ability of succeeding generations of McLean County farmers, and their counterparts in other mid-western states, to break the prairie, grow ever-increasing quantities of corn, and ship it to markets around the world, was affecting East Anglian grain prices and West Country feed prices by the 1880s. Their pride in producing corn and their ability and desire to keep on doing so is affecting markets in developing countries and the progress of world trade negotiations today. At first sight this is a local story, told from a local perspective. Nevertheless, its impact has been global.

PAUL BRASSLEY
University of Plymouth

TOM GRIFFITHS, *Forests of ash. An environmental history* (CUP, 2001). viii + 227 pp. Illus. £50.

Tom Griffiths begins this account of the mountain ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) forests of Victoria with reference to the devastating forest fires of 'Black Friday' 1939 and passes on to childhood memories of visits to ex-mill sites in the 1960s before reaching back into the colonial past to explain how the fires came about in such a devastating fashion.

Written with style and elegance that belies the author's command of a vast amount of source material, *Forests of ash* begins by establishing the characteristics of the fire-adapted sclerophyll forests of the Australian 'bush'. Subsequent chapters address the early colonial botanists' fixation with the mountain ash as tall trees, discuss the Victorian age's confidence in progress and improvement before moving to gold mining, the timber industry, water supply issues, and the emergence of field naturalists interested in the forest, as well as early tourists to the area. This first section of the book is also notable for a chapter that restores something of the story of the aboriginal people of the Kulin clans in this part of Victoria.

The culmination of the book is the chapter on the

'Black Friday' fires of 13 January 1939. Having set the scene in terms of nature of the forests, of European attitudes to forest management, particularly competing views of controlled burning, and noting a dry winter in 1938 and an exceptionally hot and dry summer in 1939, Griffiths views the resulting fires as a 'cultural creation, a culmination of a century of white settlement and environmental practice' (p. 135). He deftly uses a series of case studies to discuss the spread of the fire and to document how some remarkably enough survived it. Equally evocative is his use of Judge Leonard Stratton's Royal Commission report on the fires which extends to a useful concise biographical sketch of the man.

The 1939 fires are not however, the termination point of the book. Two subsequent chapters consider, first, long term botanical research into forest dynamics that answered some long unknown basic questions about growth rates and reproduction and, second, the former mill remnants and tramways as heritage sites. In these chapters Griffiths is able to explore something of the politics of both scientific research and conservation as well as heritage.

The volume is interwoven with what the author describes as 'spotlights', one per chapter, taking the form of natural history vignettes written by scientists from Museum Victoria. These can be read alongside the main chapters or as stand-alone essays.

Forests of ash is a revised edition of *Secrets of the forest. Discovering history in Melbourne's Ash Range* originally published in 1992. The revised edition follows a similar structure though with the addition of a prefatory chapter on forest and fire in Australia as well as a new chapter on the Kulin clan. The chapters have been shortened and more sharply focused. A second part on selected heritage sites has been deleted in favour of the natural history 'spotlights'. Finally in what he merely entitles 'Epilogue' Griffiths concludes with a short chapter of considerable expansiveness. It surveys subsequent fires, notably the New South Wales fires in 1983, reflexively considers the origins of Griffiths' own history in historical site surveys for Victoria's Land Conservation Council and finally offers an incisive discussion of the writing of environmental history in Australia. In itself this last chapter is thought provoking. *Forests of ash* is well illustrated and includes maps, though as a minor gripe I would suggest that the publisher's reproduction of the maps showing the extent of bush fires in Victoria in 1939 and 1983 lacks clarity.

This book is a pleasure to read and is likely to appeal to both specialist and general audiences.

MICHAEL ROCHE
Massey University

MARGREET VAN DER BURG, '*Geen tweede boer*'. *Gender, landbouwmodernisering en onderwijs aan plattelandsvrouwen in Nederland, 1863–1968* (A. A. G. Bijdragen, 41, 2002). xii + 468 pp. 7 tables; 26 illus; 4 graphs; 3 maps. €40.

Margreet van der Burg's Ph.D thesis not only satisfies a need but also signifies a break with the themes and approaches of the Wageningen School. Van der Burg researched the importance to women of agricultural education between 1863, when the first Dutch law on secondary education was adopted, and 1968, when another major law on secondary education was approved. She combines an anthropological approach with an historical perspective on culture and ethos. She chooses agricultural education for farmers' spouses, other rural women, and their daughters as her subject matter because this type of education was a means of involving women in agricultural modernization and rural development. Education is defined broadly here and includes the vast network of organizations and individuals who acted as advocates of the interests of women.

Two chapters introducing the topic are followed by five chapters that discuss the pioneers of women's agricultural education, the special position of women in dairy farming, the emergence and evolution of agrarian home economics and a concluding one with suggestions for further research. These five core chapters are drafted clearly and offer a wealth of new material. The introduction is a bit lengthy. After all, is not the lack of current historical studies of agrarian women evident to all?

Men had a large role in the debate about women's labour and training. Among the pioneers – A. M. M. Storm van der Chijs, W. C. H. Staring, B. W. A. E. Sloet tot Oldenhuis and J. P. Amerfoort – the feminist Storm van der Chijs (1814–1895) was the only woman. She carved a unique position for herself at the annual conferences on agrarian home economics with her pleas to expand the occupational roles and education of women. During the nineteenth century, these conferences constituted national forums on agricultural and rural issues. The events were dominated by men. In agrarian history, Storm van der Chijs' contributions to the agricultural debates were kept out of sight, the rare authors excepted who portrayed her as an eccentric. Van der Burg shows that this qualification was unmerited.

To some extent, the important themes of '*Geen tweede boer*' ('Not another farmer') trigger comparisons with today's debates about the double responsibilities of women. Family and farm being one, farmer spouses were often occupied by many varied tasks such as running the household, milking the cows, helping with the harvest, tending to chickens and young animals, growing vegetables and assisting with dairy processing. These tasks left

them little time for their tasks of spouse, mother and educator. The bourgeois, urban ideal that put the latter tasks to the forefront had little applicability to everyday life on the farm. Practical know-how and a hands-on mindset were considered more important than offering a cup of tea and an attentive ear. In the long term the supporting and educating tasks of spouse and mother gained the upper hand but even then they were viewed as strengthening the farming business.

The curricula for agricultural home economics that emerged after 1900 expressed this view. As debates were waged whether curricula should stress general home economics or agriculture, there was agreement that the training should not turn the spouses into 'another farmer', hence the title of the thesis. The 1919 law that made agrarian home economics a branch of general home economics was contested by agricultural circles. When protest proved ineffective, a few female teachers of agrarian home economics, inspired by experiences abroad and supported by farmers' leaders, expeditiously brought about the professionalization of Dutch agrarian home economics. They and the male leaders shared the view that modern agricultural education should benefit both the individual and rural society. Groningen native Theda Mansholt took the lead as director of the first national training institute for teachers of agrarian home economics (1913–41). She prepared farmer spouses and other rural women from the wealthier layers of rural society for missionary work among their less prosperous and less modernization-minded sisters.

The great merit of '*Geen tweede boer*' is that it establishes links between agrarian and rural history on the one hand and female and gender history on the other. Hitherto, the former neglected gender while the latter paid little attention to differences between town and country. In short, then, unambiguous praise for this Wageningen thesis that not only presents much new information on the history of agricultural education of the spouses of farmers and rural women but also provides a lead for scholarly debate on the gender dimensions of over one hundred years of agricultural modernization and rural development in the Netherlands.

HILDE KRIPS VAN DER LAAN
University of Groningen

HELENE ALBERS, *Zwischen Hof, Haushalt und Familie: Bäuerinnen in Westfalen-Lippe, 1920–1960* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001). xii + 505 pp. €46.40.

In view of the now decades of prominence of feminism, the subject of women in German agriculture, and their importance in a country of predominantly 'peasant' farming, has attracted remarkably little attention from historians. On that ground alone Helene Albers'

contribution is to be welcomed. A particular focus in the available literature hitherto has been upon the strain of labour on the wives of peasants. Among nationalist and Nazi investigators the spotlight fell upon the impact of that labour upon female reproduction. In the Federal Republic, before the widespread adoption from the later 1950s of consumer durables, such as vacuum cleaners and washing machines, and the contemporaneous mechanization of farming, with its transfer of a number of former female tasks (such as milking and hoeing) to male hands, the same area of concern was expressed in terms of the impact on 'the family', 'family life' and the key role of the wife in the 'peasant household'. Dr Albers' pioneering work investigates the entire gamut of the 'peasant wife' in the rural economy of the Westphalia region of north-western Germany, around a micro study of two specific villages, with an extensive use of oral evidence. One village being Roman Catholic and the other Protestant permits confessional comparisons to be made.

A criticism that might be made of the work is the choice of time period for the investigation. A remarkable overall impression conveyed by the volume is that in respect of fundamentals relatively little changed in Westphalian peasant culture and even technology between the 1920s and the 1950s. It is remarkable in that the period covers radical regime changes, along with the disastrous aftermath of one world war and the impact and catastrophic (for Germany) outcome of another. A 'feminization' of farming occurred during the period, as wives increasingly replaced hired labour. Maids to care for children became scarcer. However, in terms of the basics the 'norm' continued to hold sway into the 1950s. The maintenance of the farm, including over generations, remained the central concern, especially in matters of marriage and inheritance. In the late 1950s the peasant wife had as little say in the operation of the holding as she had in the 1920s.

Peasant marriages continued overwhelmingly to occur relatively late in life and to involve locals, in spite of population displacement in the 1940s through conscription and deaths, as well as the influx of refugees from the Allied bombing campaign followed by those from the eastern territories. The arrangement might well hinge on the more or less precise acreage and soil quality of the farms involved. One marriage was thought inappropriate because the farm of the bride's father was on sandy soil rather than the higher-yielding clay the groom was to inherit. The nature of the bride's 'trousseau' was a matter of both private and public interest. The furniture a wife brought into a marriage was displayed at the wedding reception with the doors open for guests to inspect the contents. One wife's 'trousseau' in the 1950s included a reaping machine.

Peasant marriages continued to be more fecund on average. In matters of inheritance the passing of real property into the hands of sons remained the norm. The endeavour of the Nazi regime to develop this further, through the Farm Inheritance Law of 1933, had a limited impact in practice. Under the law brothers of a deceased peasant and their sons were given a superior claim to a farm over the widow and where a son was not of age for the duration of his minority. This law, which continued in operation for some time after 1945, was generally nullified by the courts' upholding pre-nuptial agreements to the contrary, as well as by general opposition among the peasantry.

Religion continued to play an important role in peasant life, in spite of the considerable Nazi effort to eradicate church influence, especially in Catholic areas. The sway of the rectory was reflected throughout the period in such vital statistics as the noticeably higher average size of Catholic families as compared with Protestant. Even with the influx of refugees from the east from 1945 inter-confessional marriage remained relatively infrequent. Even priest and pastor, however, had to bend to or merely bemoan peasant practices deemed necessary for sustaining the existence of the peasant farm.

Topics the author doesn't explore include the seasonality of marriage and of conception and birth. Substantial space is devoted to the peasants' reaction to Nazi persecution of the Jews, which was mostly one of indifference, whereas that to the equally and consistently persecuted gypsies is ignored. Nevertheless, the volume represents a very substantial contribution to knowledge of peasant life in the twentieth century.

JOHN PERKINS
Macquarie University

A. E. LULOFF AND R. S. KRANNICH (eds), *Persistence and change in rural communities. A fifty-year follow-up to six classic studies* (CABI Publishing, 2002). xii + 189 pp. 5 tables; 51 figs. £45.

Sociological re-studies of rural communities are relatively rare in the United States. In this instance, a team approach was used to examine six localities initially researched in the 1940s. All were communities in which agriculture played key roles when originally explored; all save one had fewer than 2500 residents in the population centre when first examined. The six were thought to represent various types of rural places existing at that time.

The current set of researchers summarize the agricultural and social situations observed in the earlier studies, cite changes that occurred, and highlight socioeconomic factors at work in these areas in the 1990s. A chapter introduces the initial studies and describes the rationale

for returning to them; this is followed by one that describes the theoretical framework that is employed by those conducting the follow-up studies. General sociological theories and concepts are set as the base for the six independent studies that follow, one for each of the study communities (Sublette, Kansas, by L. Bloomquist, D. Williams, and J. Bridger; Irwin, Iowa, by E. Hoiberg; Harmony, Georgia, by G. Green; Landaff, New Hampshire, by F. Schmidt, E. Skinner, L. Ploch and R. Krannich; El Cerrito, New Mexico, by R. Krannich and C. Eastman; and the Old Order Amish in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, by A. Luloff, J. Bridger and L. Ploch). A chapter providing a comparative assessment of what occurred across the six communities concludes the book.

Photographs are used sparingly throughout to provide contrasts between circumstances in the 1940s and 1990s. The original reports also included photos and many others are available at the US National Archives and Records Administration from that work; professional photographers were assigned to explore the communities during the initial studies although evidently not as part of the more recent ones.

Selected originally to represent various points on a stability/instability continuum, dramatic changes occurred during the last half century in these places, with some reporting constant growth while others experienced population loss only to gain residents later, had relative stability in the number of residents, or noted general decline for decades. Some of the authors found it necessary to expand the geographic areas studied, because the original locality had changed so much that the sense of the original community no longer existed. New forms of community had emerged, however, thus giving rise to the conclusion that both change and persistence occurred in these rural places.

The considerable fieldwork conducted in these places generates historical and contemporary insights into change in US rural communities. The extent of the sense of community, both in social and economic terms, is explored. In some, little of the previous organizational structure exists, yet residents claim that community persists; in some others, new economic and social organizations have emerged to enhance local life. Each of the six chapters on the specific communities yields results of importance, from one in which increased divisions of labour in agriculture are evident to another in which divisions by race that were in place half a century ago persist today. Some of the communities continue only because of the ability to attract new residents, while others undergo increases that they don't necessarily desire.

The independence of the authors of the re-studies is

evident in this volume; although they shared a guiding theoretical framework grounded in the idea that community is based on social interaction that is relevant to the locality, the extent to which it was put to use varies greatly from one chapter to the next. That may have been necessary given the diversity of the sites revisited, but it makes it difficult to draw comparisons across the individual re-studies, which is evident in the brief concluding chapter. It is not as detailed a comparative assessment of persistence and change across these six places as could have been anticipated.

At least two of the localities changed so much that arguments about persistence are hindered. Rather, the former places basically ceased to exist; residents who arrived later differed greatly from the original inhabitants and developed new communities. These emerging localities, while located in more or less the same geographic space as the earlier ones, have little if any relation to the former communities or their inhabitants. Indeed, in one case, no one in the area recalled the name applied to the former place. Seasonal residents add vitality in some of the communities, while migrants with characteristics differing from those of long-term residents contribute to new issues in others.

This volume is an important addition to the sociological literature on rural communities. Few books attempt to provide comparative information on various sites across time. The results suggest that agriculture remains a key factor in some of the six communities, while in others its role has been greatly diminished. Reviewing the original reports of the studies from the 1940s and those reported in this volume for the 1990s reinforces the diversity that characterizes rural places in the United States in the past, across the decades, and at present, suggesting that both change and persistence are appropriate dimensions on which they can be compared.

WILLIS GOUDY
Iowa State University, Ames

NORMAN WIRZBA (ed.), *The art of the commonplace. The agrarian essays of Wendell Berry* (Washington DC: Counterpoint, 2002). xx + 329 pp. £15.95.

The *San Francisco Chronicle*, quoted on the dust-jacket of this book, describes Wendell Berry as 'an essayist in the tradition of Emerson and Thoreau'. While this description has some justice to it, a more pertinent comparison would be to Louis Bromfield, the novelist whose regeneration of Malabar Farm, Ohio during the 1940s turned him into a leading spokesman for rural communities and for a predominantly organic farming which would conserve natural resources. Like Bromfield, Berry was drawn back to rural life in middle age and he has written extensively on agriculture in its practical,

cultural, economic and religious aspects. In 1933, the year before Berry was born, Bromfield published *The Farm*, a curious novel without dialogue in which he traced the rise of industry and big business in the USA at the expense of the nation's agrarian population. Berry has in turn described the continued, relentless marginalizing of American agriculture over the past seventy years. The most recent essay in this collection, from 2001, finds him attacking the environmentally-destructive assumptions on which corporations base their enterprises.

Berry's work thus constitutes a link between the pioneers of organic husbandry and today's anti-globalization campaign, demonstrating that the ideas of the former have continuing relevance in the context of contemporary agricultural problems. Berry makes several references to the English botanist Sir Albert Howard (though the regrettable lack of an index means that they can be found only after a sustained search). Central to Howard's philosophy were ideas which Berry considers vital for the future health of agriculture: the Wheel of Life, a natural cycle of growth, death and decay requiring cultivators to return wastes to the soil; the importance of preserving forests, which can teach us nature's own methods of creating fertility; the need for humility in the face of a natural order which imposes limits on human interference with the created world; and the conviction that health is related to food quality and, therefore, to the vitality of the soil in which crops are grown.

Berry believes that farming should express care for the soil and for the particular locality and region where one tends it. The opening essay, 'A native hill', expresses his love of his Kentucky farm and his intimate knowledge of the landscape in which it stands; here he indeed reminds the reader of Thoreau in his descriptions of the paths he walks. In returning to his native state Berry sought, like Bromfield before him, to discover a sense of belonging. But his praise of a Jeffersonian democracy based on the family farm is also a severe critique of the rootlessness of American culture, which either marginalizes, sentimentalizes or mocks the rural.

The hoary charge of 'nostalgia' inevitably has to be addressed, and Berry deals with it ruthlessly: an agrarian culture based on respect for the natural world is both more ethical and more efficient than its technological alternative, and offers the means of long-term survival. It is less wasteful; it avoids dependence on corporations; it does not risk international instability and war for the sake of oil; it offers variety of scenery, species and crafts

as against mass-produced uniformity; it increases self-sufficiency in food supply, and it encourages local economies, re-connecting producer and consumer. Is it really preferable, Berry asks tellingly, to live in a nation where farmers are outnumbered by prisoners?

Like the British organic movement of the 1940s, Berry emphasizes the cultural component of agriculture: maltreatment of the soil is a cultural problem, caused by wrong values and bringing in its train the break-up of previously stable communities. Industrial farming's destructiveness is fuelled by commercial rapacity; the answer to environmental degradation is to be found only in values which curb rather than inflame human desires. Ultimately this is a religious issue, and Berry shares with many earlier members of the organic movement a Christian perspective on humanity's relationship to the natural world. In 'The gift of good land' he develops a thoughtful reply to the oft-quoted accusation made by Lynn White Jr, that the Judaeo-Christian tradition is to blame for our ecological crisis. While accepting some of White's criticism, Berry contends that there is no biblical basis for the dualism of nature and spirit which has led the Christian church to neglect its stewardship of the Creation. He calls for an earthly Christianity which will value Nature's abundance and celebrate bodily work and skills.

Given the growing resistance to 'fast food' and the recent compensatory emergence of a slow food movement, Berry's insistence, in an essay from twenty years ago, on the need to adjust to the slow rhythms of nature, takes on a certain prophetic significance. The western obsession with speed, he argues, makes it well-nigh impossible to exercise the patience needed to restore land to health and pass it on as an inheritance for later generations. Similarly, Berry's essays themselves demand slow reading. They are carefully argued, subtle and detailed, and written in a language whose literary cadences serve to emphasize rather than disguise the strength of his feelings and the radical nature of his dissent from American culture. Agrarianism is fortunate to have such an intelligent advocate, sensitive but uncompromising, to argue its case. Yet the opposing forces are more powerful than ever before, and it remains to be seen whether Berry's work will be remembered as rural America's swan-song or the inspiration for its renewal.

PHILIP CONFORD
University of Reading

Conference Report: The Society's Jubilee Spring Conference, April 2003

by John Veltom

After wriggling my way into that kernel of learning, King Alfred's College Winchester, I made my way the Society's Executive Committee's meeting which always precedes the first paper of the conference. As a final item of business on the agenda, our Chairman asked for someone to undertake writing the conference report for the *Review*. You could hear a pin drop, silence, as I suspect everyone present mentally rehearsed their reason for being unable to take on any extra work!¹ In a moment of weakness I said I would have a try and I am sorry to tell you that my offer was accepted!

So this report is going to be different to the usual! No immaculate prose will grace the page as does that from our usual chosen contributors. I am an amateur historian, 'Jack of all trades, master of none', who has spent 60 years – man and boy – on the 'shop floor' of agriculture, whose academic interest began when I joined the Society 23 years ago. This lack of credentials will appear obvious as you read on.²

One of the ways in which the BAHS wished to celebrate its Golden Jubilee was to organise an essay competition – entrants could choose their subject – for which there would be cash prizes for the winner and runner up. What better way to start the conference than by asking Dr David Stone (Corpus Christi Colleges, Oxford and Cambridge), the author of the winning essay, to speak to his subject 'The productivity and management and sheep in late medieval England'.³ Stone began by quoting from the work of M. J. Stephenson, showing how sheep numbers had increased after the Black Death and profits from wool became as high as 80 per cent of those received from arable. He noted a decline in fleece weights between 1370 and 1450, largely attributed to a succession of hard winters. Stone wished to argue however that the late medieval decline in fleece weights was

due to deliberate management decisions and cost-cutting. He reminded us that 'good hay, sweet hay hath no fellow' with which no livestock man would quarrel. It is well to remember when talking of hay and its effect on the health of the stock that eat it, that the seller is not necessarily after quality, he is wanting quantity! Hay that produces the heaviest crop is left longer to mature, is easier to make because there is less sap in it, but retains considerably less food value! Stone also made a point that peas and vetches were used as replacements for hay, which I found difficult to follow, the former would be an unlikely crop to make into hay, nor would it stand through to winter. Stone was quite right to stress that 'Human nature doesn't change much': care bestowed by the shepherd to his flock is the cornerstone of its consequent economic success be it 1350 or 2003. And a practical touch I enjoyed, Stone stressed that the owner of a sheep flock, be it 12 or 1200 animals, will be as cussed as any other farmer and have his own ideas on the best way to manage his flock.

After dinner Dr Roy Brigden (University of Reading) outlined the modern history of the John Lewis/Waitrose farm estate at Leckford which we were to visit on the morrow. He told us of John Spedan Lewis' purchase of the estate in 1928 with the intention of proving that farming could pay. He also wanted his estate employees to live in up-to-date farm cottages, have access to social, sporting and educational facilities and he initiated a profit-sharing scheme for them. The estate was also used at this time for work's holidays for the members of the Lewis partnership. John Spedan Lewis introduced modern equipment and methods to Leckford, for instance a combine rather than a binder. His enterprises included pigs, poultry, a dairy herd, a large arable acreage of cereals and fruit, all of which proved to be unprofitable, or

¹ [This is absolutely true. It is the only moment when no one talks in Executive Committee meetings. Editor.]

² [No it won't. Editor.]

³ This essay and Dr Nicola Verdon's both appeared in part one of this volume of the *Review*: above pp. 1–39.

if profitable one year, unprofitable the next. It was not until government aid through deficiency payments in the 1931 Wheat Act, and the formation of the Milk Marketing Board soon after, that some semblance of profit was introduced. Lewis found this hard to accept but the truth is that without the outbreak of war in 1939 and the subsequent rise in prices, the Leckford partnership might have failed.

The quality of the management that followed this turning point is well known in Hampshire farming circles. As Dr Brigden said, on our visit we would learn how the present management team under Mr Ben Gibbons has bought the estate bubbling into the twenty-first century.

Tuesday morning's sessions began with an new researcher's session in which some of the younger members of the society had an opportunity to share their research. Celia Langley (University of Exeter) outlined her project on the farming families of north Cornwall over the past 150 years. One of her concerns was to establish what factors which allowed for the survival of these families: as well as deploying the familiar documentary sources she was making heavily use of oral history to reach many aspects of family life, such as mobility amongst farmers and the farm succession, which were otherwise unevicenced. Second to speak was Shirley Brook (University of Hull), whose doctoral project is on the 'Buildings of High Farming in Lincolnshire', some of which were visited by the Society in an excursion from its Caythorpe conference in March 1999. She outlined the scale of capital investment in buildings in the mid-nineteenth century, much of it financed by the Lands Improvement Company, illustrating her account with some of the buildings. The last of the trio was Martin Ayres (University of Leicester) who spoke on 'Copyholders, lifeholders and squatters on the waste: rural housing and the erosion of old cottage tenures in nineteenth-century Dorset'. He outlined the complexity of the older customary tenures found in the county and speculated on their significance for Dorset rural society.

The conference then heard two keynote speakers. Professor Chris Dyer (University of Leicester), talked on 'Fifty years behind the plough: how has our understanding of the medieval countryside changed?'. This dealt with many themes, and elaborated on how our perspective has changed in so many areas, the decline of belief in Postan's thesis being particularly significant. Whilst not dismissing lordship and serfdom, Dyer's medieval peasant had opportunities he could exploit. He may well have been oppressed by lordship: but he was also a petty entrepreneur.

Professor Doug Hurt (Iowa State University), Editor of our sister journal *Agricultural History* reflected on the writing of rural history in America. As his scholarly paper

will appear in the next issue of the *Review*, perhaps I might be excused from recording it here in detail. But there were striking similarities between the fortunes of the subject here and there, not least its origins in agricultural economics and shift towards rural history in recent years.

On the Tuesday afternoon we journeyed to Leckford, three miles north of Stockbridge. Whilst we were being welcomed by the Farms Manager, Mr Ben Gibbons I heard a heavy lorry start up. As I was listening to Mr Gibbons, it occurred to me that I had not seen any lorries around when we arrived, so I quickly retired from the audience, gathering speed as I went, to see not a lorry but our coach – on which we were to tour the estate – disappearing down the farm road. Fortunately our Secretary, John Broad, had his mobile phone at the ready to contact the coach company and effect a reversal of the driver's intent to return rapidly to Winchester!

Whilst all this was going on, Mr Gibbons was explaining the policy behind the apple enterprise. Cox's Orange Pippin was the main variety grown, an unusual choice for a chalk dominated soil. Eight hundred tons of apples could be held in a coldstore on site. After grading through a modern packhouse, these were released on a weekly basis to the shelves of Waitrose stores. As we waited for the errant coach, members took the opportunity to buy apples from the farm shop until the a cloud of dust signalled its return.

Our tour of the estate revealed the diversity of the farming operation. As we passed through the orchards it was clear that a vigorous policy of replanting was in hand to ensure that top quality fruit could be produced well into the future. There were extensive chicken-rearing units, each unit containing 1250 birds, with 12 groups in use at any one time and the thirteenth empty and being sterilised ready for the next batch. There is something inherently rural at the sight of white chickens foraging purposefully across young green grass even if restrained by a high electric fence to keep foxes out and chickens in. Passing the extensive mushroom sheds, we made for the dairy unit, a large conglomeration of cows with the necessary milking, feeding and resting area plus huge feed store bunkers now showing only the dregs of last winter's feed. Close-by there was a large milk processing plant for the Waitrose own label organic milk.

We passed through the villages of Longstock and Leckford where the River Test twists and turns through this beautiful valley. Our final stop was at the Longstock Park Water Garden which was apparently a favourite place with JSL when he was alive. On this pleasant sunny day in early April, it was easy to see why, although the most exciting show of wetland plants would occur later in the spring and summer.

Following convention, we returned to the AGM and then the annual dinner before which Drs David Stone and Nicola Verdon, respectively winner and runner up of the essay competition, were presented with their cheques by our President, Professor Hey, amidst members' generous and prolonged applause. The annual dinner was enlivened by a special anniversary Presidential recitation of a certain verse narrative, with the conference contributing the refrains.⁴ At the later reminiscence session we welcomed one of the founders of the discipline, Professor Maurice Beresford, whose recollections brought alive some of the characters on whose endeavours this Society is based. Many others contributed anecdotes and the whole was enlivened by John Chartres' slides of past excursions.

For our first paper on Wednesday morning, Dr Peter Dewey took the rostrum to discuss 'The British Farm Tractor, 1932–2002: saviour of the agricultural machinery industry or cuckoo in the nest?'. He explained how Henry Ford, already an international car manufacturer, became known for his tractors after 5,000 were imported in 1917. Later, in 1932, he set up the Ford factory at Dagenham. By 1938 he had produced 18,000 tractors whose qualities and idiosyncrasies became known to many farmers of my generation through the war years and after. From 1946 more sophisticated machines entered the market. A fore-runner designed and built by Harry Ferguson had many unusual features, but I believe its most dramatic innovation was the use of hydraulics to carry the implement and at the same time to use its weight to improve traction. This system was eventually copied by all other tractor manufacturers and is still a vital part of modern tractor design. Dewey continued, nostalgically for me, by giving us a history of the various tractors made by firms, many of whom are now no longer in business: names like David Brown, International, Marshals, John Deere, Massey Harris. I don't think that there was a cuckoo in the nest for either farmer or manufacturer. But it is a good subject for debate!

The middle paper of the morning was presented by Professor Richard Hoyle (University of Reading) on 'Tenurial change and Chancery litigation in England,

1550–1640'. Hoyle dealt with this subject in his usual erudite way. He seems to be able to blend a series of complex legal changes into a comprehensible whole. He dealt first with the legal issues of tenure in the sixteenth century. Custom could be claimed by the tenants after only 30 or 40 years and then used to resist increases in fines. Hoyle made the point that court rolls could be made to prove almost anything! From his researches amongst the Chancery decrees, Hoyle showed us the distribution of different types of tenure: he displayed tables revealing unsuspected changes in the character of litigation. Cases were often brought by new gentry or a son who had recently taken over from his father and wanted to make tenurial changes.

To complete the conference we enjoyed Dr John Hare's (Peter Symond's College, Winchester) lecture on the 'Demesne agriculture in the chalk lands of medieval Hampshire' which appropriately took us back to where we had begun with Stone's paper on the first afternoon. The numbers of sheep on the Bishop and Prior of Winchester's downland manors were impressive: both had flocks of 20,000 sheep at different periods, with shepherds allotted 1000 to manage. The manure from these animals must have played an important part in maintaining the output of the arable crops on these poor, chalk soils.

I have spent the equivalent of twenty years of my working life amongst sheep. After Dr Hare's lecture I could picture my ancestors laid down with their flock at night with two or three hurdles under a wall for shelter, or, if they were lucky, in the sheepcote – in my day a shepherd's hut – at lambing time, waiting for the first light of dawn to reveal what ewes had lambed and if any needed help. Hang on a minute – perhaps my ancestors were also the type who spent too much time in the alehouse neglecting their duties and had to be fined by the manor court!

The conference closed with thanks expressed to all the speakers and to John Broad and Jean Morrin who handled domestic arrangements, not forgetting too the College staff who made our stay comfortable and enjoyable.⁵

⁴ [As Professor Hurt said in an e.mail to the editor: 'You have a great group, and I hope that I can attend another meeting in the future. Frankly, I'd like to hear the president's dinner speech again. Chalk it up to cultural differences, but I wasn't certain what was going on!

But it was great fun'.]

⁵. [Mr Veltom will surely be invited to memorialise our Spring Conferences again. Unless his nerve holds. Editor.]

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